

The Flood: (Genesis 6-8)

The Flood is one of the most hotly debated events between Young-Earth (YEC) and Old-Earth (OEC) Creationists. The argument lies in two distinct, but connected realms. First the argument is over the extent and purpose of the Flood according to the Scriptural account. Most YECs adhere to a global extent meaning that its purpose was to destroy the earth and all living things and the waters covered the highest mountains over the entire planet. On the other side, OECs believe the Bible speaks of a local Flood that fulfilled its purpose which was to destroy all of humanity except Noah and his family. Second, there is an argument as to what were the geologic effects of the Flood. Many YECs who believe there was no animal death before the Fall in Genesis 3 are inclined to believe that the Flood is responsible for all of the fossil-bearing rocks and geologic features we see today. Most OECs feel that a localized Flood in the Near East would have had very little effect on the geology of the region.

The geologic effects of the Flood are covered in more detail on the website. Here, we will primarily be interested in the best interpretation of the Scriptural account of the Flood located in Genesis 6-8. It is very important to realize that how one interprets the Bible in one place will have profound implications in other places of Scripture as well as in observations of the natural world and the rock record. When we explore the account of the Flood we need to keep in mind the audience (15th Century BC Hebrews who have just come out of bondage in Egypt) and what they would understand the passage to be relaying. With that, let's read the account.

Genesis 6-8 (ESV)

1 When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them,
2 the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose.
3 Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years."
4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.
5 The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.
6 And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.
7 So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them."
8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.
9 These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.
10 And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
11 Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence.
12 And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.
13 And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.
14 Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch.
15 This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits.
16 Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks.
17 For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die.
18 But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.
19 And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female.
20 Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive.

21 Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them.”

22 Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

1 Then the Lord said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation.

2 Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate,

3 and seven pairs of the birds of the heavens also, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth.

4 For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground.”

5 And Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him.

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

7 And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood.

8 Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground,

9 two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah.

10 And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth.

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened.

12 And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

13 On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah’s wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark,

14 they and every beast, according to its kind, and all the livestock according to their kinds, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, according to its kind, and every bird, according to its kind, every winged creature.

15 They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life.

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

17 The flood continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth.

18 The waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the face of the waters.

19 And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered.

20 The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep.

21 And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind.

22 Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died.

23 He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark.

24 And the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days.

1 But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.

2 The fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained,

3 and the waters receded from the earth continually. At the end of 150 days the waters had abated,

4 and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.

5 And the waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.

6 At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made

7 and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth.

8 Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground.
 9 But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him.
 10 He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark.
 11 And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth.
 12 Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore.
 13 In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth. And Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry.
 14 In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth had dried out.
 15 Then God said to Noah,
 16 “Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you.
 17 Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.”
 18 So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him.
 19 Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark.
 20 Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.
 21 And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.
 22 While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”

The first thing that will be helpful in our study of the Flood account is to come up with an outline of the text. This can be difficult as Moses (the author) does not tell this in a flowing narrative. There are pauses, parenthetical statements and reiterations of previous material throughout the passage. Below is an outline using the Hebrew verb tenses and temporal markers as guides.

- I. **6:1-8** The LORD (*Yahweh*) sees the wickedness of man and only finds favor in Noah
 - a. **6:1-4** The “Sons of God” and the Nephilim
 - b. **6:5-7** *Yahweh* gives the purpose and extent of the Flood
 - c. **6:8** Noah alone finds favor with *Yahweh*
- II. **6:9-22** God (*elohim*) sees the corruption on the earth and tells Noah to build the ark
 - a. **6:9-10** The generations of Noah
 - b. **6:11-12** *elohim* sees the corruption on the earth
 - c. **6:13-21** *elohim* gives Noah instructions for the ark and the animals
 - d. **6:22** Noah obeys *elohim*
- III. **7:1-5** *Yahweh* speaks of the immanence of the Flood
 - a. **7:1-4** *Yahweh* confirms Noah and instructs on clean animals
 - b. **7:5** Noah obeys *Yahweh*
- IV. **7:6-16** Noah and his family enter the ark as the rain begins to fall
 - a. **7:6-12** Noah and his family and the animals board the ark
 - b. **7:13-16** Noah and his family and the animals board the ark retold
- V. **7:17-24** The Flood waters prevail 150 days
- VI. **8:1-14** The Flood waters decrease and the land dries
 - a. **8:1-5** The ark rests on the mountains of Ararat
 - b. **8:6-12** Noah sends out the raven and the dove
 - c. **8:13-14** The ground dries up
- VII. **8:15-19** *elohim* tells Noah, his family and the animals to exit the ark
- VIII. **8:20-22** Noah makes sacrifices to *Yahweh* who makes a covenant with the earth

No doubt some readers who read this account will say, “why is there any debate, the text is clear when it says that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered (7:19)”. Indeed the ESV, and

virtually all other English translations, read an overwhelming amount of global-extent language. Phrases like “all flesh” (7:21), “everything that is on the earth” (6:17), “every living thing” (6:19), “all the high mountains” (7:19), “under the whole heaven” (7:19), “blotted out every living thing” (7:21), and “every living creature” (8:21) are littered throughout the text making it sound obvious that a global Deluge is in mind. As always, we need to explore the original language to see if this idea is effectively translated and carried over in the English and see if there are any details that may be overshadowed by the global language that can assist in the interpretation.

Genesis 6:1-8 (ESV)

***Yahweh* sees the wickedness of man, gives the purpose and the extent of His judgment**

- 1 When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them,
- 2 the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose.
- 3 Then the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.”
- 4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.
- 5 The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.
- 6 And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.
- 7 So the Lord said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.”
- 8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

Unfortunately the ESV does not capitalize all the letters in the word “LORD” like most other translations. If it did, the astute reader would notice that “LORD” (which is the English rendering of *Yahweh*) is mentioned 5 times while the word “God” is not used except in the phrase “sons of God”. In the next section we will only encounter God (Heb. *elohim*) and not *Yahweh*. Why does Moses use the generic title *elohim* in some sections while using the personal name *Yahweh* in others? It is probably his desire to show God’s personal and intimate side at times, while showing His magisterial and judicial side at others. In any case, the account opens with *Yahweh* looking on the earth and seeing only evil...with one small exception.

The passage begins with a *wayyiqtol* verb (*wayehiy* – to be). Most modern translations completely ignore this opening word, including the ESV. Some like the NLT convey the *wayyiqtol* with “then”, but ignore the verb “to be”. The KJV and YLT translate it best with “and it came to pass”. The NASB does a good job with “now it came about”. The LXX accurately translates as *kai egeneto*. The basic idea is that at some time down the road, something came to be. The conjunction *kiy* is used to introduce this temporal statement and is properly translated “when”. The story thus begins “when” man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them.

There is a pairing of words used here that is rarely noticed and picked up in the English translations. The text says that man (Heb. *adam*) began to multiply on the face of the land (Heb. *adamah*). The word *adamah* is best translated as “ground” not “land” because of Genesis 2:7 where God forms man from the ground and Genesis 3:19 where God tells Adam he will return to the ground. In both of these passages, “ground” makes more sense than “land”. Although “land” may be implied here in Genesis 6:1, it misses the connection that man has with the ground that was established earlier. Only the ASV, RSV, NRSV and YLT correctly translate as “ground”. The other translations are split between the interpretive “land” and the grossly misleading “earth”, perhaps being misled themselves by the LXX (*tes ges*). We will note throughout the account the use of *erets* which is rendered “earth” in most versions.

In Genesis 1:28, God blessed man and told him to multiply (*ravah*) and fill the earth. In chapter 6, man is said to have multiplied (*ravav*) on the face of the ground. The words are basically the same except the second is the root of the word for “ten-thousand” which to the Hebrew is not a literal number but it may approximate the number of humans as roughly in the tens of thousands as opposed to the billions as some have suggested in the pre-Flood world (Snelling, *Earth’s Catastrophic Past* (2010), pp. 66-67).

The population of the pre-Flood human race will be an important point later when we discuss the extent of the Flood (global vs. local). While the number of people may not be known and the number 10,000 may be an approximation, we have a clue in the phrasing “began to multiply” in verse 1. The word here for “began” is *chadal*, and it is used 55 times in the OT. It is the same word used in Gen. 4:26 where it says that in the times of Enosh, men first “began” to call upon the name of *Yahweh*. The inference here is the start of something, or, the first time something happens. The implication then in Genesis 6 is that men are just now beginning to multiply on the face of the land. This would tend to give credence to the view that the population was fairly small at the time of the Flood, certainly NOT in the billions. If the ages in the genealogy of Chapter 5 are added without gaps, we arrive at 1,656 years. In Chapter 6 verse 3, we are told that mankind would have only 120 years until the Flood. This means that for at least the first 1,536 years the population was fairly constant-to-slowly growing (because we are clearly told that it was not until 120 years before the Flood that people began to multiply as God commanded them (Gen. 1:28)). Even if one assumes many millennia of gaps in the Genesis 5 chronology, the fact remains that there were never very many people on the earth until this time when chapter 6 begins. There will be more on this later.

