

The Book of Genesis – Session Four



I will not again damn the soil on humankind's score. For the devisings of the human heart are evil from youth. And I will not again strike down all living things as I did. As long as the days of the earth –

The Epic of Gilgamesh Two Flood Stories Intertwined Genesis: Chapter 8 – 10: Noah and the Ark; The Lineage of Noah

Two Sources – One Story – Noah and the Flood*

P (Priestly Source)

God ('Elohim)
2 of every kind of animal
Animals, "male and female"
The flood is 370 days
Noah sends out a raven
Cares about ages and dates
and measurements;

J (Yahweh Source)

YHWH or LORD God
Seven pairs of clean animals
and one pair of unclean
Animals, "man and woman"
40 days and 40 nights.
Noah sends out a dove
Doesn't care

But J also describes a God who regrets things he has done. God is grieved and personally closes the ark. The God in P is more of a transcendent controller of the universe.

*The differences occur in the Masoretic Hebrew. Normally, but not always, English translations carry over the differences.

The Two Versions of the Flood Story – Genesis 6:5 – 8:22

There are two versions of the Flood story intertwined in this passage from Genesis, but they may be read separately using the following guide:

Priestly source (P) in boldface capitals (red)

The YWHW source (J) is in regular type.

Genesis 6:

- 5 And Yahweh saw that the evil of humans was great in the earth, and all the inclination of the thoughts of their heart was only evil all the day.
- 6 And Yahweh regretted that he had made humans in the earth, and he grieved to his heart.
- 7 And Yahweh said, “I shall wipe out the humans which I have created from the face of the earth, from human to beast to creeping thing to bird of the heavens, for I regret that I made them.”
- 8 But Noah found favor in Yahweh’s eyes.
- 9 **THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS OF NOAH: NOAH WAS A RIGHTEOUS MAN, PERFECT IN HIS GENERATIONS. NOAH WALKED WITH GOD.**
- 10 **AND NOAH Sired THREE SONS: SHEM, HAM, AND JAPHETH.**
- 11 **AND THE EARTH WAS CORRUPTED BEFORE GOD, AND THE EARTH WAS FILLED WITH VIOLENCE.**
- 12 **AND GOD SAW THE EARTH, AND HERE IT WAS CORRUPTED, FOR ALL FLESH AND CORRUPTED ITS WAY ON THE EARTH.**
- 13 **AND GOD SAID TO NOAH, “THE END OF ALL FLESH HAS COME BEFORE ME, FOR THE EARTH IS FILLED WITH VIOLENCE BECAUSE OF THEM, AND HERE I AM GOING TO DESTROY THEM WITH THE EARTH.**
- 14 **MAKE YOURSELF AN ARK OF GOPHER WOOD, MAKE ROOMS WITH THE ARK, AND PITCH IT OUTSIDE AND INSIDE WITH PITCH.**
- 15 **AND THIS IS HOW YOU SHALL MAKE IT: THREE HUNDRED CUBITS THE LENGTH OF THE ARK, FIFTY CUBITS ITS WIDTH, AND THIRTY CUBITS ITS HEIGHT.**
- 16 **YOU SHALL MAKE A WINDOW FOR THE ARK, AND YOU SHALL FINISH IT FROM A CUBIT FROM THE TOP, AND YOU SHALL MAKE AN ENTRANCE TO THE ARK IN ITS SIDE. YOU SHALL MAKE LOWER SECOND AND THIRD STORIES FOR IT.**
- 17 **AND HERE I AM BRINGING THE FLOOD, WATER OVER THE EARTH, TO DESTROY ALL FLESH IN WHICH THE BREATH OF LIFE FROM UNDER THE HEAVENS. EVERYTHING WHICH IS ON THE LAND WILL DIE.**
- 18 **AND I SHALL ESTABLISH MY COVENANT WITH YOU. AND YOU SHALL COME TO THE ARK, YOU AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR WIFE AND YOUR SONS’ WIVES WITH YOU.**

- 19 **AND OF ALL THE LIVING, OF ALL FLESH, YOU SHALL BRING TWO TO THE ARK TO KEEP ALIVE WITH YOU; THEY SHALL BE MALE AND FEMALE.**
- 20 **OF THE BIRDS ACCORDING TO THEIR KIND, AND OF THE BEASTS ACCORDING TO THEIR KIND, AND OF ALL THE CREEPING THINGS OF THE EARTH ACCORDING TO THEIR KIND, TWO OF EACH WILL COME TO YOU TO KEEP ALIVE.**
- 21 **AND YOU, TAKE FOR YOURSELF OF ALL FOOD WHICH WILL BE EATEN AND GATHER IT TO YOU, AND IT WILL BE FOR YOU AND FOR THEM FOR FOOD.”**
- 22 **AND NOAH DID ACCORDING TO ALL THAT GOD COMMANDED HIM – SO HE DID.**

