

## Who were the Anakim / Anakites?

The Anakim/Anakites were a formidable race of giant, warlike people (Deuteronomy 2:10, 21; 9:2) who occupied the lands of southern Israel near Hebron before the arrival of the Israelites (Joshua 15:13). The Anakim's ancestry has been traced back to Anak, the son of Arba (Joshua 15:13; 21:11), who at that time was regarded as the "greatest man among the Anakim" (Joshua 14:15).

The name "Anakim" most likely means "long-necked," i.e., "tall." The Hebrews thought them to be descendants of the Nephilim, a powerful race who dominated the pre-Flood world (Genesis 6:4; Numbers 13:33). When the twelve Israelite spies returned from exploring the Promised Land, they gave a frightening report of "people great and tall" whom they identified as the sons of Anak (Deuteronomy 9:2). The Israelites, seized with fear and believing themselves to be mere "grasshoppers . . . in their sight" (Numbers 13:33), rebelled against God (Deuteronomy 1:26-28) and refused to enter the land God had promised them.

The Israelites were exhorted by Moses (Deuteronomy 1:19) not to fear the Anakim, but they refused to trust God's promises (Deuteronomy 1:32-33). As a result, God became angry (Deuteronomy 1:34-39) and prohibited the "evil generation" from entering the Promised Land; Joshua and Caleb were the only exceptions (Deuteronomy 1:35-36). Because of their fear of the Anakim and their rebellion against God, the children of Israel were forced to wander for another 38 years in the wilderness.

During the conquest of Canaan, Joshua expelled the Anakim from the hill country, and Caleb finally drove them out of Hebron completely. However, a small remnant found refuge in the cities of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod (Joshua 11:22). Many Bible scholars speculate

that the Anakim's descendants were the Philistine giants David encountered (2 Samuel 21:15-22), including Goliath of Gath (1 Samuel 17:4-7).