

Comments on Genesis 8

The flood persists, then diminishes; note both the instigation and subsidence of this cataclysmic flood are presented as being a direct result of God's actions. Noah sends out a raven and dove from the ark to determine whether or not dry land is to be found. Note that after the dove fails to return (v. 12) Noah still waits (v. 13-14) for the command of the Lord to disembark (v. 16-18) even though he sees that the land is apparently dry. This contrasts his humility and fear of God with the arrogance of those just annihilated in the Flood.

1 AND God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that [was] with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged; 2 The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained; 3 And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated. 4 And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. 5 And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth [month], on the first [day] of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.

v1-5 After the earth is swept clean of wickedness (cf. 7:21-24), the Lord dispatches the storm (v. 1-3). The ark eventually comes to rest. The entire episode taking some five lunar months (v. 4, cf. 7:11). More than two lunar months pass until dry land is once again exposed (v. 5).

v1 "God remembered", its not that God forgot about him, it is that he took heed of Noah and every living thing.

v4-5 "mountains", the Hebrew term "har" can be taken to mean hills, mount, mountains, or high country. The author is making reference to higher ground being exposed above the flood waters.

6 And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made: 7 And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth. 8 Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground; 9 But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters [were] on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark. 10 And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; 11 And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth [was] an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. 12 And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.

v6-12 Noah waits for the flood to recede (v. 6). First, he releases a raven, which flies about and returns (v. 7). After the raven no longer returns, Noah sends out a dove (v. 8). The dove finds no place to land so it returns (v. 9). Noah waits a week and then sends the dove out again (v. 10), and it returns with an olive leaf, showing the land is once again productive (v. 11). He waits one more week, sends out the dove, and it doesn't return (v. 12).

v7 "sent forth", i.e., released.

"which went forth to and fro", i.e., flying off and returning.

v8 The dove is apparently sent out after the raven because it is a ground feeder. Where the raven would land in trees or alight someplace else above the ground, the dove is looking for dry soil to land on. Hence its return even after finding a live olive tree.

13 And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first [month], the first [day] of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry. 14 And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.

v13-14 Nearly six months pass since the end of the Deluge before the land is generally dry (v. 13), and nearly two more months pass before the earth is fully dried out (v. 14), back to its pre-flood condition.

15 And God spake unto Noah, saying, 16 Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. 17 Bring forth with thee every living thing that [is] with thee, of all flesh, [both] of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. 18 And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: 19 Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, [and] whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.

v15-19 After the flood is over and the land has recovered (v. 13-14), the Lord (v. 15) tells Noah and all living things in the ark to depart and repopulate (v. 16-17), and they do (v. 18-19).

Note the particular emphasis on each male and his wife in combination with the admonition to procreate.

20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. 21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart [is] evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. 22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

v20-22 Noah sacrifices to the Lord (v. 20) and the Lord promises to never repeat such destruction upon the face of the land because of the wickedness of man (v. 21-22). The KJV rendering is obscure, so here is the JPS:

"Never again will I doom the earth because of man,
Since the devising of man's mind are evil from his youth;
Nor will I ever again destroy every living being,
as I have done."

Such a statement certainly suggests the Lord has become reconciled to the fact mankind is simply corrupt and therefore no longer willing to deal out such harsh retribution upon the whole face of the earth. The problem with this reading is the Flood narrative is used repeatedly by later prophets in their writings to be a type of the latter-day purging of the wicked. And while it is not by a literal flood of water, it is presented as being equally devastating to the wicked. The exception might be that animal and plant life would be spared the direct brunt of the eschatological flood.

v20 There being seven pairs of clean beasts makes a single sacrifice of each type not the dangerous proposition it would have been had there only been two pairs each.

Note, even after all of the death and destruction and subsequent admonition by the Lord to breed and multiply, Noah still recognizes the need for obedience to the Law of Sacrifice, which necessitates still more death and takes one breeding animal out of the various small populations. Noah's obedience is exemplary, even in the face of circumstances that would seemingly obviate obedience.

v21 "pleasing", the Hebrew "nihoah" plays on the name Noah.

V22 Never again will the regular pattern of nature be so cataclysmically altered, solely because of the wickedness of

man.

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