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***In God's Image and Likeness 2
Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel***

Genesis 7: The Flood

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IN GOD'S IMAGE AND LIKENESS 2

ENOCK, NOAH, AND THE TOWER OF BABEL



JEFFREY M. BRADSHAW
DAVID J. LARSEN

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FIGURE G7-1. *The Evening of the Deluge*, ca. 1843
Joseph Mallord William Turner, 1775-1851

The London-born artist Joseph Mallord William Turner has become familiar to many Latter-day Saints through President Thomas S. Monson, who has used Turner's painting about sailors braving the waves to save a storm-threatened ship¹ as a metaphor for spiritual rescue.² The painting above likewise evokes the power of nature. "While Noah and his wife sleep in their tent, the biblical Flood begins. In a ... vortex of rain and moonlight, birds and beasts head toward the distant Ark. This is a preliminary version of a canvas shown in the 1843 Royal Academy. Now in London's Tate Gallery, the final work uses stronger color contrasts but is equally evocative and sketchy."³ "Pair to *Light and Color (Goethe's Theory)*, *The Morning after the Deluge - Moses writing the Book of Genesis*,"⁴ in these companion pictures Turner opposes cool and warm colors, and their contrasting emotional associations, as described by Goethe in his '*Farbenlehre*' (Theory of Colors). Turner has chosen the biblical Deluge as the vehicle for these ideas, returning to the Historical Sublime he had mastered in some of his earliest exhibition pictures. Originally painted and framed as octagons, this pair carries two of Turner's last and most inspired statements of the natural vortex, while the allusion to Goethe adds a gloss of recent science and theory to a lifetime's preoccupation with elemental forces."⁵

1 *Life-Boat and Manby Apparatus Going Off To A Stranded Vessel* (about 1831).

2 See, e.g., T. S. Monson, *To the Rescue*, May 2001. President Monson's own name for the painting was used as the title for his biography (H. S. Swinton, *To the Rescue*).

3 *Evening of the Deluge*.

4 See FIGURE G7-4, p. 256.

5 *Shade and Darkness*.

GENESIS 7

The Flood

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Overview

IN the narrative of the Flood we witness the unleashing of destructive powers as potent as those that effected Creation. A few terse words describe the results: “All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died ... and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.”¹ Leon R. Kass explains:²

God sends the Flood, a fitting response to the self-destructive conduct of the heroes. For the Flood, in restoring the watery chaos of the ultimate beginnings,³ merely completes the descent into chaos that anarchic and heroic men ... were bringing upon themselves entirely on their own. The text even makes the point linguistically: the word God uses for “destroy” — “I will destroy them with the earth”⁴ — is the same word translated “corrupt,” used to describe what man and animals were doing on their own — “all flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth.”⁵ The sympathetic and thoughtful reader understands that the Flood is necessary and fitting.

The Ark As a Mobile Sanctuary

In considering the role of Noah’s ark in the Flood story, note that the Ark was specifically a *mobile* sanctuary,⁶ as were the Tabernacle and the ark made of reeds that saved the baby Moses. Each of these structures can be described as a traveling vehicle of rescue designed to parallel God’s portable pavilion or chariot in function.

Scripture makes a clear distinction between the fixed heavenly temple and its portable counterparts. For example, in Psalm 18:11⁷ and D&C 121:1, the “pavilion”⁸ of “God’s hiding place” should not be equated with the fixed celestial “temple”⁹ to which the prayers of the oppressed ascend.¹⁰ Rather it is a representation of a movable “conveyance”¹¹ in which God,

1 Genesis 7:22-23.

2 L. R. Kass, *Wisdom*, p. 164.

3 Moses 2:2.

4 Genesis 6:13.

5 Moses 8:29.

6 See *Endnote G7-1*, p. 272.

7 Cf. 2 Samuel 22: 12.

8 I.e., booth or canopy; Hebrew *sukkah*.

9 I.e., palace; Hebrew *hekal*.

10 2 Samuel 22:7; Psalm 18:6; D&C 121:2. J. F. McConkie *et al.*, *Revelations*, p. 945 mistakenly identifies the “pavilion” of D&C 121:1 as God’s heavenly residence, whereas S. E. Robinson *et al.*, *D&C Commentary*, 4:151 correctly identifies the “pavilion” as a “movable tent.”

11 See *Endnote G7-2*, p. 272.



**FIGURE G7-2. *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* (detail), 1500-1504
Hieronymus Bosch, ca. 1450-1516**

Bosch painted *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* on the obverse of the left wing of his Rotterdam panels. Although his other depictions of fallen angels are paired with scenes of the Garden of Eden, the right wing of this work shows Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat. (The middle panel is missing.) This context makes it clear that the painting concerns the fallen "sons of God" described in Genesis 6:1-4. The panel shows a "distinctive image of a hellish earth, with glowing skies above burning buildings at the horizon. Demonic figures hover in the sky and infest the landscape, though no angel antagonists show any battle. Two obscure figures stand in the opening to a dark cave, but their identities as an overdressed female and a crippled male do not distinguish them clearly from the cast of devils depicted elsewhere by Bosch."¹

"To Bosch's contemporaries, the melancholy spectacle of sin and folly could be explained only in terms of the Devil and his followers seeking to drag mankind into perdition. Against such overwhelming odds, what chance did the pilgrim have to reach his homeland? The answer of the medieval Church may be summed up in the title of Thomas à Kempis' book, the *Imitation of Christ*. By renouncing the world and following the examples set by Christ and His Saints, the pilgrim could hope to pass through the dark night of this world into Paradise. And although Bosch painted many pictures mirroring the tragic condition of humanity, he produced almost as many others which illuminated this path to salvation."²

1 L. Silver, Jheronimus Bosch.

2 W. S. Gibson, *Hieronymus Bosch*, p. 108.

figuratively speaking, could swiftly descend to deliver His people from mortal danger.¹² The sense of the action is succinctly captured by Robert Alter:¹³ "The outcry of the beleaguered warrior ascends all the way to the highest heavens, thus launching a downward vertical movement" of God's own chariot.

Such a "downward vertical movement" had been a response to the sorry state of humanity not long before the Flood. In a vision foreshadowing this event, Enoch is said to have seen "many stars descend" from heaven.¹⁴ These were the Watchers or "sons of God"¹⁵ — identified with fallen angels in *1 Enoch* or with fallen mortal priests by early Christians and in the book of Moses.¹⁶ They were given a charge to reform mankind,¹⁷ a commission to "teach the sons of man, and perform judgment and uprightness upon the earth."¹⁸ Tragically, however, they "corrupted their way and their ordinances," the discharge of their missions thus serving to accelerate rather than halt the increase of "injustice ... upon the earth."¹⁹ It was in view of the utter failure of attempts to save humanity at large that God resolved to rescue Noah and his family.

12 K. L. Barker, *Zondervan*, p. 803 n. 18:7-15. See *Endnote G7-3*, p. 272.

13 R. Alter, *Psalms*, p. 53 n. 8.

14 G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 86:3, p. 364.

15 See *OVERVIEW Moses 8*, pp. 201, 203 for a different interpretation of the term "sons of God" as found in the book of Moses.

16 See *OVERVIEW Moses 8*, pp. 201, 203. Note that some scholars of *1 Enoch* see its story of the Watchers as being a thinly veiled polemic against contemporary temple priests.

17 J. L. Kugel, *Traditions*, pp. 179-185, 194-216; H. Schwartz, *Tree*, pp. 457-458. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 585-590.

18 O. S. Wintermute, *Jubilees*, 4:15, p. 62. J. C. VanderKam, *Book of Jubilees*, 4:15, p. 25: "teach mankind and to do what is just and upright upon the earth." P. S. Alexander, *From Second Adam*, p. 98 regards the idea that the Watchers were "wicked from the start" as a "later reworking of the story" preserved in *Jubilees*.

19 *Ibid.*, 5:2, p. 62.



FIGURE G7-3. *The Revenge of Nauplius*, Gallery of Francis I, Fontainebleau, 1522-1540
Giovanni Battista di Jacopo (Le Rosso), 1494-1540 and Francesco Primaticcio (Primatice), 1504-1570

The fresco depicts Ajax who, “returning from the Trojan war, falls into an ambush. Nauplius, to avenge the death of his son, lit a flame on the reefs. The Greek ships, thinking that they were entering the port, plunged into the rocks, and the men drowned or were beaten down with oars.”¹ For his crime in violating her temple, “Athena caused Ajax to be struck by lightning and his dead body thrown on the rocks. (left).”² The gruesome fate of the drowning victims by a combination of divine action and human cruelty evokes the violent deaths of the wicked in the Flood.