The text goes on to say that daughters were born to men. These daughters were found to be attractive by the sons of God. There is some debate over who these sons of God are. Some suggest they are the godly line of Seth, from whom Noah descended. Others say they are fallen angels. Still others say they are humans who are possessed by demons. We cannot be absolutely certain who they are, but we can apply some other biblical passages to help narrow it down. The phrase is *veney haelohiym* (LXX: *hoi huioi tou theou*). This exact phrase in the Hebrew is found only here, verse 4, and in Job 1:6 and 2:1. In Job, the phrase clearly refers to angels. It never refers to humans, and there is no biblical evidence that the lineage of Seth is in mind here. But there is a problem with an angelic interpretation here. First, angels neither marry nor are given in marriage (Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:25). Second, their offspring is clearly human (6:4) and not some half-human, half-angelic being. Also, there is no other biblical passage which suggests they are able to sexually interact with humans.

One possible way to interpret them and stay consistent with the rest of Scripture is for the “sons of God” to refer to fallen angels who come and indwell certain men. Their lust for the daughters of men would be satisfied, and they could produce the mighty men of verse 4 if they bodily indwelt the strongest men of the day, thus selectively breeding with humans. There is plenty of Scriptural evidence that demons indwell humans at times. In the NT, there are even examples of the possessed human having super-human strength and abilities (Matt. 8:28; Mark 5:2-4). It is then easy to see how an angelic being could have relations with a human woman and even produce offspring. If that genetically engineered human were then possessed, he could easily fit the description of the Nephilim in verse 4.

Yahweh then goes on to say that His Spirit (*ruach*) will not abide in man forever. Most translations use a different word for “abide”. Some use “strive” (KJV, NKJV, NASB), some use “contend” (NIV), and some modern versions read “remain” (HCSB, NCV, NET). The LXX translates as *katameno* which means “to stay” or “remain” in its 5 other uses in Scripture. There is some confusion as to the Hebrew *don* but there is reason to stick with “stay” as the LXX translators did. The reason is the next clause that says for he is flesh, his days shall be 120 years. The word translated “for” is an interesting compound word in the Hebrew (*beshaggam*). It could be translated “in their unintentional erring” as in YLT. This interpretation would nicely fit the idea of demon possessed humans sinning and being responsible for God’s sorrow, but we will see in verse 5 that the sins of humans are very much intentional. It stands then that most of the versions translate it accurately as “for” or “because” he is flesh.

There is some debate over the meaning of the phrase his days shall be 120 years. Some think that it is the reduction of the human lifespan to 120 years. This is evidenced by the reduction in the years the patriarchs lived before the Flood and after the Flood. The problem is that it did not reduce to 120 years instantaneously. People still lived over 150 years until roughly the time of Moses. Furthermore, Moses, the author of the Flood account, says in Psalm 90 that man’s days are 70-80 years (Ps. 90:10). The better interpretation in context is that man would have 120 years before God’s judgment, namely the Great Flood.

Verse 4 contains some background information, but it is difficult to interpret. It states that the Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. The identity of the Nephilim is uncertain, but the context and the LXX translation *gigantes* (giants) indicate that they were men of great height and strength. The genetic engineering of the demons had seemingly paid off and now they could possess the giants and turn them into men of renown. The Nephilim are mentioned in Numbers 12:33 where the 10 dissenting Hebrew spies reported that they lived in the land of Canaan. The spies were like grasshoppers compared to them. In the preceding verse it mentions men of great size, but these were apparently different than the Nephilim. Apparently the Nephilim were not only giants but great warriors. Anak is said to be a Nephilim. The descendants of Anak were stronger and mightier than the Hebrews (Deut. 9:1-2), but with God's help, Joshua and the Israelites were able to remove the Anakim from the land of Israel (Josh. 11:21-22).

It is interesting that Moses says that the Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward. It is not that they survived the Flood, because it is clear that only 8 people survived (1Pet. 3:20). Rather, the same processes that led to their appearance before the Flood were there *after* the Flood. That is, the demons were at work after the Flood to create a super-human race, but instead of flooding the earth to destroy them, God sent the Israelites and gave them victory over them. All these clues from the text lead to the conclusion that the "sons of God" were humans possessed by fallen angels, or demons, and their offspring, the Nephilim, were mighty men of super-human size and ability.

In verses 5-7 we read the reason, purpose and extent of the coming judgment we know as the Flood. These are important verses and should not be glossed over. These three verses should help in the argument over the extent of the Flood. When we understand the purpose we should be able to clearly see the extent. Does the Scriptural account suggest it was global in extent, or local and specifically targeted to fulfill its purpose? The Bible is clear.

The *wayyiqtol* verbs return in these three verses with a qal (active), niph'al (passive) and qal (active) verb with *Yahweh* as the subject. First *Yahweh* saw the wickedness, then He was sorry He made man, then He said He will blot them out. In verse 5, *Yahweh*, who knows the thoughts of men (Ps. 94:11; Is. 66:18), sees the depth of penetration that sin has on the earth (Heb. *erets*). It is important to note that the wickedness is that of "men" (LXX: *anthropos*). That refutes the Nephilim being half-angel, half-human beings. Next we see the severity of the wickedness. It says that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The use of words like "every", "only" and "continually" (literally "all the day") add emphasis to the fact that mankind at this time was pure evil and completely separated from his Creator. The word for "intention" (*yatsar*) is the noun form of the verb *yatsar* which is translated "to fashion". It is one of the words used of God's creation of man. The bible says He creates (*bara*), makes (*asa*) and fashions (*yatsar*) man. In this way the intentions of the thoughts of man are what he forms or fashions in his mind. Here we see that these thoughts were only and always fashioned with evil.

In verse 6, *Yahweh* is said to be sorry that He made man. He was grieved in His heart that man, whom He made in His image, had distorted that image and turned to complete evil. *Nacham* (to be sorry) is mainly used in the niph'al stem with God as the subject. The word can also be translated as to repent (as in KJV). It is then ironic that because man was unrepentant in his continuously evil ways, that God repented that He ever made him. We know that God cannot repent as we do (1Sam. 15:29), because He is incapable of sinning. Here it simply means that God was grieved in His heart that His masterpiece of Creation chose to reject Him and follow his own desires. The word for grieved is *atsav*, the verbal form of the noun *etsev*; the "pain" or "sorrow" with which Adam and Eve were cursed in Genesis 3. This is not a physical pain, but an emotional anguish. God felt sorrow in His heart because of man's sinful ways.

In these three verses, *Yahweh* clearly lays out the purpose of His impending judgment. In verse 5, He discusses His observations on the pervasiveness of man's evil ways. Then He describes how this grieves Him in His heart that His prized creature had chosen to rebel against Him. Now in verse 7, He discusses the extent of His judgment. In it He says "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them." The verb "blot out" is *machah* and it is used 33 times in the OT and connotes a complete expunging or

wiping away of something. It is usually God who does this blotting out, whether it is the intent to completely blot out a nation such as Israel (Deut. 9:14) or His ability and grace to completely blot out our sin (Ps. 51:1; Is. 44:22) never to be remembered again.

Next we see the extent of the judgment. It will be sufficient to blot out man from the face of the land. The word for “land” here is *adamah*. It is more correctly translated as “ground” as only found in the ASV, RSV and YLT. The word should not be translated as “earth” as in the KJV, NKJV, HCSB, NIV, NLT, NCV, NET, NRSV and the LXX as the modern reader will likely take the word according to his knowledge of the spherical planet earth. The word refers only to the ground or land portion of the earth.

As man only populates the land portion of the earth, there is no mention of sea creatures in the list of secondary recipients of judgment. These are the *behemah* (domesticated animals – cattle), the *remes* (reptiles – small rodents) and the *oph* (winged creatures). One will note this list is similar to the creatures made on Days 5 and 6 in Genesis 1. The only difference is the absence of the *chayetho erets* (beasts of the earth) in Genesis 1:24, although they board the ark with Noah in 7:14.

