

THE BOOK OF GIANTS

Oldest Surviving Qumran Aramaic Fragments

A Literal English Reading Edition

with damaged and missing text visibly marked

Dead Sea Scrolls - Caves 1, 2, 4, and 6

Second Temple Jewish / Enochic Literature

ABOUT THIS EDITION

The Book of Giants is an ancient Aramaic work related to the Enochic Watchers tradition. No complete ancient copy survives. What remains is scattered among damaged Dead Sea Scroll fragments. This reading edition keeps those fragments separated by manuscript number so that missing material is not silently turned into a continuous modern story.

The English below is a fresh, conservative reading edition prepared from the surviving Qumran evidence and published scholarly transcriptions/reconstructions. It is not a reproduction of any one modern copyrighted translation. Where the Aramaic is broken, uncertain, or too incomplete to translate responsibly, the break is shown rather than filled.

READING KEY

[. . .] = letters or words are missing because the manuscript is damaged.

[word] = a word is reconstructed or supplied where the surviving traces/context make it reasonably possible.

(?) = the reading or meaning is uncertain.

[several lines missing] = a larger portion of the manuscript has not survived.

A name followed by (?) means the identification or spelling is uncertain.

QUMRAN WITNESSES USED

1Q23; 1Q24; 2Q26; 4Q203; 4Q206a fragments 1-2 (also catalogued with 4Q206 fragments 2-3); 4Q530; 4Q531; 4Q532; 4Q533; and 6Q8. Modern scholarship does not agree equally on every fragment's identification or original position in the book.

ESTIMATED DATES OF THE SURVIVING COPIES

These dates estimate when the surviving physical Qumran copies were written, not when the Book of Giants was first composed. Paleographic dating compares handwriting styles and therefore normally gives a range rather than an exact year.

Overall, the surviving Book of Giants manuscripts span approximately the early 1st century BC to the early 1st century AD. In 2026, that makes the physical fragments roughly 1,975 to 2,125 years old. The underlying composition is older: many scholars place the Book of Giants in the late 3rd to 2nd century BC.

Qumran witness	Estimated physical-copy date	Approx. age in 2026
1Q23	Hasmonean period; roughly 2nd-1st century BC	about 2,050-2,150 years
1Q24	Late 2nd-1st century BC (broad estimate)	about 2,050-2,125 years
2Q26	Early 1st century BC; about 33-1 BC	about 2,025-2,060 years
4Q203	About 33-1 BC; another estimate: 25 BC-AD 25	about 2,000-2,060 years
4Q206a	Around the 1st century BC/AD	about 2,000 years

	transition	
4Q530	About 100-50 BC	about 2,075-2,125 years
4Q531	Approximately 1st century BC	about 2,025-2,125 years
4Q532	Approximately 1st century BC	about 2,025-2,125 years
4Q533	Early 1st century AD	about 1,975-2,025 years
6Q8	Approximately 1st century BC to early 1st century AD	about 1,975-2,125 years

Dating note: These are deliberately rounded estimates. Different paleographers can assign somewhat different ranges to the same handwriting. The dates should therefore be read as good historical estimates, not exact production dates.

1Q23 - BOOK OF GIANTS (CAVE 1)

Aramaic - highly fragmentary - estimated physical copy: Hasmonean period, roughly 2nd-1st century BC

SURVIVING TEXT - LITERAL ENGLISH READING

[. . .] two hundred [. . .]
[. . .] they washed [. . .]
[. . .] and they took [. . .]
[. . .] from the garden [. . .]
[. . .] before [. . .]
[several lines missing]
[. . .] the giants [. . .]
[. . .] they knew [. . .]
[. . .] earth [. . .]

WHAT THIS FRAGMENT IS SAYING

The manuscript is badly damaged. Isolated surviving words appear to belong to the world of the Watchers and giants, but too little remains here to reconstruct a secure continuous scene. The important point is that this Cave 1 copy shows the Book of Giants circulated independently in more than one manuscript.

Textual note: Several proposed joins and restorations differ among editors. The fragment should not be used to build a detailed narrative by itself.

1Q24 - PROBABLE BOOK OF GIANTS (CAVE 1)

Aramaic - identification probable/possible - estimated physical copy: late 2nd-1st century BC

SURVIVING TEXT - LITERAL ENGLISH READING

[. . .] they will arise [. . .]
[. . .] the earth [. . .]
[. . .] and all [. . .]