Genesis 7:

1. And Yahweh said to Noah, “Come, you and all your household to the ark, for I have seen you as righteous before me in this generation.
2. Of all the clean beasts, take yourself seven pairs, man and his woman; and of the beasts which are not clean, two, man and his woman.
3. Also of the birds of the heavens, seven pairs, male and female, to keep alive seed on the face of the earth.
4. For in seven more days, I shall rain on the earth, forty days and forty nights, and I shall wipe out all the substance that I have made from upon the face of the earth.”
5. And Noah did according to all that Yahweh had commanded him.
6. **AND NOAH WAS SIX HUNDRED YEARS OLD, AND THE FLOOD WAS ON THE EARTH.**
7. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him came to the ark from before the waters of the flood.
8. **OF THE CLEAN BEASTS AND OF THE BEASTS WHICH WERE NOT CLEAN, AND OF THE BIRDS AND OF ALL THOSE WHICH CREEP UPON THE EARTH.**
9. **TWO OF EACH CAME TO NOAH TO THE ARK, MALE AND FEMALE AS GOD HAD COMMANDED NOAH.**
10. And seven days later the waters of the flood were on the earth.
11. **IN THE SIX HUNDREDTH YEAR OF NOAH’S LIFE, IN THE SECOND MONTH, IN THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF THE MONTH, ON THE DAY ALL THE FOUNTAINS OF THE GREAT DEEP WERE BROKEN UP, AND THE WINDOWS OF THE HEAVENS WERE OPENED.**
12. And there was rain on the earth, forty days and forty nights.
13. **IN THIS VERY DAY, NOAH AND SHEM, HAM, AND JAPHETH, THE SONS OF NOAH, AND NOAH’S WIFE AND HIS SONS’ THREE WIVES CAME WITH THEM TO THE ARK,**
14. **THEY AND ALL THE LIVING THINGS ACCORDING TO THEIR KIND, AND ALL THE BEASTS ACCORDING TO THEIR KIND, AND ALL THE CREEPING THINGS THAT CREEP ON THE EARTH ACCORDING TO THEIR KIND, AND ALL THE BIRDS ACCORDING TO THEIR KIND, AND EVERY WINGED BIRD.**

- 15. AND THEY CAME TO NOAH TO THE ARK, TWO OF EACH OF ALL FLESH IN WHICH IS THE BREATH OF LIFE.**
16. **AND THOSE WHICH CAME WERE MALE AND FEMALE, SOME OF ALL FLESH CAME, AS GOD HAD COMMANDED HIM.** And Yahweh closed it for him.
17. And the flood was on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and the waters multiplied and raised the ark, and it was lifted from the earth.
18. And the waters grew strong and multiplied greatly on the earth, and the ark went on the surface of the waters.
19. And the waters grew very strong on the earth, and they covered all the high mountains that are under the heavens.
20. Fifteen cubits above, the waters grew stronger, and they covered the mountains.
21. **AND ALL THE FLESH, THOSE THAT CREEP ON THE EARTH, THE BIRDS, THE BEASTS, AND THE WILD ANIMALS, AND ALL THE SWARMING THINGS THAT SWARM ON THE EARTH, AND ALL THE HUMANS EXPIRED.**
22. Everything that had the breathing spirit of life in its nostrils, everything that was on the dry ground, died.
23. And he wiped out all the substance that was on the face of the earth, from human to beast, to creeping thing, and to bird of the heavens, and they were wiped out from the earth, and only Noah and those who were with him in the ark were left.
- 24. AND THE WATERS GREW STRONG ON THE EARTH A HUNDRED FIFTY DAYS.**

Genesis 8:

- 1. AND GOD REMEMBERED NOAH AND ALL THE LIVING, AND ALL THE BEASTS THAT WERE WITH HIM IN THE ARK, AND GOD PASSED A WIND OVER THE EARTH, AND THE WATERS WERE DECREASED.**
2. **AND THE FOUNTAINS OF THE DEEP AND THE WINDOWS OF THE HEAVENS WERE SHUT**, and the rain was restrained from the heavens.
3. And the waters receded from the earth continually, **AND THE WATERS WERE ABATED AT THE END OF A HUNDRED AND FIFTY DAYS.**
4. **AND THE ARK RESTED IN THE SEVENTH MONTH, IN THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF THE MONTH, ON THE MOUNTAINS OF ARARAT.**
5. **AND THE WATERS CONTINUED RECEDING UNTIL THE TENTH MONTH; IN THE TENTH MONTH, ON THE FIRST OF THE MONTH, THE TOPS OF THE MOUNTAIN APPEARED.**
6. And it was at the end of forty days, and Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made.
7. **AND HE SENT OUT A RAVEN, AND IT WENT BACK AND FORTH UNTIL THE WATER DRIED UP FROM THE EARTH.**

8. And he sent out a dove from him to see whether the waters had eased from the face of the earth.
9. And the dove did not find a resting place for its foot, and it returned to him to the ark, for waters were on the face of the earth, and he put out his hand and took it and brought it to him to the ark.
10. And he waited seven more days and again he sent out a dove from the ark.
11. And the dove came to him at evening time, and here was an olive leaf torn off in its mouth, and Noah knew that the waters had eased from the earth.
12. And he waited seven more days, and he sent out a dove, and it did not return to him ever again.
13. **AND IT WAS IN THE SIX HUNDRED AND FIRST YEAR, IN THE FIRST MONTH, ON THE FIRST OF THE MONTH, THE WATERS DRIED FROM THE EARTH.** And Noah turned back the covering of the ark and looked, and here the face of the earth had dried.
14. **AND IN THE SECOND MONTH, ON THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF THE MONTH, THE EARTH HAD DRIED UP.**
15. **AND GOD SPOKE TO NOAH, SAYING,**
16. **“GO OUT FROM THE ARK, YOU AND YOUR WIFE AND YOUR SONS’ WIVES WITH YOU.**
17. **ALL THE LIVING THINGS THAT ARE WITH YOU, OF ALL FLESH, OF THE BIRDS, AND OF THE BEASTS, AND OF ALL THE CREEPING THINGS THAT CREEP ON THE EARTH, THAT GO OUT WITH YOU, SHALL SWARM IN THE EARTH AND BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY IN THE EARTH.”**
18. **AND NOAH AND HIS WIFE AND HIS SONS AND HIS SONS’ WIVES WENT OUT.**
19. **ALL THE LIVING THINGS, ALL THE CREEPING THINGS AND ALL THE BIRDS, ALL THAT CREEP ON THE EARTH, BY THEIR FAMILIES THEY WENT OUT OF THE ARK.**
20. And Noah built an altar to Yahweh, and he took some of each of the clean beasts and of each of the clean birds and he offered sacrifices on the altar.
21. And Yahweh smelled the pleasant smell, and Yahweh said to his heart, “I shall not again curse the ground on man’s account, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from their youth, and I shall not again strike all the living as I have done.
22. All the rest of the days of the earth, seed and harvest, and cold and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”

Source: Who Wrote the Bible, by Richard Elliott Friedman, HarperSanFrancisco (HarperCollins Publishers), New York, 1987, 1997

Two Flood Stories: Noah vs. Ut-Napishtim (Dr. Gregory Neal)

Notes On Comparing The Ancient Near-Eastern Flood Stories:

The Chaldean Flood Tablets from the city of Ur in what is now Southern Iraq contain a story that describes how the Babylonian god Enlil had been bothered by the incessant noise generated by humans. He convinced the other gods to completely exterminate every person on Earth as well as land animals and birds with a great flood. One of the gods, Ea, went against the decision of the rest of the gods, and told a human, Ut-Napishtim, to build an ark to save a few humans and some animals.

An excerpt from the Epic of Gilgamesh will provide a bit of the flavor of the story:

“You know the city Shurrupak, it stands on the banks of the Euphrates. That city grew old and the gods that were in it were old. There was Anu, lord of the firmament {earth}, their father, and warrior Enlil their counselor, Ninurta the helper, and Ennugi, watcher over canals; and with them also was Ea. In those days the world teemed, the people multiplied, the world bellowed like a wild bull, and the great god was aroused by the clamor. Enlil heard the clamor and he said to the gods in council, 'The uproar of mankind is intolerable, and sleep is no longer possible by reason of the babel {everyone talking at once}.' So, the gods agreed to exterminate mankind. Enlil did this, but Ea warned me in a dream. He whispered their words to my house of reeds, “Reed-house, reed-house! Wall, O wall, hearken reed-house, wall reflect; O man of Shurrupak, son of Ubara-Tutu; tear down your house and build a boat, abandon possessions and look for life, despise worldly goods and save your soul alive. Tear down your house, I say, and build a boat. These are the measurements of the barque {boat} as you shall build her: let her beam equal her length, let her deck be roofed like the vault that covers the abyss; then take up into the boat the seed of all living creatures.”