A few questions are raised when reading this list. Is it global or local? That is, does it include every living creature, or a specific list of beasts that would be affected by the judgment on man? It may seem obvious why the sea creatures of Day 5 are not mentioned, but what about fresh water fish? They are not mentioned and their extinction would be inevitable in a worldwide Flood of sea water. The other question is, what did these creatures do wrong to deserve the judgment and the statement of remorse from God for having made them? It is true that all Creation groans because of the corruption of mankind (Romans 8:20-22). We were told to take dominion of all Creation (Gen. 1:26-28), and because of the Fall we have lost that capacity. Therefore, all of the inhabitants of the planet suffer when we sin. It seems then that God’s repentance at having made the beasts in this list is mainly due to man’s inability to rule them as intended. There is no biblical example of animals sinning and deserving or receiving punishment directly from God.

So to summarize, this opening section describes the sad state of planet earth. Man was incapable of taking dominion as was intended because of the Fall. Instead, he turned to pure wickedness with the help of demonic influences. *Yahweh* looks at His Creation and sees that man was only thinking and doing evil all the time, and He was grieved in His heart and sorry He had made them. He determined to blot them off the face of the ground from which they were made, and gave them 120 years until His impending judgment. This is THE sole purpose of that judgment and it should be restated...to blot out wicked man from the face of the ground.

As is the case many times in Scripture, God ends with a bright note. In verse 8 we see that Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. The word “favor” (Heb. *chen*) is found 69 times in the OT with 43 of the occurrences appearing in the phrase “favor in the eyes of”. As with Moses in Exodus 33:12, Noah finds favor, or “grace”, in the eyes of *Yahweh* who spares Him from the judgment to come.

Genesis 6:9-22 (ESV)

***Elohim* sees the corruption on the earth and tells Noah to build the ark**

9 These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.

10 And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

11 Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence.

12 And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.

13 And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

14 Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch.

15 This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits.

16 Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks.

17 For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die.

18 But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

19 And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female.

20 Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive.

21 Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them.”

22 Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

It seems logical to separate the account between verses 8 and 9 for two reasons. First, the Hebrew word *toledoth* (generations) is always used to open a section of an account or genealogy (see also Gen. 2:4; 5:1; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12). Second, only the title *elohim* is used when referring to God in this section. His personal Name *Yahweh* is not used here. It is not used again until chapter 7. Here, *elohim* will reiterate the pervasive presence of sin on the earth and the need for judgment. In verse 17, He actually describes the means of His judgment. It will come about as a Flood that will destroy all flesh. This verse has been central to argument over the extent of the Flood. We will dive into it in context and in detail below. This section can be divided into three parts...the generations of Noah (9-10), *elohim's* description of corruption on the earth (11-12), *elohim's* instructions to Noah to build the ark and Noah's obedience.

It is stated that Noah was a righteous (Heb. *tsaddiyq*) man. The OT claims that Noah, Daniel and Job (Ezek. 14:14, 20) and Abraham (Gen. 15:6) were righteous in God's sight. He is also considered blameless (Heb. *tamiym*). Job also was considered blameless (Job. 1:1) as was Satan before his fall (Ezek. 23:15). In addition to character traits, the Bible says that Noah walked with God. This is a notion that is only otherwise mentioned of Enoch (Gen. 5: 22-24) although it is something that God desires and requires (Micah 6:8).

Noah had three sons (Heb. *ben*). While *ben* could mean any descendent, it is clear from the context that Shem, Ham and Japheth were Noah's actual sons.

Verse 11 begins with another *wayyiqtol* verb, *watishshacheth* (and she [the earth] was corrupt). This, however, does not advance the storyline because it is a reiteration of what was stated in the opening verses. In verse 5, *Yahweh* looks on the earth and sees the wickedness of man. Here *elohim* looks on the earth and sees the corruption. This is the same event told with two different intentions. By using *Yahweh* in the opening verses, Moses intended to show the remorse and grief felt by the intimate Creator that His prize creature had turned from His ways (verse 6). Now, he mentions the title-name *elohim* to show only the righteous judicial side of the Creator. It is not said here that *elohim* was grieved in His heart although it is the same God.

Elohim looks on the earth and sees corruption (Heb – *shachath*; LXX – *phtheiro*). The earth was filled with violence (Heb – *chamas*; LXX – *adikia*). The word for “was corrupt” (*schachath*) is very important here. It speaks of a moral corruption (see BDB, p. 1007) and there is some great wordplay used here. The word is used four times in verses 11-13. Each time the LXX translates as *phtheiro* or *kataphtheiro*. The same word, in noun form, is used in Paul's famous passage on the suffering of Creation in Romans 8:21. There he says that it is suffering the bondage of corruption (*phthora*). In context, he is speaking about the moral conditions of man that, because of his Fall, cause him to be unable to take dominion of the Creation as originally intended. Because of this, Creation groans and suffers. This same corruption that Paul speaks of was intolerably high in Genesis 6. Man was overwhelmingly corrupt to the point that God was sorry He made him (Gen. 6:6). The wordplay comes in in verse 13 where *elohim* tells the uniquely righteous Noah that He intends to destroy (Heb. *shachath*) all flesh (man) because he has corrupted (Heb. *shachath*) the earth.

Verses 11-13 are a re-telling of the purpose of the Flood. *Yahweh* gives the purpose for the judgment in verses 5-7. Now *elohim* again describes the moral conditions on earth, and tells the scope and reason of the punishment. It should not be understated that the reason for the Flood is the moral condition of mankind on the earth, and the extent of the punishment is to destroy all mankind. We know this from the text and from

the fact that morality is a trait that is uniquely human. No animal can display moral corruption. Therefore the intent is to destroy all mankind save Noah and his family.

The argument is over the extent of the judgment because of English words like “all flesh” (verses 12, 13), and the “earth” (verse 13). After all, when God says He is going to destroy the earth in verse 13, doesn’t that mean the entire global earth? It certainly does to a 21st Century English speaker, but not necessarily to a 15th Century BC Hebrew. He would have no comprehension of the global earth that we do today. That is why the Hebrew word *erets* speaks of a local piece of land most of the time in context. I believe it does here as well as we shall see below. Even though it says that God was sorry He made the animals in verse 7 and intended to blot them out, it is not them who were the cause, but man. Therefore, like Paul says, *all* Creation suffers on account of us. God’s judgment would be just enough to fulfill its purpose, which was to destroy all mankind. Many animals would get caught up in that judgment as well, not because they themselves were in the wrong, but because of their proximity to the corrupt man.

If God’s view of corruption was not *global*, it certainly was *universal*. Verse 8 reminded us that only Noah was found to be righteous. Similarly, David writes in Psalm 14 that there is no one who does good, they are all corrupt (*shachath*) (Ps. 14:1-3). Paul later states that all have sinned and fallen short of God’s standards (Rom. 3:23). This is all because of the Fall. If David and Paul clearly tell us that there are none who do good today, how must the earth have looked before the Flood?

Though *elohim* says in verse 11 that the earth (*erets*) is corrupt, He later elaborates by saying it is filled with violence “because of them” (v. 13). He will destroy them with the earth. Some global-extent Young-Earth Creationists have taken this to mean that one of the purposes of the Flood was to destroy the earth. The implication would be that great geologic catastrophes all over the world would have buried all of the creatures living at that time, later to become the fossil record. The context, however, does not allow for the interpretation that this was a purpose of the judgment, although it could be a consequence. The preposition *eth* (with) here is used to connote “together with” rather than used as a preposition of means (e.g. “he killed him WITH a sword”). In that case, the author would have used *be* or *le*. Consequently, *elohim* truly did intend to destroy man together with the *erets* (earth/land). The question then becomes “what is the proper interpretation of *erets*?” and “just how much did the *erets* get destroyed?” These questions will be addressed below. For now, it will suffice to say that the purpose is to destroy man, and that means that any flesh or land around him will get destroyed in the process.

In verses 14-21, *elohim* instructs Noah to build an ark for him, his family and two of certain kinds of animals to escape the impending Flood. Verse 14 contains some interesting theological and geological connotations. Noah is to build the ark out of gopher wood. The Hebrew word is *gopher* and it is used only here, so the exact kind of wood is a mystery. But Noah is then instructed to cover (Heb. *kaphar*) it with pitch (Heb. *kopher*). The Hebrew words for “gopher wood”, “cover” and “pitch” are very similar with “cover” and “pitch” obviously derived from the same root (*kpr*). *Kaphar* is used only here, but it is derived from a similar word meaning “to cover” or “to make atonement”. Also coming from that root is *kippur* from where the Jews get their Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur (Lev. 16). The idea is to cover the sins of man with blood to make atonement. The blood of the sacrificed animal was to atone for the sins of the man (Lev. 17:11). Yet another related word is *kopher* which means “ransom”. The idea behind this is a substitution for the penalty of sin, which is always blood. Mark 10:45 states that Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for many. That is, His blood was shed on the cross so that ours would be spared (1Cor. 15:3). He died in our place. The covering of the ark with pitch could be pictured as a symbol of God saving Noah’s family by His mercy while the unjust died for their transgressions. Truly even today, our sins can be covered by the atoning blood of our ransom, Jesus Christ.