- 1 Y. Jestaz, *La galerie François*, p. 13. The central boatman with the oar is strongly reminiscent of Michelangelo’s depiction of Charon in a like posture in the Last Judgment scene of his Sistine Chapel frescoes. Thanks to Olivier Blaise for this observation.
- 2 J-P Samoyault, *Guide*, p. 92. For an extended discussion, see D. Panofsky *et al.*, *Étude*, pp. 44-48.

Noah’s mission was one that few of us would envy. As Nibley imagines it:

If we fancy Noah riding the sunny seas high, dry, and snug in the Ark, we have not read the record — the long, hopeless struggle against entrenched mass resistance to his preaching, the deepening gloom and desperation of the years leading up to the final debacle, then the unleashed forces of nature, with the family absolutely terrified, weeping and praying “because they were at the gates of death”²⁰ as the Ark was thrown about with the greatest violence by terrible winds and titanic seas. Albright’s suggestion that the flood story goes back to “the tremendous floods which must have accompanied the successive retreats of the glaciers”²¹ is supported by the tradition that the family suffered terribly because of the cold and that Noah on the waters “coughed blood on account of the cold.”²² The Jaredites had only to pass through the tail end of the vast storm cycle of Noah’s day, yet for 344 days they had to cope with “mountain waves” and a wind that “did never cease to blow.”²³ Finally, Noah went forth into a world of utter desolation, as Adam did, to build his altar, call upon God, and try to make a go of it all over again, only to see some of his progeny on short order prefer Satan to God and lose all the rewards that his toil and sufferings had put in their reach.

20 M. J. bin Gorion (Berdichevsky), *Die Sagen*, p. 146: *Auch Noah und seine Söhne schrien und weinten in ihrer Angst und hatten grosse Furcht, denn sie waren der Pforte des Todes nahe* [Noah and his sons cried and wept in anxiety and had great fear, for they were near the gate of death].

21 W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods*, p. 99.

22 H. Freedman *et al.*, *Midrash*, 32:11, 1:256. Cf. J. Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah* 1, 32:10:5, p. 338.

23 Ether 6:6, 8.



FIGURE G7-4. *Light and Color (Goethe's Theory): The Morning After the Deluge - Moses Writing the Book of Genesis*, 1843

Joseph Mallord William Turner, 1775-1851

Turner has been called “the most versatile, successful, and controversial landscape painter of nineteenth-century England. Demonstrating mastery of watercolor, oil painting, and etching, his voluminous output ranges from depictions of local topography to atmospheric renderings of fearsome storms and awe-inspiring terrain. Though profoundly influenced by landscapists and history painters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Turner was an innovator who has been hailed as a forerunner of modernist abstraction.”¹

“In the title of this painting, Turner references the optical experiments of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, whose writings include a study of after-images, the colored spots produced in the eye by staring directly at the sun.”² The figure of a seated Moses can be seen just above the center of the painting.

“While critics accused Turner of extravagance and exaggeration [in his later work], outdoing each other with comparisons of his pictures to lobster salad, soapsuds and whitewash, beetroot or mustard, [John] Ruskin rooted his

analysis (at least at first) in Turner’s truth to nature. He became the standard-bearer of a new generation of Turner admirers, now usually professional, middle class or newly rich, who embraced his work for its modernity.”³

- 1 Joseph Mallord William Turner.
- 2 P. Pfeiffer, Sun.
- 3 Joseph Mallord William Turner.

“Upon the Face of the Waters”

Despite its ungainly shape as a buoyant temple, the Ark is portrayed as floating confidently above the chaos of the great deep. Significantly, the motion of the Ark “upon the face of the waters”²⁴ paralleled the movement of the Spirit of God “upon the face of the waters”²⁵ at the original creation of heaven and earth. The deliberate nature of this parallel is made apparent when we consider that these are the only verses in the Bible that contain the phrase “the face of the waters.” The recurrence of this phrase in the story of the Flood tells us that the presence of the Ark symbolized a return of the same Spirit of God that hovered over the waters at Creation — the Spirit whose previous withdrawal was presaged in Genesis 6:3.²⁶ “Where [that Spirit] is withdrawn, chaos flourishes unchecked.” “Where it hovers, there is order, and chaos is restrained.”²⁷

The keys to understanding the symbolism of the movement of Noah’s ark on the water are found in the creation story. In Moses 2:2, God says: “I caused darkness to come up upon the face of the deep.”²⁸ Unlike Genesis 1:2 where the origin of the darkness is left obscure, Joseph Smith’s translation of the verse tells us that God purposefully introduced the darkness. A corresponding statement in the book of Abraham asserts that the “darkness *reigned* upon the face of the deep,”²⁹ recalling ancient creation accounts that portray darkness not merely as the absence of light but as an active entity in its own right.³⁰

24 Genesis 7:18.

25 Genesis 1:2. See *Endnote G7-4*, p. 272.

26 V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, p. 267. Several Jewish sources describe the similar process of the removal of the *Shekhinah*—representing God’s presence — in various stages and its return at the dedication of the Tabernacle. See, e.g., H. Schwartz, *Tree*, p. 51, 55-56. See also D. J. Larsen, *Enoch and the City of Zion*.

27 V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, p. 267.

28 See *Endnote G7-5*, p. 272.

29 Abraham 4:2.

30 Cf. Isaiah 45:7 and N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 6.



FIGURE G7-5. Stone Chariot, Vitthala Temple Complex, Hampi, Karnataka, India
Kanad Sanyal, 1959-

Originally built in the first half of the 15th century, the Vitthala temple is named for one of the aspects of the lord Vishnu, worshipped locally as the cult deity of the cattle herds.

Since the stone temple chariot represents the vehicle of lord Vishnu, it is not surprising to find it “parked” in front of his temple. Originally it functioned as a shrine containing a statue of Garuda (the eagle god):¹

[The] base platform is carved with mythical battle scenes. Though the chariot is not resting on it, the four giant wheels attached mimic the real life ones complete with the axis shafts and the brakes. A series of concentric floral motifs decorate the wheels. It appears from the marks on the platform, where the wheels rest, the wheels were free to move around the axis. In front of the chariot two elephants are positioned as if they are pulling the chariot.

In fact these elephants were brought from elsewhere and positioned here at a later stage. Originally two horses were carved in that position. The tails and the rear legs of the horses can be still seen just behind these elephant sculptures. A broken stone ladder once gave access to the sanctum is kept between the elephants. You can still spot the marks on the floor and the doorsill where once the ladder stood.

A nineteenth-century photograph attests that there was once a dome like superstructure over the chariot.²

1 Vitalla Temple.

2 On the symbolism of a square chariot with a round superstructure in Huang-Lao cosmography, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, ENDNOTE E-53, p. 717 and ENDNOTE E-206, p. 755.

Far from representing the stirring of evil and opposition, as one may suppose initially, the darkness upon the waters of creation was meant to represent a vital manifestation of God’s goodness. Indeed, Nicolas Wyatt’s careful analysis of Genesis 1:2 concludes that the element of darkness was nothing less than a description of “the veil for the divine glory”³¹ surrounding the Lord as He descended from heaven to earth to begin the work of Creation.³² This is the same imagery we encounter in Psalm 18, where God is portrayed as riding on the cherub throne of His chariot³³ with “darkness under his feet”³⁴ and “his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.”³⁵ Just as “darkness was upon the face of the deep”³⁶ when God descended in the moment immediately preceding the Creation, so darkness surrounded the glorious Ark as Noah moved over the waters in a prelude to the remaking of the world.³⁷ Nibley notes that in such accounts, where torrential waters and thick darkness above and beneath occlude the horizon, “the distinction between earth-travel and sky-travel often disappears.”³⁸

31 N. Wyatt, *Darkness*, p. 96.

32 M. Barker, *Gate*, p. 120. Among the sources cited by Barker in defense of this conclusion are such widespread themes as Philo’s idea of the Logos as the “shadow of God” (Philo, *Interpretation 3*, 3, 96, p. 61) and a version of the creation story that passed through the hands of the Gnostics (R. A. Bullard *et al.*, *Archons*, 95, p. 168).

