The word "Nephilim" is formed / spelled TWO ways in the Old Testament Hebrew text:

נפלים   **and**   נפילים **(see Numbers 13:33, e.g.)**

The difference between them, of course, is the extra letter in the second spelling:

נפילים

This difference in spelling is critical to understanding where the word comes from and how it should be translated. As many readers know, ancient Hebrew, like other Semitic languages, was originally spelled WITHOUT vowels (there were only consonants). Around the 6th century BC, Hebrew began to use certain CONSONANTS for vowel sounds – the letters essentially did "double duty." Among these consonants was the letter indicated by the arrow above – the Hebrew letter "yod".

The reason for this development was the preservation of correct pronunciation. Such "double duty" consonant-vowels are called *matres lectiones* (Latin for "mothers of reading" – they were to guide the reader into correct reading / pronunciation). These letters **preserved permanently LONG vowel sounds (in Hebrew, long "i" is pronounced like English long "ee").**

Depending on the preference of the scribe who was copying the Hebrew Bible, a word in which such a consonant was used could be written WITH or WITHOUT that consonant – it depended on the reading of the text, and whether or not he felt that the "reading guide" (the "fuller spelling") was necessary. He could use the technical, grammatically correct way of writing it (with the middle yod), or he could use a "contraction" – in which case the " i " vowel would have been marked with a *dot below the letter* (the difference in practice is analogous to your old English teacher taking points off on a paper for using "can't" – spelled with an apostrophe - when the stylistically "proper" spelling is "cannot").

THE IMPORTANT POINT in all this is that the "middle yod" of "nephilim" tells us that the word was CORRECTLY pronounced as "nĕ – fee – leem," and that the "proper" way of spelling the word was נפילים.

AS A RESULT of this scribal spelling clue, we can do two things:

1) Weed out incorrect spelling alternatives – and the "root words" that go with them; and
2) Deduce the root words that may legitimately be behind "nephilim"

Let's go through the options, including Sitchin's explanations:

What נְפִילִים (Nephilim) Does NOT mean:

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1) "those who fall upon" (implying they were mere human warriors) – many Christians hold this view

> This interpretation ASSUMES that the Hebrew was originally written as נפלים, and fails to take the middle "y" into account. This is significant, since if the word meant the above ("those who fall upon"), the consonants would be pointed (i.e., spelled with vowels – notice the little dots) as what Hebrew grammar calls a Qal plural participle, like this:

נֹפְלִים ("Nophelim")
> *** note that the vowel dot is ABOVE the letter, which indicates long "o", not the required long " i ". As a result of not accounting for the proper vowel, this cannot be the meaning of Nephilim.**

2) Some argue for a passive meaning, "those who are fallen (through some circumstance)." A passive verb is a verb that denotes the subject of the verb is acted UPON by an outside force. In Hebrew, if this were the meaning, the word would have to be pointed as a Qal passive participle, constructed like this:

נְפוּלִים (“Nephulim")

(but this adds a letter not in the original text – the ו)

The verdict, then, is that this meaning cannot be the meaning of Nephilim. This meaning IS POSSIBLE, though, if the root word is NOT Hebrew, but Aramaic –see below.

3) **Sitchin's Proposals:**

"those came down from above"
"those who were cast down"
"people of the fiery rockets"

Simply stated, these options are far from the mark. The last one in particular is completely bogus and self-serving.

First, the verb that usually is used for "to come down" (meaning "direction as in a journey") is **yarad** - ירד, not naphal (נפל). If we go with Sitchin's "those who were CAST down," we would need a participle of **yarad** spelled as a Hiphil stem (stems are like conjugations) which, in the Hebrew language, **requires the letter "m" (מ) on the front.** This form would be spelled: מורידים. Standard dictionaries of Hebrew "naphal" show that the "direction in a journey sense" is foreign to the word anyway. Clearly there is no relationship to נפילים.

Second, standard Hebrew dictionaries[1] DO at times allow for a meaning "to cast down" – but in Hebrew, all such cases are also **Hiphil stem** as above – and require an extra letter added to the front in the verb / participle form (either an "m" or "h" – מ or ה). Examples of these forms are found in the following verses (note how NONE of them even look like נפילים / nephilim):

Ezekiel 6:4 - הִפַּלְתִּי - hippalti	
Daniel 9:18 - מַפִּילִים - mappilim	

Daniel 9:20 - מַפִּיל - mappil	
Daniel 8:10 - תַּפֵּל - tappel	
Exodus 21:27 - יַפִּל - yappel (knock out a tooth)	
Psalm 22:19 - יַפִּילוּ - yappilu (cast lots)	

Third, Sitchin's "people of the fiery rockets" is absolutely contrived. Naphal has nothing to do with fire or rockets (check any Biblical Hebrew dictionary or lexicon). This translation is absolutely bogus. Go back to my website where I have scanned the range of word meanings described in the leading Hebrew Lexicon, Koehler – Baumgartner (English translation, Brill). You will find Sitchin's understanding in NO dictionary; he makes it up.