There is some considerable debate over just what this covering was. The text says that it was to be covered inside and out with *kopher*, which is translated nearly unanimously as pitch. The only exceptions in the English versions are the NCV and NLT “tar” and YLT “cypress”. The Vulgate translates as *bitumine* and the LXX as *asphaltos*. The Vulgate and the LXX make it difficult to come up with any other meaning than a hydrocarbon of some form. Some YECs have argued that it could be a resin from a tree, but the context and translations weigh in heavily against that, although the YLT does translate as “cypress”. The implications would be that hydrocarbons existed BEFORE the Flood and therefore were not a product OF

the Flood. If there were hydrocarbons before the Flood then there were fossils before the Flood, and in enough quantity to make the “pitch” to line the ark at a minimum. We should examine this further.

Kopher is translated as *asphaltos* in the LXX which is only used two other times. Once in Genesis 14:10 to describe the “tar pits” in the Valley of Siddim, and once in Genesis 11:3 where they used “tar” for mortar between the bricks of the Tower of Babel. Both other times, the LXX translates the Hebrew word *chemar*. *Chemar* is only used one other time, in Ex. 2:3, where Moses’ mother covered (*chamar*) a basket with tar (*chamar*) and pitch (*zepheth*) and placed him inside. The LXX combines “tar” and “pitch” in Ex. 2:3 as *pissasphaltos*. In all of these verses, all of these words are translated as *bitumen* in the Vulgate. There leaves little doubt then that the *kopher* in Genesis 6:14 is in the realm of an asphalt, bitumen, tar or pitch; all of which are hydrocarbons in some fashion.

Geologically, asphalt occurs naturally where oil has been biodegraded at or near the surface. There are 305 naturally occurring bitumen deposits around the world at the surface with an estimated 5.5 billion barrels of in-place reserves according to the United States Geological Survey (USGS). The largest deposit of naturally occurring asphalt is located in Pitch Lake in southwestern Trinidad. This asphalt was used to caulk ships during the time of the explorers in the 16th Century. The La Brea Tar Pits in Los Angeles, California are actually asphalt lakes. They are famous for their preservation of Ice Age fossils such as mastodons. Tar and pitch can be used somewhat interchangeably although pitch is more solid and tar is more liquid in nature. Both of these can form from plant material or petroleum. Pitch that is derived from plant material is called resin, while pitch associated with petroleum is called bitumen. All of these materials are well known from ancient times for their ability to waterproof wooden vessels.

Although it is possible from the English translations to interpret the “pitch” coming from plant material and being more of a resin, the more ancient translations use “asphalt” and “bitumen” which connote a petroleum affiliation. It then seems clear that the best interpretation is that the pitch that Noah used was a petroleum product. This presents a serious challenge to the view that there were no hydrocarbons before the Flood. If there were hydrocarbons, then there MUST have been fossils in abundance enough to cover the ark. In addition, we know that asphalt is a secondary petroleum product. It forms from the biodegradation of an oil that was already there previously. The oil would have formed at depth, then upon upheaval to a depth suitable for biogenic activity, it would have been transformed into the asphalt. Typically this will happen where reservoir temperatures are less than 80 degrees Celsius. Above that temperature, the bacteria should not survive.

We know approximately where the story of Noah’s Flood takes place. In Genesis 8:4, the Bible says that the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. Presently, Mt. Ararat is in Turkey near the Iranian and Armenian borders. In this Transcaucasian Province, the USGS estimates almost half a billion barrels of naturally occurring bitumen in place. This would have been an ample source of the “pitch” Noah needed to cover the ark. In fact, the North Caspian Basin and the Volga-Ural Province are the third and fourth largest sources of natural bitumen in the world. There may not have been much better provision for Noah to build the ark anywhere else on earth.

In addition to the instructions to cover the ark in pitch, *elohim* gives Noah the exact measurements and structure of the ark. It is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high and have three levels. It is also to have a window that is a foot and a half from the top of the ark.

It is not until verse 17 that we find the actual means of the judgment. Here, *elohim* tells Noah, “I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die.” Taken out of context in any English Bible, this verse would clearly point to a global, worldwide Deluge. To arrive at the best interpretation, however, we must look at the words used in the original languages. We must also be extremely careful to distinguish between a “universal” extent which would refer to totality and a global extent which would refer to geography.

First let us look at what exactly is the nature of this judgment. It is a flood of waters (Heb. *mabbul*: LXX – *katakusmos*). The word *mabbul* is used 13 times in the OT, 12 of which are in the Genesis chapters on the Flood and refer to the Flood itself. The other use is in Ps. 29:10 where it says “the Lord sits enthroned over

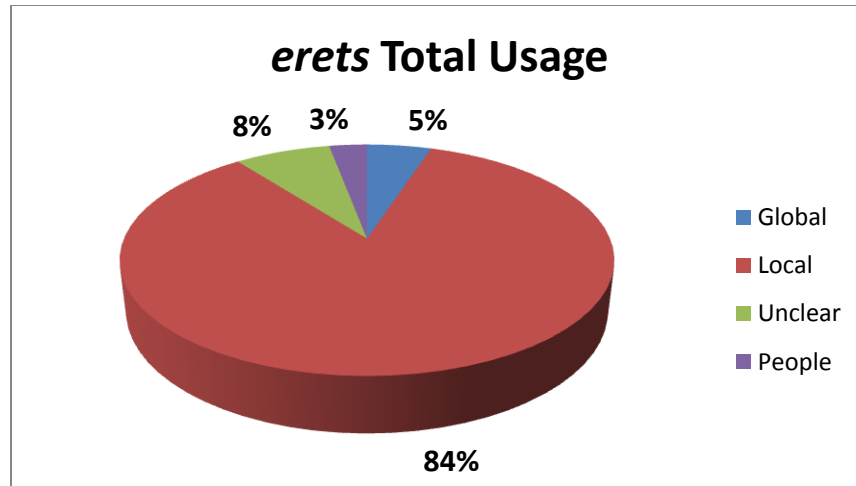
the flood". The Hebrew and the LXX use the same words throughout the Flood narrative, but there are other Hebrew words used to describe floods in other passages. In Exodus 15:5 Moses uses *tehom* to describe the waters that covered the Egyptian soldiers; in 2Sam. 5:20 the "bursting flood" is translated from the Hebrew *mayim*; *sheteph* is used for the overwhelming flood of Nahum 1:8; and *nahar* is used to describe the "floods" in Ps. 93:3. The LXX *kataklysmos* is used not only in the Great Flood narrative but also for the "great waters" of Ps. 32:6 (Heb. *sheteph mayim*), the "overwhelming flood" of Nahum 1:8 (Heb. *sheteph*), and the "flood" that will mark the end of the Anointed One in Dan. 9:26 (Heb. *sheteph*). The related verb *kataklyzo* is used in Job 14:19 to describe water that flows calmly and washes away soil. In Jer. 29:2 it is used to describe the overflowing torrent from the north that will defeat the Philistines (in this case not a flood of waters but of an invading army). Similarly in Ezekiel 13:11, 13 it is used to portray God's wrath as a "deluge of rain". This is a figurative deluge of rain, but the "torrential rains" of Ezekiel 38:22 are most likely literal rains along with hail and burning sulphur that will defeat Gog's army which invades Jerusalem at the end of the Millennium. The four NT uses of *kataklysmos* all refer to Noah's Flood.

Even though our words can be used to describe a figurative flood of God's judgment, it is quite apparent that the great *mabbul* (LXX: *kataklysmos*) is a very real, literal flood. And, with the exception of the odd LXX translation of Job 14:19, it appears that this flooding is not gentle but is a result of torrential down pouring of rain. Even though our English word "cataclysm" is derived from *kataklysmos*, we must be careful not to think of the Flood in today's English terminology. We should hope to attain a biblical description of the Flood that would have been the understanding of a Hebrew living in the 15th century BC. The history of the word *mabbul* is difficult, but a similar Akkadian word (*bubbulu*) refers to an "inundation" (i.e. with water). All this to say that the biblical terminology for Noah's Flood is special, and it describes a flood that was, in a sense, cataclysmic and would serve its purpose of judging the human population for its corruption. We now turn to the matter of extents.

The exact interpretation of the extent of the words such as "earth" and "all flesh" can be tricky. On the one hand, God defines "flesh" as corrupt (verses 12-13), and since we know the Hebrew word speaks of a moral corruption, we can logically deduce from the text that "flesh" here refers to human beings. On the other hand, flesh is also clearly referring to animals in other places in the account (see 7:21 and 8:17). Similarly, the phrase the breath of life can refer to both humans only, and humans and animals (see 7:15). Since these words and phrases can be ambiguous when interpreting the extent of the Flood, the best clue is in the word *erets*.