33 Psalm 18:10.

34 Psalm 18:9. Cf. Exodus 24:15-18.

35 Psalm 18:11. Cf. the wording of the rescue scene in Psalm 18:16: “he drew me out of many waters.”

36 Genesis 1:2.

37 See *Endnote G7-6*, p. 272.

38 H. W. Nibley, *Tenting*, p. 41. Cf. W. Shakespeare, *Winter’s Tale*, 3:3:84-86: “I am not to say it is a sea, for it is now the sky, betwixt the firmament and it you cannot thrust a bodkin’s point.” See *Endnote G7-7*, p. 273.



FIGURE G7-6. *The Ark as a Mini-Replica of Creation*

Here we see the Ark represented as the nucleus of a new world moving “upon the face of the waters.”

In his thought-provoking essay, *Treasures in the Heavens*,¹ Hugh W. Nibley draws on Mandaeen and Gnostic sources to describe the creation of new worlds through a “colonizing process called ‘planting.’” “[T]hose spirits that bring their treasures to a new world are called ‘Plants,’ more rarely ‘seeds,’ of their father or ‘Planter’ in another world.² Every planting goes out from a Treasure House, either as the essential material elements or as the colonizers themselves, who come from a sort of mustering-area called the ‘Treasure-house of Souls.’”

1 H. W. Nibley, *Treasures*.

2 Cf. Adam’s “planting” (E. S. Drower, *Prayerbook*, pp. 283, 286, 290).

In the story of the Ark’s motions upon the waters, however, we are witnessing something graver than a blurring of the distinction between earth-travel and sky-travel. Rather, we can understand that, figuratively speaking, the very sky has fallen. As a consequence the “habitable and culture-orientated world lying between the heavens above and the underworld below, and separating them”³⁹ has vanished.⁴⁰ In the words of *1 Enoch*, “heaven ... fell down upon the earth. And when it fell upon the earth, ... the earth was swallowed up in the great abyss.”⁴¹ After that violent crash, what remained was a jumbled, watery confusion — with one exception: The motion of the Ark “upon the face of the waters,”⁴² like the Spirit of God “upon the face of the waters”⁴³ at Creation, was a portent of the appearance of light and life. Within the Ark, a “mini-replica of Creation,”⁴⁴ were the last vestiges of the original Creation, “an alternative earth for all living creatures,”⁴⁵ “a colony of heaven”⁴⁶ containing seedlings for a second Garden of Eden,⁴⁷ the nucleus of a new world. All these were hidden within a vessel of rescue described in scripture, like the Tabernacle, as a likeness of God’s own traveling pavilion.

39 N. Wyatt, *Darkness*, p. 93.

40 Cf. 2 Peter 3:6: “... the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.”

41 G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 83:3-4, p. 345. Compare with Nickelsburg’s paraphrase of this reversion to “primordial chaos”: “Heaven’s canopy — stretched out at creation to separate the waters above from the deep — is torn off and hurled onto the earth, which collapses and sinks back into the abyss” (*ibid.*, p. 349 n. 3-4).

42 Genesis 7:18.

43 Genesis 1:2.

44 E. A. Harper, *You Shall Make*, p. 54. Cf. L. M. Morales, *Tabernacle Pre-Figured*, pp. 151-154. Morales argues that the “building and filling of the Ark ... exhibit a correspondence with the ‘building’ and filling of the cosmos” at the time of Creation (*ibid.*, p. 152).

45 E. A. Harper, *You Shall Make*, p. 54.

46 L. M. Morales, *Tabernacle Pre-Figured*, p. 154.

47 Cf. H. W. Nibley, *Treasures*, p. 185.

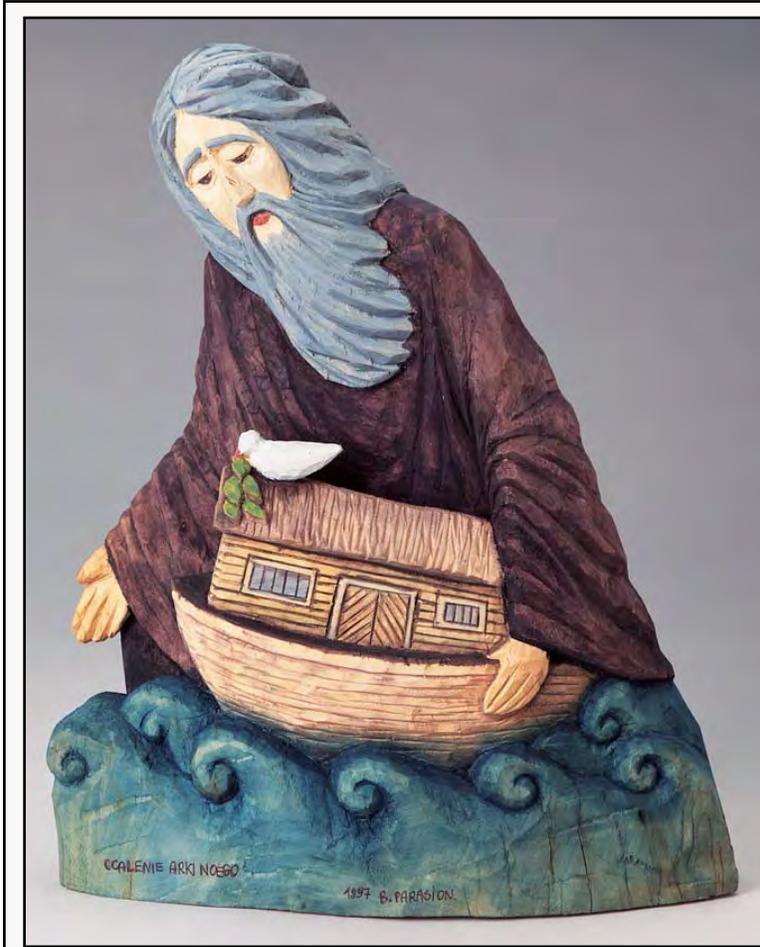


FIGURE G7-7. Noah's Ark
Boleslaw Parasion, 1950-

This sculpture is drawn from former LDS mission president Walter Whipple's large collection of Polish folk art. It "depicts a thoughtful God guiding the Ark with his hands."¹ Although the Bible does not mention explicitly God's role during the Flood, the scene shown here is described in *1 Enoch* 67:2: "I will put my hand upon [the Ark] and protect it."² George Nickelsburg conjectures that "God's placing a protective hand on the Ark corresponds either to Genesis 7:16 ("and YHWH shut him in"), or to the covering of the Ark mentioned in Genesis 6:16; 8:13, or both."³ However, a better parallel is found in the book of Moses: "Enoch saw that Noah built an ark; and that the Lord smiled upon it, and held it in his own hand."⁴

- 1 D. R. Dant, *Polish*, p. 91.
- 2 G. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 67:2, p. 273.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 288 n. 2a-c.
- 4 Moses 7:43.

Just as the Spirit of God patiently brooded⁴⁸ over the great deep at Creation, and just as "the longsuffering of God waited... while the ark was a preparing," so the indefatigable Noah endured the long brooding of the Ark over the slowly receding waters of the Deluge.⁴⁹

Car tout ce qui vivait sur terre fut détruit.
L'arche close flottait sur cet océan morne;
Au hasard, elle allait vers l'horizon sans borne,
Au milieu de l'horreur d'une éternelle nuit.⁵⁰

48 See *Endnote G7-9*, p. 273.

49 See *Endnote G7-8*, p. 273.

50 Saint-Saëns, *Le Déluge*, 2:
For all that once lived had now perished in fright.
Safely the Ark on bleak sea did careen;
To and fro drifting toward horizon unseen,
Amid the dark horror of eternal night.

See S. D. Long, *Wicked Hearts* for an exploration of the reception of the Flood narrative in music in Saint-Saëns's masterpiece and in Donizetti's *Il diluvio universale*.