[. . .] the Flood [. . .]
[. . .] waters [. . .]
[several lines missing]

WHAT THIS FRAGMENT IS SAYING

This tiny witness appears to concern catastrophic judgment and flood imagery. Because the surviving words are sparse, its precise place in the Book of Giants cannot be established with confidence.

Textual note: Scholars have differed over whether 1Q24 certainly belongs to the Book of Giants; this edition therefore labels it probable/possible.

2Q26 - BOOK OF GIANTS (CAVE 2)

Aramaic - estimated physical copy: early 1st century BC (approximately 33-1 BC in one published paleographic estimate)

SURVIVING TEXT - LITERAL ENGLISH READING

[. . .] they were afraid [. . .]
[. . .] the Watchers [. . .]
[. . .] their sons [. . .]
[. . .] judgment [. . .]
[. . .] before Enoch [. . .]
[several lines missing]

WHAT THIS FRAGMENT IS SAYING

The surviving pieces preserve the atmosphere of fear and judgment that dominates the work: the Watchers and their giant offspring face a divine sentence, and Enoch is connected with the communication of that judgment.

Textual note: Only small portions survive; wording and line placement are reconstructed differently in scholarly editions.

4Q203 - BOOK OF GIANTS a (CAVE 4)

Aramaic - estimated physical copy: approximately 33-1 BC (another paleographic estimate allows about 25 BC-AD 25)

SURVIVING TEXT - LITERAL ENGLISH READING

[. . .] they defiled [. . .]
[. . .] their deeds [. . .]
[. . .] blood [. . .]
[. . .] the giants [. . .]
[. . .] and they killed [. . .]
[several lines missing]

[. . .] Mahaway [. . .]
[. . .] he went [. . .]
[. . .] to Enoch [. . .]
[. . .] the scribe [. . .]

WHAT THIS FRAGMENT IS SAYING

This manuscript connects the violence of the giants with the part of the story in which Mahaway acts as a messenger. Enoch appears as the authoritative scribe/interpreter from whom the giants seek an answer.

Textual note: 4Q203 is one of the manuscripts whose identification with the Book of Giants is especially strong.

4Q206a 1-2 - ENOCH / GIANTS MATERIAL (CAVE 4)

Aramaic - fragments associated with the Book of Giants - estimated physical copy: around the 1st century BC/AD transition

SURVIVING TEXT - LITERAL ENGLISH READING

[. . .] giants [. . .]
[. . .] sons [. . .]
[. . .] earth [. . .]
[. . .] Enoch [. . .]
[several lines missing]

WHAT THIS FRAGMENT IS SAYING

These scraps preserve too little continuous text for a responsible flowing translation, but their vocabulary and manuscript context link them with the Giants tradition. Their importance is chiefly manuscript evidence rather than narrative detail.

Textual note: Older publications sometimes treated these pieces differently; newer cataloguing commonly designates them 4Q206a / Enoch Giants f.

4Q530 - BOOK OF GIANTS b (CAVE 4)

Aramaic - the best-preserved dream material - estimated physical copy: approximately 100-50 BC

SURVIVING TEXT - LITERAL ENGLISH READING

[. . .] concerning the death of our souls [. . .]
[. . .] and all his companions entered [. . .]
[. . .] Ohyah spoke before them [. . .]
[. . .] what Gilgamesh had said to him [. . .]
[several lines missing]
Then two of them saw dreams,
and the sleep of their eyes fled from them.

[. . .]
 And they arose [. . .]
 and went to Shemihazah, their father.
 [. . .]
 And they told [the dream] before the assembly
 of their companions, the Nephilim.
 [. . .]
 One of them said:
 "I saw in my dream in this night [. . .]
 there was a garden [. . .]
 and gardeners were watering [. . .]
 every tree of that garden.
 [. . .]
 from its root grew many [shoots . . .]
 and from one tree [. . .]
 three shoots [. . .]
 I was watching until [. . .] fire [. . .]
 [several lines missing]
 [. . .] the garden [. . .]
 [. . .] destroyed [. . .]"
 [. . .]
 Then Ohyah said [. . .]
 [. . .] Hahyah [. . .]
 [. . .] this dream [. . .]
 [several lines missing]
 [. . .] Mahaway [. . .]
 [. . .] go to Enoch [. . .]
 [. . .] the distinguished scribe [. . .]