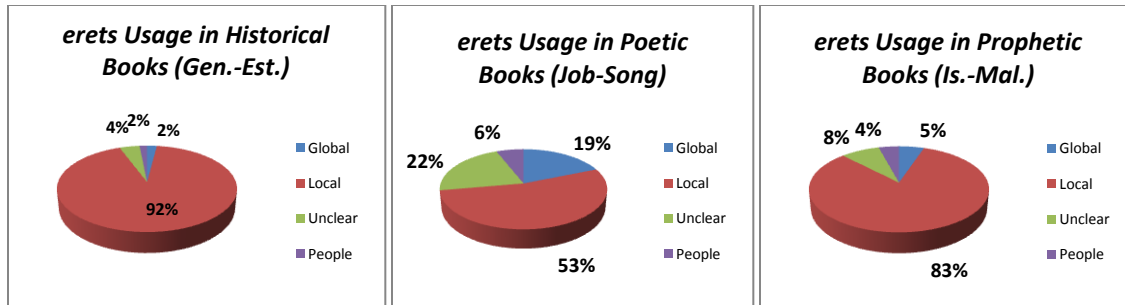
To arrive at the best interpretation of *erets*, we should examine its uses in all the OT, the different literary Book groupings, and in this Flood account exclusively. It is used 2504 times in the OT, 37 of which occur in Genesis 6-8. Semantically, it can mean the entire planet earth as in Genesis 1:1 or it can mean a local plot of land ranging in size from no bigger than a human body which bows with his face to the *erets* (1Chr. 21:21) to the size of a country (Ex. 12:51) to a bigger region (Jer. 3:18) to the entire land portion of the planet (Gen. 1:28). *Erets* can also be used to describe a group of people as in 2Sam 15:23 where "all the *erets* wept". It was the people who wept, and not the physical ground of the earth.

I have done a point count of all the OT uses of *erets* and divided them into the following semantic groups: a global earth, a local plot of land/ground, uncertain geographical extent, and people groups. The following chart shows the graphical distribution of the term by semantic category. Notice that *erets* is only used with an inarguable global extent in mind in only 5% of the occurrences. Even if we add in the "unclear" occurrences, we would only see it used globally 13% of the time. In an overwhelming majority of the cases, *erets* is used to describe a plot of ground of some size less than the entire globe.



Here are some interesting uses of the word *erets* where the meaning is clear and any attempt to take it in any other way is impossible. In Gen. 15:18 God gives Abram the *erets*. Surely He did not give him the entire global earth. He even defines the extent of the land as “from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates”. Even without that definition, it is doubtful that Abram would have thought he was receiving the entire global earth as a possession. In Ex. 1:10 the Egyptians formulate a plan to deal shrewdly with the Israelites lest they join with their enemies and “escape from the *eretz*”. Did the Egyptians think they would leave the planet? Of course not. Likewise in Deut. 1:21, God is not telling the Israelites to take possession of the earth, but rather the land He was showing before them. The battle between David and Absalom’s men in 2Sam. 8:18 was spread “over the face of all the *erets*”. Obviously it did not encompass the globe. In 2Kings 3:20 we read that the water “came from the direction of Edom, till the *erets* was filled with water”. This verse is interesting in that it could be translated to say that this water came and filled the earth. We know from the context that this interpretation is wrong. The water simply filled a local plot of land. To be sure, nobody would dare mention the Great Flood of 2Kings 3:20 as one which affected the planet’s geological processes. There are certainly many more examples where the usage of *erets* clearly does not mean the global planet earth, but let us now turn to its use in the various literary styles.

See the charts below to see how the term is used in the literary groupings of the OT Books. First we see that in the historical Books, the meaning of *erets* is almost exclusively local (even if you include all the “uncertain” uses as global). That is because these Books are mainly narratives that tell accounts of real people in real geographical areas. There is no real reason to think that an Israelite living at this time would have had a concept of a global planet earth with the exception of considering all of what is under heaven as created by and belonging to God. That is exactly how it is used in places such as Gen. 14:19; Deut. 4:39; 10:14; and 1Sam 2:8. As we move on to the poetic Books we find that *erets* is inarguably local in meaning in only about half of the occurrences. This section contains the highest percentage of global uses because of the author’s intent on praising the qualities of God that are abundant in all the earth as in Ps. 57:6; 72:19 because He made the earth (Ps. 146:6; Prov. 30:4). It is for this reason that the author’s give a greater number of calls to worship for all the *erets* (in these cases referring to people groups) as in Ps. 33:8; 66:1; 96:1; 98:4. The fewer occurrences of the local meaning can be accounted for strictly by the literary nature and intent of these Books. In the middle between the historical and poetic Books lie the prophets. As was the case in the historic Books, the overwhelming use is local, but there is an increased global usage primarily to show that God who created the earth alone is powerful and all-knowing to bring about the fulfillment of the prophecies as in Is. 40:28; Jer. 10:12; 32:17; 51:15; Zech. 12:1.



From this point count approach it is clear that there is a time and a place in Scripture where an intended extent of *erets* is employed. This lengthy and detailed background on the word *erets* was necessary in order to determine its proper use in context here in Genesis 6-8. From the use of *wayyiqtol* verbs we can be certain that this is a historical narrative which tells about real people and real places in real time. Significantly, similar literary styles in the OT almost exclusively use *erets* when describing a local portion of the earth of varying geographical extents. The exceptions are when the author wishes to describe the *erets* as being created by and belonging to God. Such is not the context of the Flood account although the Flood is depicted here in Gen. 6:17 as a judgment “upon the earth” because it was corrupt (v.12). Since we know this corruption is referring only to mankind, it seems fitting that only the earth which contained man would be impacted by this judgment.

We come now to the term all flesh in verse 17. We know that the proper definition of the phrase in verse 12 is referring to just human beings because only they could have “corrupted their way on the earth”. Since sin and redemption are not possible in the animal world, it is logically deduced that this is only referring to humans. But it may also logically be deduced that any animal caught up in this judgment against mankind would also perish.

Since we have good evidence that *erets* may mean a local or regional portion of land, we may substitute that into the passage for the last part of verse 17. It then states that everything that is on the land shall die. Reading it this way takes much of the interpretation problems of a global reading away. For example, we know that God did not tell Noah to take any fish on the ark. Why? Because they would not need saving in a flood of water. They would have easily survived. Therefore we CANNOT interpret *erets* here with a global extent. It would not be a true statement that everything on the planet earth would die, since we know that fish, plants and microorganisms survived just fine. I believe it is statements like this, rendered with the English “earth” that have greatly misled people and kept them from a proper interpretation of the Flood, not only biblically, but also geologically.

With the gloomy news of the impending judgment behind, *elohim* then comforts Noah by saying I will establish my covenant with you in verse 18. This is the first time this word, *beriyth*, is used in the Bible. It is the general word for a covenant between people, nations, or between God and man with proof of blessings and/or accompanying signs. It is used 284 times in the OT. Here, the covenant is between God and Noah. The covenant is not given here, but it will be in 8:20-9:17 where God promises never again to flood the land and wipe out all flesh, and tells Noah and the creatures on the ark to be fruitful and multiply and fill the land.

Over the next three verses *elohim* instructs Noah on what to take with him on the ark. He is to take a male and female of every living thing of all flesh. This is later expanded to the birds (or winged insects: *oph*), the animals (domesticated: *behema*) and the creeping things (lizards and rodents: *remes*), so we know this does not truly mean ALL flesh. There again is no mention of fish or the beasts of the earth mentioned in Gen. 1:24 (the *nephesh chayyah*). This is just another example where it is difficult to interpret extents based on traditionally global terminology. Noah is also instructed to take food for his family and all the animals. The term *maakhal* is not strictly vegetarian and does not exclude meat. Noah was careful to obey all that *elohim* told him (v. 22).

Genesis 7:1-5 (ESV)

Yahweh speaks on the immanence of the Flood

1 Then the Lord said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation.

2 Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate,

3 and seven pairs of the birds of the heavens also, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth.

4 For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground."

5 And Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him.

The personal name of God is again employed in this section which opens with the *wayyiqtol* verb *wayyomer* (and [Yahweh] said). Naturally this would mean that the storyline is continued uninterrupted from the end of chapter 6. While this is true, there is a notable gap of about 100 years between the chapters. This is the time it took for Noah and his family to build the ark. This text does not specifically say that Noah needed 100 years to build the ark, but we know that Noah was 500 years old at the end of chapter 5 (verse 32), and that the Flood began in his 600th year (7:6) and we are now just 7 days away from its onset (7:4). During that 100 years we know from 1Pet. 3:20 that God patiently waited for other people to repent and be saved, but only the 8 people in Noah's family escaped the Deluge.