Genesis 7: Text and Commentary

<p style="text-align: center;">CHAPTER 7</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>NOAH COMMANDED (PP. 261-263)</i></p> <p>AND ^athe Lord said unto Noah, ^bCome thou and all thy house into the ark; for ^{c,d}thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.</p> <p>2 Of every clean beast ^athou shalt take to thee by sevens, ^bthe male and his female: and of beasts that are ^cnot clean by two, the male and his female.</p> <p>3 Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; ^ato keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.</p> <p>4 ^aFor yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth ^bforty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.</p> <p>5 And ^aNoah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him.</p> <p>6 And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>NOAH ENTERS THE ARK (P. 263)</i></p> <p>7 ¶ And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.</p> <p>8 Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the</p>	<p>earth,</p> <p>9 There ^awent in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.</p> <p>10 And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>THE FLOOD BEGINS (PP. 263-264)</i></p> <p>11 ¶ ^aIn the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the ^bfountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.</p> <p>12 And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.</p> <p>13 ^aIn the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark;</p> <p>14 ^aThey, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, ^bevery bird of every sort.</p> <p>15 And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life.</p> <p>16 And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and ^athe Lord shut him in.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>THE WATERS PREVAIL AND ALL LIFE PERISHES (PP. 264-266)</i></p> <p>17 And ^athe flood was forty days upon the earth; and ^bthe waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth.</p> <p>18 And ^athe waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark ^bwent upon the face of the waters.</p> <p>19 And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and ^aall the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.</p> <p>20 Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.</p> <p>21 And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and ^aevery man:</p> <p>22 All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.</p> <p>23 And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and ^athey were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.</p> <p>24 And ^athe waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.</p>
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1 And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

- 1 a **the Lord said.** The account of the Flood alternates between the use of “Lord” (Hebrew *Yahweh*) and “God” (Hebrew *’elohim*) in referring to Deity. Most modern scholars see this (along with other textual features such as repetition and verbal parallelism) as evidence for the use of two primary sources (designated *J* for *Jahwist* and *P* for *Priestly*) in the composition of the biblical story of the Flood.¹ Other scholars, while not necessarily denying the likelihood of multiple sources behind the Genesis account, focus on the harmonious structure of the whole in the account as we have it today.² Westermann³ wisely observes:

When commentators exegete the flood narratives of *J* and *P* separately, as they generally do, there is danger that justice will not be done to the individual narrative form as it has come down to us. One cannot avoid the fact that *R*’s composite narrative has something important of its own to say, and that the scope of its effect belongs neither to *J* nor to *P* but to *R*.⁴

See COMMENTARY Moses 8 p. 278 for an overall perspective on the structure of the Flood story.

With respect to the use of the two divine names, rabbinical tradition, in an alternative explanation, associates “God” with the attribute of Justice and “Lord” with the attribute of Mercy.⁵ Approaching the problem in a more nuanced way, Cassuto⁶ has formulated a set of principles that he sees as governing the use of the generic (God) and specific (Lord) designations of Deity in Israel and the ancient Near East. In brief, “God” is used when referred to in His character as the source of life and creation, in abstract philosophical conceptions of the scholars, and with respect to His transcendental qualities; “Lord” is used when referring to Him as the source of law for the people of Israel, in the popular conceptions of the people, and with respect to His personal character and direct relationship to people and nature.⁷ “Sometimes, of course,” Cassuto admits, “it happens that two opposite rules apply together and come in conflict with each other; then, as logic demands, the rule that is more prevalent to the primary purport of the relevant passage prevails.”⁸

- b **Come thou and all thy house into the ark.** This commandment was anticipated in Genesis 6:18. The corresponding command for disembarkation is found in Genesis 8:16.
- c **thee have I seen righteous before me.** Wenham⁹ sees this phrase as the end of a “long-range chiasmus” between Genesis 6:9, 11 and 6:12, 7:1:

6:9	Noah was righteous ... among his contemporaries
6:11	The earth was ruined
6:12	God saw the earth was ruined
7:1	The Lord said ... “you have I seen are righteous in this generation”

- d **thee.** This is given as “thee only” in JST OT2.¹⁰

1 E.g., C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, pp. 395-406, 424-425, 427-431, 434-436. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, pp. 133-134 for a brief discussion of similar issues in the story of Creation.

2 E.g., U. Cassuto, *Documentary*; V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, pp. 285ff; I. M. Kikawada et al., *Before Abraham*; L. M. Morales, *Tabernacle Pre-Figured*, pp. 121-192; J. H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, pp. 86-87; G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, pp. 167-169.

3 C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, p. 431.

4 See *Endnote G7-10*, p. 274.

5 R. M. Zlotowitz et al., *Bereishis*, 1:239-240.

6 U. Cassuto, *Documentary*, pp. 15-41; U. Cassuto, *Adam to Noah*, pp. 85-88; U. Cassuto, *Noah to Abraham*, pp. 35-36.

7 U. Cassuto, *Adam to Noah*, p. 87. V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, p. 286 asserts that “Lord” also occurs in passages where Deity is thematic.

8 U. Cassuto, *Documentary*, p. 32.

9 G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p. 176.

10 S. H. Faulring et al., *Original Manuscripts*, p. 626.

2 Of every clean beast **thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female:** and of beasts that are **not clean** by two, the male and his female.

3 Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; **to keep seed alive** upon the face of all the earth.

4 **For yet seven days,** and I will cause it to rain upon the earth **forty days and forty nights;** and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

5 **And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him.**

- 2 a **thou shalt take to thee by sevens.** Earlier Noah had been told to take pairs of animals aboard, with no reference to clean or not clean.¹¹ Hamilton sees this verse as part of a “final and more detailed set of instructions” rather than an inconsistency caused by the awkward integration of the *J* and *P* sources: “The contradiction disappears ... if we read *shenayim* in 6:19-20 as a collective for ‘pairs’; one cannot form a plural of a word that is dual. Thus Genesis 6:19-20 is the general statement. Noah is to bring aboard pairs of animals. Specifically the animal population is to consist of seven pairs of clean and one pair of unclean.”¹² This is in order that Noah later may be able to offer sacrifice of the clean animals.¹³ “Again it is the centrality of the idea of a covenant relationship that lies behind the author’s work.”¹⁴
- b **the male and his female.** Literally, “man and his wife.” “The two nouns *ish* (man), and *ishah* (woman, wife), originally designated male and female of human beings, but were later applied to the male and female of animals as well.”¹⁵
- c **not clean.** Jewish exegetes stress the fact that God said “not clean” rather than uttering the odious term for “unclean.” For example, R. Yudan commented: “We find that the Holy One, blessed be He, used a circumlocution of three words so as not to make use of the word ‘unclean’ with His own mouth.”¹⁶
- 3 a **to keep seed alive.** The Hebrew term for seed “means both semen and the offspring that is its product. It is a very concrete way of conceiving propagation and the survival of a line.”¹⁷
- 4 a **For yet seven days.** Jewish tradition holds that the Flood was postponed by God to allow a proper mourning period for Methuselah’s recent death.¹⁸ The superfluous term “yet” was explained by the idea that there would be “an additional grace period of several days beyond the original period which God allotted in the hope that [the wicked] would repent.”¹⁹ There was to be no question that the Lord had given ample time for any who wished to be saved.
- b **forty days and forty nights.** Rashi equated this time period to the amount of time it took for a fetus to be formed after conception, stating that Noah’s wicked generation had “behaved depravedly by troubling their Fashioner to fashion the forms of fetuses of *mamzerim* [i.e., children born of an incestuous or adulterous relationship].”²⁰
- 5 a **Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him.** Wenham²¹ summarizes verses 5-16 as a “narrative that relates the complete and total obedience of Noah and the animals

11 Genesis 6:19-20.

12 V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, p. 287.

13 J. H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, p. 85; R. M. Zlotowitz *et al.*, *Bereishis*, 1:242-243.

14 J. H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, p. 85.

15 Rambam, *Moreh* 1:6, cited in R. M. Zlotowitz *et al.*, *Bereishis*, 1:243.

16 J. Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah* 1, 32:4:1, p. 332.

17 R. Alter, *Five Books*, p. 43 n. 3.

18 Rashi, *Genesis Commentary*, 1:73 n. 7:4; R. M. Zlotowitz *et al.*, *Bereishis*, 1:244.

19 *Ibid.*, 1:244.

20 Rashi, *Genesis Commentary*, 1:73-74 n. 7:4.

21 G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p. 177.

5 *And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him.*

6 *And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.*

7 *And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.*

8 *Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth,*

9 *There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.*

10 *And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.*

11 *In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.*

12 *And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.*

to God's command to enter the Ark and the onset of the Flood. The fulness of description, the use of epic apposition, and repeated mentions of the date give this scene weight and solemnity. The day when the old creation died is described with a gravity befitting the occasion. The threefold refrain 'as God (the Lord) had commanded him' emphasizes the other central fact: Noah's fidelity to God led to his salvation."

6 a **Noah was six hundred years old.** Hamilton²² comments: "That Noah was six hundred years old when the Flood began tells us that his sons, or at least one of them, would be one hundred years old.²³ Apparently Noah fathered no additional children after the Flood, although he still had about one third of his life left.²⁴ In the post-Flood covenant Noah receives abundant promises from God, but more progeny is not among those promises."