The flood story from “The Epic of Gilgamesh” and the Hebrew story in Genesis are very similar with almost 20 major points in common. Their texts are obviously linked in some way. Either:

- Genesis accounts were copied from an earlier Babylonian story, or
- The Gilgamesh myth was copied from an earlier Hebrew version of the accounts in Genesis, or
- Both were copied from a common source that predates them both.

Given that the Gilgamesh account is sourced from the much earlier Atrahasis story from Ur, it is likely that both the Biblical accounts and the Gilgamesh myth are pulling from this common account.

In both the Genesis and Gilgamesh stories:

- The Genesis story describes how mankind had become obnoxious to God; they were hopelessly sinful and wicked. In the Babylonian story, they were too numerous and noisy.
- The gods (or God) decided to send a worldwide flood. This would have drowned all men, women, children, babies and infants, as well as eliminate all of the land animals and birds.
- God (or one of the gods) knew of one righteous man, Ut-Napishtim or Noah.

- One of the gods (or God) ordered the hero to build a multi-story wooden ark (called a chest or box in the original Hebrew).
- The ark would be sealed with pitch.
- The ark would have many internal compartments
- It would have a single door
- It would have at least one window.
- The ark was built and loaded with the hero, a few other humans, and samples from all species of other land animals.
- A great rain covered the land with water.
- The mountains were submerged under water.
- The ark landed on a mountain in the Middle East.
- The hero sent out birds at regular intervals to find if any dry land was in the vicinity.
- The first two birds returned to the ark. The third bird apparently found dry land because it did not return.
- The hero and his family left the ark, ritually killed an animal, and offered it as a sacrifice.
- God (or the gods in the Epic of Gilgamesh) smelled the roasted meat of the sacrifice.
- The hero was blessed.
- The Babylonian gods seemed genuinely sorry for the genocide that they had created. The God of Noah appears to have regretted his actions as well, because he promised never to do it again.

There are a number of details in which the two stories differed:

- Noah received his instructions directly from Yahweh; Ut-Napishtim received them indirectly during a dream.
- Noah's ark was 3 stories high and rectangular in shape. Two estimated dimensions are 547 x 91 ft. and 450 x 75 ft. The Babylonian ark was 6 stories high and square.
- Noah's ark included only his sons and his son's wives; Ut-Napishtim invited additional people aboard: a pilot and some skilled workmen.
- Noah's ark landed on the Mountains of Ararat; Ut-napishtim Ark landed on the Mt. Nisir range. These locations are both in the Middle East, a few hundred miles apart.
- In the Bible, some of the water emerged from beneath the land and oceans. The rains from above lasted for 40 days and nights. A 40-day interval often symbolized a period of judgment in the Hebrew Scriptures. In the Babylonian account, the water came only in the form of rain, and it lasted 6 days.
- Noah released a raven once and a dove twice; Ut-Napishtim released three birds: a dove, swallow and raven.

Dr. Gregory S. Neal – 2017 (revised)
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Table of Nations

In Chapter Ten, the *Table of Nations*, the writer attempted to sketch a panorama of all known human cultures – from Greece and Crete in the west through Asia Minor and Iran and down through Mesopotamia and the Arabian Peninsula to northwestern Africa.



Noah's ark landed on Mount Ararat in Eastern Turkey near present Day Armenia. The sons of Shem ended up in what is now the Saudi Arabia, near the Red Sea. Nimrod, son of Cush and grandson of Ham was a mighty hunter and founded cities in Mesopotamia. The descendants of Canaan (another of Ham's sons) ended up on the region where Israel eventually settled. The descendants of Japheth became the Sea Peoples, assumed to have been settled in the islands around the Aegean Sea and Crete in the Mediterranean.

Abram (Abraham) was from Ur in Mesopotamia, but he was a descendant of Shem through Arpachshad, Sehalh, Eber, and Peleg. (We learn this in Chapter 11.) The descendants of Peleg's brother Joktan, settled on the Arabia peninsula. Either Peleg and his descendants settled in Mesopotamia, or at some point they moved from Arabia back north to the Euphrates.

Commentary on the Torah with a New English Translation and the Hebrew Text by Richard Elliott Friedman, Harper One – HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 2001

Next: **Session Five** *Genesis 11: The Story of Babel; Introducing the Schocken Bible* by Everett Fox