As noted above, 100 years have passed since *elohim* instructed Noah to build the ark, and now just 7 days before the rains come *Yahweh* tells Noah to enter the ark. In his first 500 years, Noah walked with God and found His favor. After 100 years, Noah still is seen as righteous before *Yahweh* (v. 1).

In this passage, Noah is instructed to take an increased number of clean animals (v. 2) and birds (v. 3) for the sacrifices he would make after the Flood is over (8:20).

The first of many time markers is now given in verse 4. We are now just 7 days before the Flood and it will rain on the earth forty days and forty nights. Even though the number 40 is found many times in Scripture, there is no reason to think these are anything other than 40 literal days as they are mentioned elsewhere in this account (7:12, 17). The word here for rain (*matar*) is used 17 times in its verbal form, 16 of which are in the *hiphil* stem which designates active causative action. The main idea behind the word in its verbal form is that God is the One who "rains" on His people either blessings (Ex. 16:4 & Ps. 78:24-manna) or, more often, judgments (Gen. 19:24-sulfur and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah; Ex. 9:23-hail on the Egyptians; or Ps. 11:6-coals on the wicked). The noun form (also *matar*) is used 38 times in the OT and refers to a common rain. Interestingly the noun form is not used in this Flood narrative, but rather *geshem* is employed. It is used in both Gen. 7:12 and 8:2 and it is typically used to describe the heavy winter rain (cf. Ezra 10:9 & Song 2:11). According to Easton's Bible Dictionary, these rains usually fall between the middle of December to March in Palestine. From the terminology used by Moses, we may infer that these were to be rains similar (even if only a seasonal similarity) to the familiar but sometimes torrential winter rains. In any case, we may safely say that these rains were seen as caused by *Yahweh*.

One idea that is tossed about, usually in global-extent YEC camps, is that these rains were the first ever seen on the earth. This idea is taken mainly from Gen. 2:5 where it says that "the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land" and then extrapolating that all the way to the Flood account. There are two big problems with this thinking, however. First, there is no biblical evidence warranting the absence of rain from Adam to Noah. In fact, the text in Gen. 2:5 would seem to suggest that once Adam was created, rain would indeed fall (from the usage of the adverb "yet"). Second, and very unfortunately, many English translations translate *erets* (ESV, HCSB-"land") as "earth" (KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV, NLT, Message). We have already seen the ample evidence from the text that "land" fits the context much better in Gen. 2:5. This is a great example of relying solely on a faulty English translation to come up with a faulty interpretation of earth history. The implications are such that there would have been *no* rain on the entire planet for a minimum of 1656 years (assuming a continuous genealogical progression in Genesis 5). This has led to a hypothesis that there was a vapor canopy above the earth before the Flood, taken in part from Gen. 1:6-8 where God made the expanse to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth. This hypothesis has severe problems both biblically (the concept is never mentioned in the Bible) and

scientifically (the greenhouse effect of all the water vapor in the atmosphere would make earth uninhabitable). With all the evidence from the Scripture that the pre-Fall and pre-Flood natural world was virtually identical to the one we know today, this view can be easily dismissed as unbiblical if not unthinkable. Rain was certainly an integral part of earth history, and rain drop marks can even be observed in the rock record, such as in the Triassic rift sediments of New England and the Permian Coconino Sandstone in the Grand Canyon.

Whether or not Noah was familiar with the rain he would encounter seemed to have no bearing on his faith. Noah was found to be righteous and therefore he did everything just as *Yahweh* instructed.

Genesis 7:6-16 (ESV)

Noah and his family enter the ark as the Flood begins

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

7 And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood.

8 Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground,

9 two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah.

10 And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth.

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened.

12 And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

13 On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark,

14 they and every beast, according to its kind, and all the livestock according to their kinds, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, according to its kind, and every bird, according to its kind, every winged creature.

15 They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life.

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

In this section we find the beginning of the Great Flood. From the Hebrew verbs we can rightly outline this passage as follows: v. 6 gives us background information, vv. 7-12 give the storyline, and vv. 13-17 pause and re-tell the story. There is only one verb in verse 6 (*chayah* "came") and it is in the perfect tense. The other verb in most English translations ("was") is not found in the Hebrew, although it is a proper interpolation and is even found in the LXX (*en*). *Chayah* is the verb "to be" and is best translated as such. The NET Bible goes too far with their translation "engulfed". There is no intensification in the word to justify that wording. Likewise with the HCSB, NLT and Message rendering of "covered". These translations are too interpretive. These word choices may have been fueled by the fact that every translation favors "earth" rather than "land" for *erets*. We have already seen, however, that "land" is not only a possible translation, but the more likely one based on the context.

Our first *wayyiqtol* verb appears in verse 7 (*wayyavo* – and they came), thus beginning the storyline of Noah and his family entering the ark. Noah also takes all of the clean and unclean animals, the birds and the *remes* (creeping animals, small rodents or tiny reptiles) just as *elohim* commands. Again, there is no mention that Noah boarded any fish or plants.

The account continues in verse 10 where after seven days the waters of the Flood came upon the earth. The verse begins the *wayyiqtol* verb *wayyahiy* (and it was). Unfortunately, many modern translations leave the verb untranslated. Nevertheless the seven days encountered in verse 4 have now passed and the waters (Heb. *mayim*) have now come. The verb here translated as "came" is the same as in verse 6 (*chayah*). Again, the NET (engulfed) and NLT (came and covered) have gone beyond the text with their translations. The Hebrew simply tells us that the waters came on the *erets* (land).

The Flood officially begins on the 17th day of the 2nd month of Noah's 600th year of life (v. 11). We must look closely at what exactly happens to the natural world according to the text beginning with this verse.

The English reads on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights (Gen. 7:11b-12). Many YEC global Flood adherents use this verse to suggest the entire earth was catastrophically hit by torrential rains from above as well as tectonically altered by the bursting forth of the fountains of the deep. In the book "*Coming to Grips with Genesis*", William Barrick Th.D. states in his chapter on the Flood that "It is abundantly clear from the language of the Flood narrative that the disruption of the earth's surface was comprehensive and global" (p. 260). He says again that the Flood "obscured the original continent(s)" (p. 267). Specifically relating to this verse, Barrick states that "[the] word [*baqa*-"burst open"] is loaded with geological significance. It indicates that in the prevailing phase of the floodwaters there was massive tectonic activity in the crust of the earth. These earthquakes would have caused volcanoes and tsunamis (as earthquakes do today) on a global scale, with incredible destructive power" (p. 268). Let's explore the terminology used in verse 11 and see if Barrick's "geological significance" is well-founded.

Before we get to the verb (burst forth), we need to determine what the fountains of the great deep (Heb. *maeyenoth tehom rabah*) are. The word *maayan* (fountain) is used 22 times in the OT. The primary use of this word is for a common fountain or spring of water. In Proverbs 8:24 wisdom is said to exist "when there were no depths (*tehom*)" and "when there were no springs (*maayan*). The great deep is mentioned three other times in the OT. In Is. 51:10, the "great deep" is referring to the Red Sea when God parted the waters for the Israelites to cross over. In Amos 7:4, the prophet sees a vision in which fire rains down and burns up the great deep and the land. Amos intercedes for Israel and God decides not to follow through. Finally in Psalm 36:7, God's judgments are compared to the great deep. The latter two are clearly figurative, and in the only other historical use (Is. 51:10), the great deep refers to the Red Sea. That is not to say that Noah's Flood need be localized to the Red Sea for *tehom* can clearly refer to the world's oceans as in Gen 1:2. The LXX translates *tehom* as *abussos* from which we get the word "abyss": a term geologists use today to describe the environment of the deep ocean. So then it is difficult to determine the extent of these fountains just from the terminology despite Barrick's claim that it is "abundantly clear". Especially since the only other historical reference to the "great deep" is local and does not refer to the world's oceans. It can even be logically assumed that the reference in Amos is local as well as it is a prophecy against Israel.

In any case, these fountains of the great deep were "burst open". Indeed the English translation has catastrophic connotations. Barrick considers this word (*baqa*) to be loaded with geologic significance. The word here is in the *niphal* stem and should therefore be translated as the passive "were burst open". There is no reason for the NASB to change to the active voice from the ASV. Likewise almost all modern English translations lose the passive voice for this verb while retaining it for the windows of heaven - "were opened". *Baqa* is used 51 times in the OT, 15 in the *niphal*. According to TWOT, the basic idea seems to be "a strenuous cleaving of recalcitrant materials". Sometimes these can be natural materials of the earth such as the waters of the Red Sea "splitting" for the Israelites in Ex. 14:16; Ps. 78:13; Is. 63:12. Others refer to the splitting of the rock for the water to gush out for the wandering Israelites (Is. 48:21; Ps. 78:15-to provide waters as from the deep). Still others refer to the splitting of the ground (presumably an earthquake) (Num. 16:31; Mic. 1:4; Zech. 14:4). Proverbs 3:20 refers directly to Genesis 7:11 and says that the deeps "broke open" by God's knowledge. From these verses, the TWOT definition seems justified. The interesting verse here may be Ps. 78:15 where it says that God split (*baqa*) rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep (*tehom*). Here, the deep appears to be the groundwater beneath the wilderness that was released as a spring (*maayan* in Ps. 114:8).