9 a **went in two and two.** "Ramban's view is that only two of each species came by themselves. Noah had to bring the other six pairs of the clean species."²⁵

11 a **In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month.** Opinion is divided as to whether the New Year fell in the spring or the fall.²⁶ Scholars have encountered difficult chronological issues in the Flood story.²⁷

b **fountains of the great deep ... windows of heaven.** Consistent with ancient conceptions of cosmology,²⁸ the waters of the Flood were seen as originating both from above and below.

broken up. Literally, "split" (Hebrew *baqa*). By way of contrast to *Enuma Elish*,²⁹ where *order* is created by bisecting Ti'amat, the Bible account depicts the creation of *chaos* by the splitting of the great deep (*tehom rabba*). "In other words, the themes are reversed. Genesis 7:11 may be cited, then, as a confirming illustration of Yahweh's lordship over the waters. They are His to release or to control."³⁰

22 V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, p. 288.

23 See Genesis 5:32.

24 Genesis 9:28-29.

25 A. J. Rosenberg, *Mikraot*, p. 105 n. 7:9.

26 N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 55.

27 See, e.g., U. Cassuto, *Noah to Abraham*, p. 83; N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 376; G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, pp. 179-181; C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, pp. 432-433.

28 See, e.g., J. H. Walton, *Genesis*, pp. 12-13.

29 S. Dalley, *Epic*, 4, pp. 253-255.

30 V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, p. 293. See Psalm 74:15 and Isaiah 51:10.

13 **In the selfsame day** entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark;

14 **They, and every beast** after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, **every bird of every sort**.

15 And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life.

16 And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and **the Lord shut him in**.

17 And **the flood was forty days upon the earth**; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth.

- 13 a **In the selfsame day.** Wenham³¹ translates this phrase as “On this very day” and notes that this “fairly rare phrase” is “used to stress the memorableness of a particular occasion, e.g., Abraham’s circumcision,³² the Exodus,³³ Moses’ death.”³⁴ He also notes that the repetition of the entry into the Ark, here with additional details, gives “the whole occasion ‘a festive tone’³⁵ as befits an act which marks one of the turning points of human history”:

Noah’s great act of obedience not merely saved himself but made possible the new world order, whose safety would be guaranteed by covenant. These verses thus portray the founders of the new humanity and new animal kingdom processing in a double column into the Ark. As each group embarks, its name is called and recorded for posterity.

The entry by pairs emphasizes the orderly nature of the male-female relationships of this chosen group in contrast to the depravity of the men and women of Noah’s generation.

- 14 a **They, and every beast.** Verses 14 and 15 are omitted in their entirety in JST OT1.³⁶
- b **every bird of every sort.** Literally, “birds of every type of wing.”³⁷ This seemingly superfluous detail was added, according to Rashi, so as to make sure grasshoppers were included.³⁸ No creature was to be forgotten.
- 16 a **the Lord shut him in.** In *Gilgamesh* and *Atrahasis*, it is the flood hero who shuts his own door.³⁹ By way of contrast, the biblical phrase points to “the divine director behind the operation.”⁴⁰
- 17 a **the flood was forty days upon the earth.** This phrase describes the first heavy phase of the deluge. “The absence of any personal names [in the verses that follow] apart from a parenthetical mention of Noah in v. 23, enhances the atmosphere of desolation.”⁴¹ The slowing of the pace in these verses “marks the climax of a narrative.”⁴²

31 G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p. 181. Cf. C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, pp. 436-437.

32 Genesis 17:23, 26.

33 Exodus 12:41, 51.

34 Deuteronomy 32:48.

35 Indeed, Westerman asserts that the phrase “On this very day” specifically “seems to refer to a day of remembrance or a feast day” (C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, p. 436).

36 S. H. Faulring et al., *Original Manuscripts*, p. 113.

37 A. J. Rosenberg, *Mikraot*, pp. 105-106 n. 7:14.

38 Rashi, *Genesis Commentary*, 1:76 n. 7:14. See U. Cassuto, *Noah to Abraham*, pp. 90-91 for an opposing view.

39 S. Dalley, *Atrahasis*, 3:2, p. 31; A. George, *Gilgamesh*, 11:94, p. 91.

40 G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p. 182.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 182.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 183.

17 And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and **the waters increased**, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth.

18 And **the waters prevailed**, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters.

19 And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and **all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered**.

- b **the waters increased.** Literally, “the waters multiplied.” Wenham⁴³ calls this phrase “a baleful echo of the injunction given to the first creatures to be fruitful and multiply.⁴⁴ As if to reinforce this echo, the word appears again in v. 18.”
- 18 a **the waters prevailed.** “A stage further. The waters do not merely multiply greatly; they triumph.”⁴⁵
- b **went upon the face of the waters.** Sarna translates this as “drifted upon the waters.”⁴⁶ The biblical account makes it clear that the Ark “was not shaped like a ship and it had no oars,” “accentuating the fact that Noah’s deliverance was not dependent on navigating skills, [but rather happened] entirely by God’s will,”⁴⁷ its movement solely determined by “the thrust of the water and wind.”⁴⁸

Significantly, the motion of the Ark “upon the face of the waters”⁴⁹ paralleled the movement of the Spirit of God “upon the face of the waters”⁵⁰ at the original creation of heaven and earth. The deliberate nature of this parallel is made clear when we consider that these are the only two verses in the Bible that contain the phrase “the face of the waters.” In short, the recurrence of this phrase in the story of the Flood tells us that the presence of the Ark symbolized a return of the same Spirit of God that hovered over the waters at Creation — the Spirit whose previous withdrawal was presaged in Genesis 6:3. “Where [that Spirit] is withdrawn, chaos flourishes unchecked.” “Where it hovers, there is order, and chaos is restrained.”⁵¹

- 19 a **all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.** Bradley⁵² explains:

The fundamental question is whether the Noachian flood was global or local. The terminology used in Genesis 6-9 seems to favor a global flood... [However, t]he use of such biblical language in other stories may help us to understand the intention here. In Genesis 41:56, we are told, “The famine was spread over all the face of the earth.” We normally interpret this famine as devastating the lands of the ancient Near East around Egypt and do not assume that American Indians and Australian Aborigines came to buy grain from Joseph. 1 Kings 10:24 states that “the whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart.” Surely Inca Indians from South America or Maoris from New Zealand had not heard of Solomon and sought his audience.

The Hebrew word *eretz* used in Genesis 7:19 is usually translated “earth” or “world” but does not generally refer to the entire planet. Depending on the context, it is often translated “country” or ‘land’ to make this clear. References to the entire planet are found in Genesis 1:1; 2:1; and 14:22, for example. However, more typical references might be Genesis 1:10; 2:11; or 2:13, where *eretz* is translated ‘land.’ In Genesis 12:1, Abram was told to leave his *eretz*. He was obviously not told to leave the planet but rather to leave his country... A final helpful comparison to obtain a proper interpretation of Genesis 7:19 involves Deuteronomy 2:25, which talks about all the nations “under the heavens” being fearful of the Israelites. Obviously, all nations “under the heavens” was not intended to mean all on planet Earth.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 182.

44 Moses 2:22, 28.

45 G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p. 182.

46 N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 55.

47 R. M. Zlotowitz *et al.*, *Bereishis*, p. 230. Cf. U. Cassuto, *Noah to Abraham*, pp. 60-61.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

49 Genesis 7:18.

50 Genesis 1:2.

51 V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, p. 267.

52 W. Bradley, *Why*, pp. 177-178.

20 Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.

21 And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and **every man**:

22 All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.

23 And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and **they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive**, and they that were with him in the ark.