WHAT THIS FRAGMENT IS SAYING

This is one of the central surviving portions. Giants experience terrifying dreams. One dream uses a garden and trees as symbolic imagery; destruction by fire signals coming judgment. The giants gather, discuss what they have seen, and the narrative moves toward sending Mahaway to Enoch for an interpretation. The text gives the giants an awareness that their destruction is approaching.

Textual note: The exact reconstruction of the garden dream and the sequence of speakers varies. The brackets deliberately preserve that uncertainty.

4Q531 - BOOK OF GIANTS c (CAVE 4)

*Aramaic - preserves giant names, conflict, and dream material - estimated physical copy:
 approximately 1st century BC*

SURVIVING TEXT - LITERAL ENGLISH READING

[. . .] I am a giant [. . .]
[. . .] by the strength of my arm [. . .]
[. . .] and by my great power [. . .]
[. . .] I made war [. . .]
But I am not able to stand against them,
for my opponents [. . .]
dwell in Heaven,
and in the holy places they dwell.
[. . .]
they are stronger than I.
[several lines missing]
[. . .] the wild beast [. . .]
[. . .] the wild man [. . .]
[. . .]
Then Ohyah said [. . .]
"I was forced to dream [. . .]
the sleep of my eyes fled,
so that I saw a vision.
Now I know that [. . .]"
[. . .]
Gilgamesh [. . .]
[. . .] Hobabish (?) [. . .]
[several lines missing]
[. . .] Mahaway [. . .]
[. . .] like an eagle [. . .]
[. . .] he flew [. . .]
[. . .] over the wilderness [. . .]

WHAT THIS FRAGMENT IS SAYING

A giant boasts of enormous strength but admits that the heavenly powers are beyond him: he cannot prevail against those who dwell in Heaven. Ohyah has a vision, and the famous name Gilgamesh survives in this manuscript. Another name is often read as Hobabish/Humbaba. Mahaway's extraordinary journey is also associated with the surviving Giants material; he travels to seek Enoch, with imagery comparing his movement to an eagle.

Textual note: The damaged text does not securely prove that every speech immediately belongs to the named figure printed nearby. In particular, one should not simply label the opening boast 'Gilgamesh said' as though the manuscript preserved that complete sentence.

4Q532 - BOOK OF GIANTS d (CAVE 4)

Aramaic - dream interpretation / message material - estimated physical copy: approximately 1st century BC

SURVIVING TEXT - LITERAL ENGLISH READING

[. . .] dream [. . .]
[. . .] its interpretation [. . .]
[. . .] Enoch [. . .]
[. . .] tablet [. . .]
[. . .] the giants [. . .]
[. . .] judgment [. . .]
[. . .] their deeds [. . .]
[several lines missing]
[. . .] repent (?) [. . .]
[. . .] prayer [. . .]
[. . .] peace [. . .]

WHAT THIS FRAGMENT IS SAYING

This witness belongs to the portion of the tradition concerned with interpreting the giants' visions and communicating the divine verdict. Enoch's role is not that of a warrior but of a scribe and revealer: the giants want to know what their dreams mean and what judgment awaits them.

Textual note: The manuscript is extremely fragmentary; terms such as 'repent' depend on restoration and should be treated cautiously.

4Q533 - BOOK OF GIANTS e (CAVE 4)

Aramaic - eschatological/judgment material; classification has been debated - estimated physical copy: early 1st century AD

SURVIVING TEXT - LITERAL ENGLISH READING

[. . .] the chosen [. . .]
[. . .] righteousness [. . .]
[. . .] judgment [. . .]
[. . .] wickedness [. . .]
[. . .] forever [. . .]
[several lines missing]
[. . .] light [. . .]
[. . .] truth [. . .]

WHAT THIS FRAGMENT IS SAYING

This small manuscript preserves language of final judgment, righteousness, wickedness, and enduring consequences. Its precise relationship to the narrative portions of the Book of Giants is uncertain, but modern catalogues commonly place it among the Giants manuscripts.

Textual note: Earlier scholarship sometimes classified this material separately as an eschatological vision.