There does appear to be ample biblical evidence that the word *baqa* carries some geological significance as Barrick states. That said, there is some ambiguity as to the extent of the words "deep", "fountain" and "burst forth". Global Flood advocates would suggest there were sub-oceanic pockets of water that catastrophically burst open (Snelling, *Earth's Catastrophic Past* (2010), pp. 31-33). However, the text does not specifically say that, and there is no evidence from the geologic record that this took place. Some adherents suggest the mid-oceanic ridges bear the scars of these sub-oceanic fountains (Barrick's chapter in "*Coming to Grips with Genesis*", p. 276). Indeed, when one looks at a bathymetric map of the earth, it is an appealing place to start, but if we look at the present-day ridges, they have nothing to do with water. They are places where magma from the mantle is coming to the surface and creating new oceanic crust. There is no possibility that these formations could have been storehouses for sub-surface pockets of water

because the crust is too thin. Additionally, just because the mid-ocean ridges appear global (the system is nearly 50,000 miles in length) does not mean that they would have been able to store water enough to cover the entire globe. There are places that are thousands of miles from this system, so the amount of water stored in these pockets would have been immense and would have left a geologic trace. No such traces have been found.

It is well known that there are pockets of water in the subsurface. This water is interpreted as being left in the pore space of the sediment as it was buried after deposition in the paleo-ocean. The water is a brine, and is frequently encountered during drilling for oil and natural gas (much to the dismay of the drilling company). This water can be abundant but it usually occurs in very small, sometimes unconnected pore spaces within the rock. Occasionally it can occupy underground karsts (caves), but these have never been seen or inferred to have “burst” forth onto the surface. In places where the crust is thin, conditions can be just right to bring subterranean water forcefully to the surface, such as at Yellowstone National Park. For these geysers to have supplied water for a global Flood would imply a thin crust over the entire earth. The geologic record speaks heavily against that, however. Such places are called “hot spots” and are very localized, and most have left a breadcrumb trail of where they have been (such as the Hawaiian Island chain). Again, the geologic record does not support the notion of there being subterranean or sub-oceanic pockets of abundant water that at some time in the past “burst” forth onto the surface. Such catastrophic actions should be glaringly obvious when looking at the record all over the earth. Perhaps there is a better explanation to reconcile the Scriptural account with the geologic account.

We have already seen the semantic ranges of the words “deep”, “fountain” and “burst forth”. We have also noted that *baqa* does carry with it substantial proof of a geologic event of some level. Certainly the splitting of the ground in Numbers 16:31 indicates an earthquake or sinkhole in which the earth opened its mouth and swallowed Korah and his family. This anthropomorphic language is very common in the OT where attributes and actions of the creation and the Creator are described using terms familiar to the human audience. While the true action taken by the fountains of the deep in Genesis 7:11 may never be known, it is apparent that it need not be a worldwide catastrophic phenomenon. In fact, the predominant usage of *baqa* in Scripture is local in extent (i.e. the Red Sea, the rock that gushed water, local earthquakes).

Genesis 7:11 is one of the most often cited verses by global Flood advocates to show the immense catastrophic tectonic upheavals caused by God’s judgment on the earth in Noah’s Flood. It appears that the terminology used does speak of catastrophe, but this interpretation stretches the semantic range to the max and is not consistent with other uses in Scripture, nor is it remotely consistent with the geologic record. Based on these other occurrences of the terms mentioned here, I would propose the following, general, biblical interpretation of verse 11: the fountains of the great deep would refer to any water already on or just underneath the surface of the ground, and the “bursting” is the geologic activity that brought the water to the area of the judgment. This action could be an earthquake, or quakes, that triggered the release of a dammed body of water or the release of groundwater in the form of springs or geysers. We must be honest in saying it is difficult to determine the extent of this geologic activity, although the overwhelming use of these terms in Scripture is local in extent. The definition given may seem vague, but it is biblically accurate and will serve as the framework for the interpretation of the Flood narrative and its effects on the natural world.

There is abundant geologic evidence that many of the bodies of salt water in the vicinity of Europe, Asia and the Middle East were fresh water in the recent past and “suddenly” flooded and became the seas we know today. For example, the Black Sea was a large fresh water lake 8,000 years ago. We know this from fossils of fresh water mollusks and the remains of man-made tools and structures in 300 feet of present-day salt water. It is postulated that the retreating glaciers at the end of the last ice age melted and infilled the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas. This water broke through a natural dam at the Bosphorus and flooded the Black Sea. Similarly, the Mediterranean Sea was once completely evaporated, leaving behind the Messinian Salt deposit. Then, the natural dam at the Strait of Gibraltar gave way when the ground shifted and the Atlantic Ocean came in and filled up the basin in perhaps just a few months. This is believed to have happened around 5.5 million years ago. Also, the Eastern Mediterranean has a more recent history of salt to fresh water cyclicity. The Gulf of Corinth was a disconnected fresh water lake until about 13,200 years ago when the sediments became marine, according to several cores taken on the sea bottom. The

change was primarily due to glacial melting and rising seas, but the very active tectonics in the region and the evidence of mudslides and sharp contacts in the cores suggests the transition may have happened rather suddenly. Indeed there are other examples in the region that speak of similar histories.

I have been careful not to link any of these geologic case histories with the biblical account of Noah's Flood. These examples were given simply to provide evidence that geologic events have happened in the region that caused the flooding of an area in a relatively short amount of time. The geologic events listed in Genesis 7:11 could easily be similar to the ones that caused the floods mentioned above. The processes could be the same. The terminology used in Scripture for the "bursting forth" of the "fountains of the great deep" may well be referring to the breaking of a natural dam that protected the inhabitants of Noah's day from the level of the sea that was above them. This interpretation may not be correct, but, importantly, it fits within the semantic range of the words used, and can be backed up by other passages in the Bible. We must be careful to not only practice sound biblical exegesis, but to also look to the rock record to help strengthen our interpretation in cases like this. Unfortunately, so many people let their interpretation of one side of the story run wild without making sure the other side agrees. This is true of some who only let their biblical interpretation speak without having corroborating evidence from the natural world, as well as those who only focus on their interpretation of the rocks and dismiss the Bible as a collection of myths. I believe the truth of Noah's Flood should show itself in both accounts.

We come now to the next event of verse 11: the windows of the heavens were opened. The phrase "windows of the heavens" in Hebrew reads *waaruboth hashamayim*. In 5 out of its 9 occurrences, *aruvah* (window) is used with *shamayim* (heaven(s), sky). Many have imagined that this phrase speaks of a torrential rain such as has not happened before or since the Great Flood. It does seem that the other uses of this phrase suggest an abundant amount of rainfall (see the hypothetical usage in 2Kings 7:2, 19). But also consider God's promise of blessings to pour out of these same windows in Mal. 3:10. While the terminology does infer plentiful rainfall, it does not specifically speak of catastrophic worldwide downpours. Rather, the words themselves simply refer to avenues of God's abundant judgment and blessing in the form of rainfall. We should be careful not to read too much into this phrase in the Flood narrative when it is used elsewhere in Scripture to depict just a heavy rain. What is unique about this rainfall in Scripture is its duration.

Verse 12 picks up the storyline again with another *wayehiy* (and it was, or and it came about) and says that the rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights. Again, sadly, most modern English translations ignore that verb, but it is very helpful in outlining the account. We have also seen *wayehiy* in verse 10 and will encounter it again in verse 17. So, this verse adds to its background information in verse 11 to say that the rain began to fall and did so for 40 days and nights. As we will see, this is different than what is written in verse 17 where it says that the Flood was on the land 40 days. That is not simply a redundancy.

It is significant to point out, and this may come as a complete surprise to most readers, that the Bible does not say that the rain ONLY lasted 40 days and 40 nights. In fact, a closer reading of the text will show that the rains lasted 150 days, not 40. Even in verse 12 Moses is careful not to limit the rains to only 40 days. We will see the evidence for the 150 day rainfall below. So, what then is the significance of the 40 days? I believe the main reason for mentioning the 40 days is that there is a significant event that happens on that day: the ark is lifted up off the ground (see verse 17). Another possibility is to add symmetry to the account in the way of a chiasm using the day markers (i.e. 7 (7:4,10) – 40 (7:12,17) – 150 (7:24) – 40 (8:6) – 7 (8:8 or 10) although this may not hold as much ground. Nevertheless it has now been raining on the land for 40 days.