24 And **the waters prevailed upon the earth** an hundred and fifty days.

- 21 a **every man**. Hamilton⁵³ observes: “In the preservation notice we were told first about the salvation of human beings, and then [about] that of the animals. In the death notice we are told first about the loss of animal life and then [about] the loss of human life. The Hebrew of v. 21 takes eight words to describe the loss of animal life, but only two words to describe the demise of human life.” “Thus the verse ends on a note, as it were, of bitter sorrow.”⁵⁴
- 23 a **they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive**. “Life did not simply die. It was wiped out. The threats of 6:7 and 7:15 were fulfilled. Only Noah and those with him in the Ark survived. The contrast between those wiped out *mhh* and Noah *nh* is deliberately highlighted by using the similar verb with the proper name.”⁵⁵ “The survivors do indeed represent a ray of hope for the future, but for the moment they are but a meager and woeful remnant.”⁵⁶
- 24 a **the waters prevailed upon the earth**. The chapter ends “with an awe-inspiring picture of the mighty waters covering the entire earth. We see water everywhere, as though the world had reverted to its primeval state at the dawn of Creation, when the waters of the deep submerged everything. Nothing remained of the teeming life that had burst forth upon the earth. Only a tiny point appears on the face of the terrible waters: the Ark that preserves between its planks the seeds of life for the future. But it is a mere atom and is almost lost in the endless expanse of water that was spread over the face of the whole earth. A melancholy scene that is liable to fill the reader with despair. What will happen to this atom of life?”⁵⁷

53 V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, p. 297.

54 U. Cassuto, *Noah to Abraham*, p. 95.

55 G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p. 183.

56 U. Cassuto, *Noah to Abraham*, p. 97.

57 *Ibid.*

Gleanings

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Nahum M. Sarna: The Flood and Creation¹

The uncompromisingly moral tenor and didactic purpose of the Genesis Flood story have influenced its literary artistry. Because humanly wrought evil is perceived to be the undoing of God's creativity, numerous elements in the story are artful echoes of the Creation narrative. Thus the divine decision to wipe out the human race employs the same two verbs that are used in the original Creation, but transposed in order to symbolize the reversal of the process.² The Deluge itself is brought about by the release and virtual reuniting of the two halves of the primordial waters that had been separated in the beginning.³ The classification of animal life in 6:20 and 7:14 corresponds to that in 1:11-12, 21, 24-25. The provisioning of food in 6:21 depends upon 1:29-30. Noah is the first man to be born after the death of Adam, according to the chronology of 5:28-29, and he becomes a second Adam, the second father of humanity. Both personages beget three sons, one of whom turns out to be degenerate. Noah's ark is the matrix of a new creation, and, like Adam in the Garden of Eden, he lives in harmony with the animals. The role of the wind in sweeping back the flood waters recalls the wind from God in 1:2. The rhythm of nature established in 1:14 is suspended during the Flood and resumed thereafter, in 8:22. Finally, the wording of the divine blessing in 9:7 repeats that in 1:28, just as the genealogical lists of the Table of Nations in chapter 10 parallel those of 4:17-26 and 5:1-32 that follow the Creation story. In both cases the lineage of the human race is traced back to a common ancestry.

Morris S. Petersen: The Exact Nature of the Flood Is Not Known⁴

The Old Testament records a flood that was just over fifteen cubits (sometimes assumed to be about twenty-six feet) deep and covered the entire landscape: "And all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered."⁵ Scientifically this account leaves many questions unanswered, especially how a measurable depth could cover mountains. Elder John A. Widtsoe, writing in 1943, offered this perspective:⁶

The fact remains that the exact nature of the flood is not known. We set up assumptions, based upon our best knowledge, but can go no further. We should remember that when inspired

1 N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, pp. 49-50.

2 Genesis 6:7. Cf. Genesis 1:26-27.

3 Genesis 7:11. Cf. Genesis 1:1, 6-7.

4 M. S. Petersen, *Earth*, 2:432.

5 Genesis 7:19.

6 J. A. Widtsoe, *Evidences*, p. 127.

writers deal with historical incidents they relate that which they have seen or that which may have been told them, unless indeed the past is opened to them by revelation.

The details in the story of the flood are undoubtedly drawn from the experiences of the writer. Under a downpour of rain, likened to the opening of the heavens, a destructive torrent twenty-six feet deep or deeper would easily be formed. The writer of Genesis made a faithful report of the facts known to him concerning the flood. In other localities the depth of the water might have been more or less. In fact, the details of the flood are not known to us.

B. Kent Harrison: We See No Evidence of a Worldwide Flood⁷

We see no evidence of a worldwide flood. In fact, we see overwhelming evidence that there was not such a (recent) event. Geologists know the geologic effects of flooding, as for example in the scablands in the state of Washington that resulted from the emptying of Lake Missoula. No such topography is seen on large scale. A possible explanation is that the Flood was a relatively local event.

Walter Bradley: Evidence for a Local Flood⁸

The fundamental question is whether the Noachian flood was global or local. The terminology used in Genesis 6-9 seems to favor a global flood... [However, t]he use of such biblical language in other stories may help us to understand the intention here. In Genesis 41:56, we are told, “The famine was spread over all the face of the earth.” We normally interpret this famine as devastating the lands of the ancient Near East around Egypt and do not assume that American Indians and Australian Aborigines came to buy grain from Joseph. 1 Kings 10:24 states that “the whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart.” Surely Inca Indians from South America or Maoris from New Zealand had not heard of Solomon and sought his audience.

The Hebrew word *eretz* used in Genesis 7:19 is usually translated “earth” or “world” but does not generally refer to the entire planet. Depending on the context, it is often translated “country” or ‘land’ to make this clear. References to the entire planet are found in Genesis 1:1; 2:1; and 14:22, for example. However, more typical references might be Genesis 1:10; 2:11; or 2:13, where *eretz* is translated ‘land.’ In Genesis 12:1, Abram was told to leave his *eretz*. He was obviously not told to leave the planet but rather to leave his country... A final helpful comparison to obtain a proper interpretation of Genesis 7:19 involves Deuteronomy 2:25, which talks about all the nations “under the heavens” being fearful of the Israelites. Obviously, all nations “under the heavens” was not intended to mean all on planet Earth.

The Hebrew word translated “covered” in Genesis 7:19 is *kasah*. It can mean “residing upon,” “running over,” or “falling upon.” Twenty feet of water running over or falling upon the mountains (or hills) is quite different from that amount residing upon them, although either event could destroy human and animal life in its path...

If the entire Mesopotamian valley was flooded and the water receded slowly, then Noah might have seen only water, with distant mountain ranges being over the horizon. God’s use of wind in Genesis 8:1 to cause the flood to subside would be reasonable for a local flooding of this huge valley. It would not make sense for a flood that left water to a depth of thirty thousand feet, sufficient to cover Mount Everest. Genesis 8:4 indicates that the Ark came to

⁷ B. K. Harrison, *Truth*, p. 173.

⁸ W. Bradley, *Why*, pp. 177-179.

rest on the hills or mountains of Ararat, not specifically Mount Ararat, which is seventeen thousand feet tall. This complex mountain range extends north and east of Mount Ararat down to the foothills skirting the Mesopotamian plain. If the Ark had landed near the top of Mount Ararat, it is difficult to imagine how Noah and his family as well as the animals would have been able to descend to the base of the mountain, given the considerable difficulty mountain climbers have today attempting to reach the locations where the Ark is thought (I believe, incorrectly) to have landed.

Further evidence for a local flood is found in Genesis 8:5, where it is noted that the water receded until the tenth month when the tops of the mountains (or hills) became visible for the first time. The reference here seems to be what Noah could see, not the entire world. In Genesis 8:11, the dove returns with an olive leaf. Since olive trees don't grow at higher elevations, a flood that covered all the mountains would not give this type of evidence of receding.

One can estimate the total amount of water that would be needed to cover all the mountains on the face of the earth and compare this to the total water reserves that we know of on planet Earth, both in lakes and oceans and in subterranean aquifers. A flood that covered all the mountains on earth would require 4.5 times the total water resources that exist on planet Earth.

Hugh W. Nibley: Understanding the Flood From Noah's Perspective⁹

The Latter-day Saints have four basic [Creation] stories, those found in the Bible, the Book of Moses, the Book of Abraham, and the temple—each seen from a different angle, like the four Gospels but not conflicting if each is put into its proper context. And what is that context? One vitally important principle that everyone seems to have ignored until now is the consideration that everything is presented to us in these accounts through the eyes or from the point of view of, the individual observers who tell the story. Historians long ago came to realize that the boast of German *Geschichtswissenschaft*—to report what happened at all times “*wie es eigentlich geschah*,” the whole truth, the complete event in holistic perfection as it would be seen by God — is a philosopher's pipe dream ...