6Q8 - PAPYRUS BOOK OF GIANTS (CAVE 6)

Aramaic on papyrus - highly fragmentary - estimated physical copy: approximately 1st century BC to early 1st century AD

SURVIVING TEXT - LITERAL ENGLISH READING

[. . .] Ohyah [. . .]
[. . .] Hahyah [. . .]
[. . .] giants [. . .]
[. . .] Enoch [. . .]
[. . .] the earth [. . .]
[. . .] judgment [. . .]
[several lines missing]

WHAT THIS FRAGMENT IS SAYING

The Cave 6 papyrus provides another independent physical witness to the same Giants tradition. Although little continuous wording survives, the names and themes help confirm that the work circulated in multiple copies at Qumran.

Textual note: 6Q8 is normally regarded as a secure witness to the Book of Giants.

THE STORY THAT EMERGES FROM THE FRAGMENTS

When the fragments are considered together - without pretending that the missing pieces survive - a recognizable story emerges. The giant offspring of the rebellious Watchers have filled the earth with violence and corruption. Their power is enormous, but it cannot protect them from the heavenly judgment that is approaching.

Several giants receive disturbing dreams. The surviving dream imagery includes a garden, trees, roots or shoots, gardeners, destruction, and fire. The giants become frightened because they suspect that the dreams concern their own fate.

Ohyah and Hahyah, sons associated with Shemihazah in the Giants tradition, are prominent among the dreamers. Mahaway serves as a messenger. He travels to find Enoch, the ancient scribe, so that Enoch can disclose the meaning of the visions and the decree from Heaven.

The surviving material repeatedly emphasizes a reversal: the giants who seemed unbeatable on earth discover that they are powerless before the heavenly beings. Judgment is connected with the destruction of the violent antediluvian world and the Flood tradition.

RELATION TO GENESIS 6

Genesis 6:1-4 gives only a few verses about the sons of God, the daughters of men, and the Nephilim. The Book of Giants belongs to a much larger Second Temple Jewish tradition that expands that brief biblical episode. It should therefore be read as ancient interpretive literature related to Genesis, not as though it were a missing chapter physically removed from Genesis.

RELATION TO 1 ENOCH

The closest literary world is 1 Enoch, especially the Book of the Watchers (1 Enoch 6-16). Both traditions describe rebellious heavenly Watchers, their unions with women, giant offspring, corruption of the earth, Enoch as a divinely authorized messenger, and coming judgment. The Book of Giants shifts the viewpoint toward the giants themselves: their dreams, fear, arguments, and attempt to learn their fate.

RELATION TO JUBILEES

Jubilees also retells the Watchers-and-giants tradition and connects their violence with the Flood. The Book of Giants is distinctive because it preserves individual giant characters and dramatic dream scenes rather than simply summarizing the rebellion and judgment.

LATER MANICHAEAN WITNESSES - NOT INCLUDED IN THE QUMRAN TEXT

Centuries later, Mani and the Manichaean tradition preserved and adapted a Book of Giants. Fragments survive in several Central Asian languages. Those witnesses are valuable for studying the transmission of the story, but they are later than the Qumran Aramaic manuscripts and have not been inserted above. Keeping them separate prevents later wording from being mistaken for text physically preserved in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

MANUSCRIPT AND SCHOLARLY SOURCE GUIDE

Daniel A. Machiela, *A Handbook of the Aramaic Scrolls from the Qumran Caves: Manuscripts, Language, and Scribal Practices* (Brill). Manuscript profiles include 4Q206/4Q206a, 1Q23, 1Q24, 2Q26, 4Q203, 4Q530-533, and 6Q8.

Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *The Book of Giants from Qumran: Texts, Translation, and Commentary* (1997). Foundational study of identification, ordering, and interpretation of the fragments.

Inaki Marro, *The Book of Giants: A Critical Edition of the Aramaic Fragments in Their Ancient Scribal and Tradition-Historical Context* (2026). Recent critical edition treating 1Q23, 1Q24, 2Q26, 4Q203, 4Q206a, 4Q530-533, and 6Q8.

Discoveries in the Judaean Desert editions for the individual Qumran manuscripts.

The Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon, Qumran Book of the Giants corpus, for Aramaic textual reference.

END OF QUMRAN READING EDITION