What נְפִילִים (Nephilim) DOES – or can – mean:

There are two options for the correct meaning of "nephilim" – meanings that preserve the correct middle "y" letter and hence the middle " i " vowel – but they BOTH are based on Aramaic roots.

1. In Aramaic, however, you could have a Naphal root, and the spelling would be נְפִילִין ("nephilin") – the "n" ending is the standard plural ending in **Aramaic** nouns (Aramaic was the language spoken in Babylon, where Israel was exiled in the 6th century – the SAME century in which the *matres lectiones* consonant-vowels begin to appear). When Aramaic words were carried into the Hebrew Bible by those who wrote or edited the final form of the Hebrew Bible, the proper Hebrew "m" plural was substituted for the Aramaic "n" to "convert" the form to proper Hebrew (see any good reference grammar here; e.g., Jouon-Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, vol. 1, p. 271; and *Gesenius's Hebrew Grammar*, ed. Kautsch, p. 242). Once this word was incorporated into the Hebrew Bible and the above ending change affected, we have נְפִילִים – the exact form we find in the Hebrew Bible at Numbers 13:33.

If Aramaic "naphal" is the correct root behind "nephilim," then the ONLY thing this spelling can mean is "those who fell / were fallen." The reason for this narrowness is that the spelling reflects the Aramaic

passive Pe-il participle. This meaning is discussed by rabbis – that these offspring of the Genesis 6 cohabitation between human women and the sons of God were "spiritually fallen" (evil).

2. Interestingly, however, the view Sitchin thinks is impossible (based on his childhood anecdote about not accepting his teacher's answer to the meaning of "nephilim") is actually the most likely meaning. Unfortunately, Sitchin's teacher didn't know any more about the structure of the word than Sitchin apparently does now. The spelling נְפִילִין is also the plural for "giants" (singular = Jewish Aramaic נְפִילָא - note the middle "y"). Once this word was incorporated into the Hebrew Bible, the above ending change (-m for –n) would also have taken place, producing נְפִילִים – again the exact form we find in the Hebrew Bible at Numbers 13:33. (It is curious how Sitchin could deny his teacher's answer that the Nephilim were giants, while Numbers 13:33 clearly establishes the Nephilim were in fact giants. Apparently Sitchin is banking on his readers not finding this verse).

My guess is that BOTH meanings work in tandem – the GIANTS produced by the cohabitation were EVIL / "FALLEN".

One thing is absolutely certain, though – Sitchin is wrong on all counts with respect to the meaning of "Nephilim." Once his Nephilim scenario is undone, everything built upon it falls.

LASTLY: A Truly Incredible Sitchin Error in Regard to the Nephilim:

From his *Stairway to Heaven* pp. 110-112

הא באדין חשבת בלבי די מן עירין הריאנתא ומן קדישין היא וֹלנפֹיֹלֹיֹן

Sitchin notes: "But as we examine the Hebrew original, we find it does not say 'watchers'; it says 'Nephilim' – the very term used in Gen 6. Thus do all the ancient texts and ancient confirm each other. The days before the deluge were the days when the Nephilim were upon the earth, the mighty ones, the people of the rocket ships."

The above text is from the Genesis Apocryphon found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, and concerns a myth about the conception of Noah. Sitchin is at pains here to make the sons of God (the "holy ones") equal to the Nephilim (see above), and thus have Noah as a Nephilim descendant, as well as to distinguish the Nephilim from the evil Watchers of Intertestamental literature. He even emphasizes the word "nephilim" to make sure we know what word he is talking about (see underlining). Unfortunately, he makes two amazing blunders:

1) The language is Aramaic, not Hebrew (contra his quote); this is detectable to someone who knows the difference. You can tell by virtue of the endings " – in" (‏ין‎ -) plural endings (as opposed to - im / ‏ים‎ - of Hebrew; cf. ‏לנפילין‎ (spelled in English letters here "nephilin" with an "n" ending), ‏עירין‎ ‏קדישין‎ and .

2) When Sitchin says the text does not say "watchers" he misses the word IN THE LINE a few words prior to "nephilin". The enlarged word is WATCHERS in Aramaic!

הא באדין חשבת בלבי די מן עירין הריאנתא ומן קדישין היא ולנפילין

Once again, Sitchin's scholarship is dubious. The Watchers are NOT the nephilim, and the nephilim are NOT the "holy ones". The ones who came from heaven, the sons of God –called Watchers in Enoch, fell into sin and fathered the Nephilim. Sitchin is undeniably wrong.

By the way – the term "Watcher" and "holy ones" are EQUATED in the book of Daniel (ch. 4). Didn't Sitchin look?

[1] See the entry for נפל in *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, Francis Brown, S. Driver, C. Briggs (eds.), Hendrickson Publishers; *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Vols. 1-4), Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner (eds.), Brill; *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Johannes Botterweck and H. Ringgren (eds.), Eerdmans.