The Latter-day Saints, inheritors of the Christian version of this teaching, are constantly converting statements of limited application to universal or at least sweeping generalities. To illustrate, I was told as a child that the Rocky Mountains, the Appalachians, and the Andes all came into existence overnight during the great upheavals of nature that took place at the time of the Crucifixion—an absurdity that plays into the hands of critics of the Book of Mormon. But what we find in the 3 Nephi account when we read it carefully is a few sober, factual, eyewitness reports describing an earthquake of 8-plus on the Richter scale in a very limited area. Things that appear unlikely, impossible, or paradoxical from one point of view often make perfectly good sense from another. The *Nautical Almanac* gives the exact time of sunrise and sunset for every time of the year, yet astronauts know that the sun neither rises nor sets except from a particular point of view, the time of the event being strictly dependent on the exact location. From that point of view and that only, it is strictly correct and scientific to say that the sun does rise and set. Just so, the apparently strange and extravagant phenomena described in the scriptures are often correct descriptions of

⁹ H. W. Nibley, *Before Adam*, pp. 64-66. See D. E. Jeffery, *Noah's Flood* and C. M. White *et al.*, *Noachian Flood Story* for considered LDS perspectives on reconciling scientific findings with the Genesis flood story. See also M. S. Petersen, *Earth*, p. 432; J. A. Widtsoe, *Flood*.

what would have appeared to a person in a particular situation. You and I have never been in those situations. To describe what he sees to people who have never seen anything like it, the writer must reach for metaphors and similes: “His eyes were *as* a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white *like* the pure snow . . . his voice was *as* the sound of the rushing of great waters.”¹⁰ There was no fire, no snow, no rushing waters, but that is as near as Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon could come to telling us what they experienced when “the veil was taken from [their] minds, and the eyes of [their] understanding were opened!”¹¹ They were reporting as well as they could what they had seen from a vantage point on which we have never stood.

A recent study points out that the charge that Abraham’s story in the Bible must be fictitious because no one could know the highly intimate things reported there — nobody, Haming admits, unless it were Abraham himself. The earliest Abraham books are supposed to be autobiographies, and the story told from his point of view makes perfectly good sense. So with Noah in the ark. From where he was, “the whole earth”¹² was covered with water as far as he could see; after things had quieted down for 150 days and the Ark ground to a halt, it was still three months before he could see any mountain tops. But what were conditions in other parts of the world? If Noah knew that, he would not have sent forth messenger birds to explore. The flood as he described it is what he saw of it. “He sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground.”¹³ Couldn’t he see for himself? Not where the dove went. It was not until seven days later that he sent it out again; and after flying all day, the bird came back with a green leaf fetched from afar; “so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.”¹⁴ Still he waited another seven days. When the dove did not return, Noah had his answer. In some distant place, trees were bearing and there was birdfood to be found. But not where Noah was. All that time he had not dared to open up.

Note that the author does not fall into the literary trap of telling where the birds went and what they saw. That became a standard theme of early Oriental literature, faithfully reflected in the classical stories of the sea-eagle and the hoopoe. All Noah tells us is what he saw of the birds and the flood. The rain continued at least in spots, for there was that magnificent rainbow. Why do Christians insist on calling it the first rainbow, just because it is the first mentioned? Who says that water drops did not refract light until that day? Well, my old Sunday School teacher, for one, used to say it. The rainbow, like the sunrise, is strictly the product of a point of view, for which the beholder must stand in a particular place while it is raining in another particular place and the sun is in a third particular place, if he is to see it at all. It is a lesson in relativity.

Parley P. Pratt: Not a Spiritual But a Physical Flood¹⁵

It was well for Noah that he was not well-versed in the spiritualizing systems of modern divinity; for under their benighted influence he would never have believed that so marvelous a prophecy would have had a literal meaning and fulfillment. No, he would have been told that the Flood meant a spiritual flood, and the Ark a spiritual ark, and the moment he

10 D&C 110:3, emphasis added.

11 D&C 110:1.

12 Genesis 8:9.

13 Genesis 8:8.

14 Genesis 8:11.

15 P. P. Pratt, *Voice*, p. 4.

thought otherwise he would have been set down as a fanatic, knave, or fool. But it was so — that he believed the prophecy literally. Here then is a fair sample of foreknowledge, for all the world who did not possess it perished by the Flood.

Leon Kass: The Ark Is a Microcosm of the Projected New Earthly Order¹⁶

The Ark is a microcosm of the projected new earthly order. Afloat amidst the watery chaos, it bears male and female of every species of terrestrial and avian life, in order to begin again. The complete variety of living forms is represented: the new order preserves not only the phenomenon of life but also the many-splendored kinds that make an articulated world. In charge of preservation and order is the human animal, guardian of all animal life. Will he be willing and able to maintain order and to preserve life? We should not underestimate the obstacles to his doing so. For life as such always poses a danger to life, and the human animal threatens it most of all.

Hugh W. Nibley: Charity Toward All Creatures¹⁷

There is a tradition that Melchizedek, instructing Abraham in the things of the priesthood, explained to him that Noah earned his blessing by his charity to the animals, recalling how in the Ark, “We did not sleep because all night long we were setting food before this one and before that one.” Taking this lesson to heart, Abraham himself made a sort of Garden of Eden near Hebron, and there practiced charity toward all creatures that thus he might become “a possessor of heaven and earth.”¹⁸

William Blake: A Dog Starv'd At His Master's Gate¹⁹

A dog starv'd at his master's gate
 Predicts the ruin of the state.
 A horse misused upon the road
 Calls to heaven for human blood ...
 Kill not the moth nor butterfly,
 For the last judgment draweth nigh.

¹⁶ L. R. Kass, *Wisdom*, p. 169.

¹⁷ Nibley, *Dominion*, p. 9.

¹⁸ See Genesis 14:19, 22.

¹⁹ From W. Blake, *Auguries of Innocence*.

Endnotes

- G7-1** Recognizing that even the most ostensibly permanent temple complexes are best viewed only as way stations, Nibley generalized the concept of mobile sanctuaries to include all current earthly structures:¹

The most wonderful thing about Jerusalem the Holy City is its mobility: at one time it is taken up to heaven and at another it descends to earth or even makes a rendezvous with the earthly Jerusalem at some point in space halfway between. In this respect both the city and the temple are best thought of in terms of a tent, ... at least until the time comes when the saints "will no longer have to use a movable tent"² according to the early [Apostolic] Fathers, who get the idea from the New Testament ...³ It is now fairly certain, moreover, that the great temples of the ancients were not designed to be dwelling-houses of deity but rather stations or landing-places, fitted with inclined ramps, stairways, passageways, waiting-rooms, elaborate systems of gates, and so forth, for the convenience of traveling divinities, whose sacred boats and wagons stood ever ready to take them on their endless junkets from shrine to shrine and from festival to festival through the cosmic spaces. The Great Pyramid itself, we are now assured, is the symbol not of immovable stability but of constant migration and movement between the worlds; and the ziggurats of Mesopotamia, far from being immovable, are reproduced in the seven-stepped throne of the thundering sky-wagon.

- G7-2** Appropriately translated by Sparks *et al.* from the Greek as "Tabernacle."⁴ Eden surmises:⁵

No doubt the historical model closest to this is the *apadâna* of the Persian sovereign, the pavilion of the royal palace in which the King of kings sat in his throne to receive his subjects. In some texts of the Jewish tradition, the link which ties the description of the divine audience room to the earthly royal one is clearly shown. For instance, in the *Pirkei De Rebbe Eliezer*, an early medieval Midrash, we can read:⁶ "[God] let Adam into his *apadâna*, as it is written: 'And put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to keep it.'"⁷

- G7-3** Some Christians also came to view this Psalm as foreshadowing the Incarnation.⁸ Noah's ark was sometimes seen in a similar fashion: "The Ark was a type of the Mother of God with Christ and the Church in her womb (*Akath*). The flood-waters were a type of baptism, in which we are saved."⁹

- G7-4** The singular rather than the plural term for "water" appears in JST OT2, the source of Moses 2:2.¹⁰ However, "waters" (Hebrew *mayim*) the original term in Genesis, is used in JST OT1 as well as in the later translation of the book of Abraham. This raises the possibility that the change in OT2 was made erroneously or on John Whitmer's initiative rather than the Prophet's.¹¹

- G7-5** Although Walton credited Joseph Smith's explicit use of the Hiphil-like term "caused" in the book of Abraham¹² to the influence of the Prophet's Hebrew teacher,¹³ Moses 2:2 provides a clear instance where a similar construction involving the same verb was explicitly added in the Joseph Smith Translation in 1830,¹⁴ five years before Hebrew study began in Kirtland.

- G7-6** Cf. M. Meyer, *Secret Book of John*, 29:135-136, p. 130:

1 H. W. Nibley, *Tenting*, pp. 42-43.

2 Origen, *John*, 10:23, p. 404. "The pitching of the tent outside the camp represents God's remoteness from the impure world" (H. W. Nibley, *Tenting*, p. 79 n. 40).

3 E.g., "John 1:14 reads literally, 'the logos was made flesh and pitched his tent [*eskenosen*] among us'; and after the Resurrection the Lord 'camps' with his disciples, Acts 1:4. At the Transfiguration Peter prematurely proposed setting up three tents for taking possession (Matthew 17:4; Mark 9:5; Luke 9:33)" (*ibid.*, p. 80 n. 41).

4 J. N. Sparks *et al.*, *Orthodox Study Bible*, Psalm 17 (18):12, p. 691.

5 G. B. Eden, *Mystical Architecture*, p. 22.

6 Cf. M.-A. Ouaknin *et al.*, *Rabbi Éliézer*, 12, p. 82.

7 Genesis 2:15.

8 J. N. Sparks *et al.*, *Orthodox Study Bible*, p. 691 n. 17.

9 *Ibid.*, Genesis 6:14-21, p. 12. See 1 Peter 3:18-22.

10 S. H. Faulring *et al.*, *Original Manuscripts*, p. 595.

11 See K. P. Jackson, *Book of Moses*, p. 10.

12 E.g., Abraham 4:4, 4:17.

13 M. T. Walton, Professor Seixas, p. 42.

14 S. H. Faulring *et al.*, *Original Manuscripts*, OT1, p. 86.

It did not happen the way that Moses said, “They hid in an ark.”¹⁵ Rather they hid in a particular place, not only Noah but also many other people from the unshakable generation. They entered that place and hid in a bright cloud. Noah knew about his supremacy.¹⁶ With him was the enlightened one who had enlightened them since the first ruler had brought darkness upon the whole earth.

G7-7 A hymn of self-praise by the Sumerian king Šulgi of the Ur III Dynasty speaks of sky-travel via the royal *magur*-boat, e.g.: “The king, the [pure] *magur*-boat, [which traverses the sky]”;¹⁷ “His shining royal *magur*-boat... Which... was shining in the midst of the sky.”¹⁸ *Magur*-boats were also used for divine travel (e.g., the *magur*-boat of Enki).¹⁹ See also P. Artzi *et al.*, *Bar-Ilan Studies*, pp. 65-136, especially pp. 96, 105-107.

G7-8 In the following chiasmic structuring of the account, Wenham demonstrates the pattern of “waiting” throughout the story as well as the centrality of the theme of Genesis 8:1: “But God remembered Noah”.²⁰

7 days of waiting for flood (7:4)
 7 days of waiting for flood (7:10)
 40 days of flood (7:17a)
 150 days of water triumphing (7:24)
 150 days of water waning (8:3)
 40 days of waiting (8:6)
 7 days of waiting (8:10)
 7 days of waiting (8:12)

“The timetable of the Flood with its seven-day periods of waiting may indicated that he observed the Sabbath.”²¹

G7-9 The word describing the agent of divine movement is expressed in the beginning of the story of Creation and in the story of the Flood using the same Hebrew term, *ruach* (in Genesis 1:2, the KJV translates this as “spirit,” while in Genesis 8:1 it is rendered as “wind”). In the former, the *ruach* is described as “moving” using the Hebrew verb *merahepet*, which literally “denotes a physical activity of flight over water.”²² However, Walton has argued that the wider connotation in both the Creation and Flood accounts expresses “a state of preparedness”:²³ “*ruach* is related to the presence of the deity, preparing to participate in Creation.”²⁴

Consistent with this reading, which understands this verse as a period of divine preparation, the creation story in Joseph Smith’s book of Abraham employs the term “brooding” rather than “moving” as we find in the King James Version. Note that this change is consistent with the English translation given in the Hebrew grammar book that was studied by Joseph Smith in Kirtland.²⁵ John Milton²⁶ interpreted the passage similarly in *Paradise Lost*, drawing from images such as the dove sent out by Noah,²⁷ the dove at Jesus’ baptism,²⁸ and a hen protectively covering her young with her wing.²⁹

[T]hou from the first
 Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
 Dovelike satst brooding on the vast abyss
 And mad’st it pregnant.”

15 Genesis 7:7.
 16 Alternatively, “he (Noah) recognized his authority” (F. Wisse, Apocryphon of John, 29:12, p. 121); “Noah was aware of his divine calling” (H. W. Nibley, *Enoch*, p. 268)
 17 J. Klein, *Three Šulgi Hymns*, Šulgi D, 48, p. 75.
 18 *Ibid.*, Šulgi D, 355-356, p. 87.
 19 *Ibid.*, p. 118 n. 354-361.
 20 G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p. 157.
 21 *Ibid.*, p. 177.
 22 M. S. Smith, *Priestly Vision*, p. 55.
 23 J. H. Walton, *Genesis 1*, p. 149.
 24 *Ibid.*
 25 See J. Seixas, *Manual*, p. 31.
 26 See H. J. Hodges, Dove; J. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 1:19-22, p. 16; cf. Augustine, *Literal*, 18:36; E. A. W. Budge, *Cave*, p. 44.
 27 Genesis 8:6-12.
 28 John 1:32.
 29 Luke 13:34.

“Brooding” enjoys rich connotations, including, as Nibley³⁰ observes, not only “to sit or incubate [eggs] for the purpose of hatching” but also:

... “to dwell continuously on a subject.” Brooding is just the right word—a quite long quiet period of preparation in which apparently nothing was happening. Something was to come out of the water, incubating, waiting—a long, long time.

Some commentators emphatically deny any connection of the Hebrew term with the concept of brooding.³¹ However, the “brooding” interpretation is not only attested by a Syriac cognate³² but also has a venerable history, going back at least to Rashi, who spoke specifically of the relationship between the dove and its nest. In doing so, he referred to the Old French term *acoveter*, related both to the modern French *couver* (from Latin *cubare* — to brood and protect) and *couvrir* (from Latin *cooperire* — to cover completely). Intriguingly, this latter sense is related to the Hebrew term for the atonement, *kipper*.³³

Going further, Margaret Barker admits the possibility of a subtle wordplay in examining the reversal of consonantal sounds between “brood/hover” and “atone”: “The verb for ‘hover’ is *rchp*, the middle letter is *cheth*, and the verb for ‘atone’ is *kpr*, the initial letter being a *kaph*, which had a similar sound. The same three consonantal sounds could have been word play, *rchp/kpr*.”³⁴ “There is sound play like this in the temple style.”³⁵ In this admittedly speculative interpretation, one may see an image of God, prior to the first day of Creation, figuratively “hovering/atoning” [*rchp/kpr*] over the singularity of the inchoate universe, just as the Ark smeared with pitch [*kaphar*] later moved over the face of the waters “when the waters cover[ed] over and atone[d] for the violence of the world.”³⁶

G7-10 This quote from E. Fox, *Books of Moses*, p. xxi illustrates the attitude of holistically oriented commentaries toward source-critical approaches:

Given the text I am now using, what has interested me here is chiefly the final form of the *Torah* books, how they fit together as artistic entities, and how they have combined traditions to present a coherent religious message. This was surely the goal of the final “redactor(s),” but it was not until recently a major goal of biblical scholars. While, therefore, I am not committed to refuting the tenets of source criticism in the strident manner of Benno Jacob and Umberto Cassuto, I have concentrated in this volume on the ‘wholeness’ of biblical texts, rather than on their growth out of fragments. My Commentary is aimed at helping the reader to search for unities and thematic development.

At the same time, in recent years I have found it increasingly fascinating to encounter the text’s complex layering. It appears that every time a biblical story or law was put in a new setting or redaction, its meaning, and the meaning of the whole, must have been somewhat altered. A chorus of different periods and concerns is often discernible, however faintly. Sometimes these function to “deconstruct” each other, and sometimes they actually create a new text ... As far as analysis of the text in this manner is concerned, I would recommend to the reader the brilliant work of E. L. Greenstein, *Torah* and D. Damrosch, *Narrative Covenant*.

30 H. W. Nibley, *Before Adam*, p. 69.

31 E.g., U. Cassuto, *Adam to Noah*, pp. 24-25.

32 F. Brown *et al.*, *Lexicon*, 7363, p. 934b.

33 M. Barker, *Atonement*; A. Rey, *Dictionnaire*, 1:555.

34 M. Barker, June 11, 2007.

35 *Ibid.* See additional examples in M. Barker, *Hidden*, pp. 15-17.

36 E. A. Harper, *You Shall Make*, p. 4.