In the next four verses Moses retells the part of the account where Noah and his family enter the ark. We know the story pauses because of the lack of *wayyiqtol* verbs, and the parallels between verses 13-16 and 7-9 suggests a reiteration of the same event. *Wayyiqtol* verbs are first seen here in verse 15 (and they went), and again in verse 16 (shut). It is theologically significant that Noah did as *elohim* commanded in verse 10, and then goes on to say that it was *Yahweh* that shut him in. It is the personal Name that is used here to show the intimate saving and sealing of Noah and his family.

Genesis 7:17-24 (ESV)

The Floodwaters prevail

17 The flood continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth.

18 The waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the face of the waters.

19 And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered.

20 The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep.

21 And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind.

22 Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died.

23 He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark.

24 And the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days.

The narrative continues in verse 17 with the *wayyiqtol* verb *wayehiy* (and it came about). Sadly, as was the case in verses 10 and 12, this verb is not translated. In my opinion, this is how Moses moves the storyline along. He takes the recount of Noah entering the ark with his family and the animals and moves it up to the logical point where it was in verse 12. Whereas then it was the rain that continued for 40 days and nights, here the emphasis is on the flood (Heb. *mabbul*) that continued for 40 days. Note here that it does not say 40 days *and nights* in the Hebrew text like it does in verse 12. The LXX does read *kai tessarakonta nuktas* (and 40 nights) in attempt to parallel verse 12. Fortunately all English translations follow the Hebrew and omit this later addition. The idea here is to focus not on the continuing rain, but on the flooding. It is not the rain or the bursting of the fountains of the deep that is the judgment: it is the Flood (Gen. 6:17).

It is often neglected that we are in a flowing part of the narrative as evidenced by the chain of *wayyiqtol* verbs. In order to properly understand and interpret these passages we need to read them as such. The second verb in verse 17 is *wayyirebu* (and they [the waters] increased). This is the same verb used by God when He told the sea creatures and the birds to “multiply” on the earth on the 5th Creation Day in Genesis 1:22. We are located still on Flood Day 40, and we are told that the waters (Heb. *mayim*) are continuing to increase. There is no evidence that the rains or the fountains have yet been restrained. In fact that will not happen for another 110 days as we will see.

The third *wayyiqtol* verb mentioned in verse 17 is *wayyiseu* (and they [the waters] raised). This verb in its continuous tense is extremely important in understanding the geologic effects of the Flood. And it appears that most commentators overlook its significance (although a few have described and interpreted it grammatically correct, they have ignored its consequence as to its effect on the natural world). The verse here says that the waters increased and bore up the ark. The implications of the *wayyiqtol* tense here is that we must view this as largely sequential. That is, on the 40th day of the Flood the waters rose and bore up the ark. The ark had not been moved from the ground previously. That means that the waters that had been raining down and bursting forth from the ground had not accumulated enough to move the ark until the 40th day of the Flood. William Barrick (a Young-Earth proponent) agrees on this point and references several others who also concur in his chapter in the book “*Coming to Grips with Genesis*” (p. 263).

We know from Scripture that the ark was about 45 feet high (Gen. 6:15). For argument’s sake let us assume that half of that height (23 feet) of water was necessary to lift the ark off the ground. That amounts to a rise of about 6 inches per day. While that does not sound like the catastrophic amount that most global-Flood adherents propose and need to defend their Flood Geology ideas, it is a very significant amount of water. Certainly the people living in the land would have been unable to escape, especially if the majority of that water came in from the initial bursting of the fountains. As mentioned above, there is geologic evidence that several basins have recently flooded in what could have been just a few months. It remains then very plausible that the land where all the population lived was inundated immediately with the flooding of waters that were already on the earth as the rain continued to mercilessly fall and add to the water column.

The text is very clear in its usage of sequential verbs outlining the events of the 40th day of the Flood. In my opinion this offers a very damaging blow to the notion of a worldwide catastrophic Flood. **It seems utterly nonsensical to suggest that the bursting of the fountains of the great deep and the opening of the windows of the heavens caused great tectonic upheavals of the earth's crust, but were unable to lift the ark off the ground for 40 days.** Any attempt to attach great worldwide tectonism to these events is shot down by that simple piece of *biblical* evidence. It is safe to say that the biblical text suggests a rather slow accumulation of waters of about 20 feet in depth occurred in the first 40 days. At that time, the ark was sufficiently buoyant and began to float on the waters. This biblical description of the opening period of the Flood account is a far cry from what global Flood advocates suggest happened. A reading of materials published by so-called Flood geologists leaves one with the notion that the onset of the Flood in Genesis 7:11 literally turned the world upside down with its huge earthquakes triggering volcanic eruptions as the crustal plates began their catastrophic movements at paces far quicker than measured today. After reading these verses and paying careful attention to the original word choices and grammatical relationships it is very difficult to reconcile that interpretation with what the Bible is truly saying. It is true that the Bible does not mention specific geological events during the Flood, but it does give us constraints on what are acceptable and unacceptable geologic interpretations. This 40th day gives us a very clear constraint on the depth and energy levels of the Flood in its early stages.

The fourth and final *wayyiqtol* verb in verse 17 is *wataram* (and it [the ark] was lifted up). The text says it rose high above the *erets*. This is a clear instance where *erets* does not mean the global earth, but a local portion of it (although only the paraphrase NCV uses the term “ground”). The YLT translates as “it is raised up *from* off the earth” following the LXX “*apo tes ges*”. Most other versions read some variation as “rose [high] above the earth”. The compound preposition translated as “high above” is *meal* and it is a combination of *min* (from) and *al* (upon). It is used 216 times in the OT and according to “*Basics of Biblical Hebrew*” typically means “from upon” (p. 60). It is unfortunate that most modern translations employ too much interpretation in their translation “high above”. The phrase *meal haarets* is also used in Gen. 8:3 where “the waters receded from the earth”. Are we to assume that they receded “high above” the earth? Similarly, should we interpret that if one transgresses the covenant of God as in Joshua 23:16 they will perish from “high above” the earth? No, the words here literally indicate only that the ark rose “from upon” its resting place on the ground and tell us nothing as to the height of the water. A casual reading in English will not get us closer to the intended meaning of the text here. Rather it falsely gives hope for a catastrophic lifting of the ark.

Logically this fourth verb in the chain follows the ark lifting off the ground, but there does not appear to be any notion from the text as to how high it rose just yet. The text is just simply giving us a chain of events as follows: it was the 40th day of the Flood – the waters increased – the ark was lifted off the ground – it rose up from off the ground.

The account continues chronologically in verse 18 with three *wayyiqtol* verbs: the waters prevailed (*wayyigeberu*) and increased greatly (*wayyirebu*) and the ark floated (*wateleke*) on the face of the waters. The verb prevail (*gavar*) is used 25 times in the OT (4 times in the Flood narrative) and carries the connotation of a successful warrior who triumphs with his strength and vitality. In this case the warrior is the Flood and it exhibits its domination over the land here beginning on the 40th day. Not only do the waters prevail over the land, they are also said have increased greatly on the earth which suggests the waters do not stop coming on the 40th day. They are still coming, and the water level is still rising.

It is during this continued prevailing phase of the Flood that Moses pauses to describe the seemingly surreal presence and effect of the Flood on the land and its inhabitants. Verses 19 and 20 give us additional information on the extent of the Flood. When these verses and following are read in English, they give almost unanimous support to a worldwide catastrophic Flood. But as we have seen, the first 40 days appear to have yielded only about 20+ feet of water and resulted in geologic insignificance. What are we to make then of the phrases that follow? ***All the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered*** (v. 19)...***the mountains were covered*** (v.20)...***all flesh that moved on the earth...everything on the dry land...died*** (v. 21-22)...***He blotted out every living thing...they were blotted out from the earth*** (v. 23). If one were to advocate anything but a complete devastation and destruction of everything on planet earth after reading this, their explanation would surely face a strong uphill battle. On the other hand, if a

worldwide catastrophic Flood is in view here then it should be readily apparent when reading not only the English translation, but also the original Hebrew.

In order to interpret these verses, we will practice the same sound exegetical tactics we would employ anywhere else in Scripture. That is, what are the terms used in the original language and their semantic ranges and grammatical relationships? What are the other uses (if any) in the rest of the Bible? What is the context? How would an original audience understand what is being said? We will address these questions below in as objective a manner as possible to arrive at a sound biblical model for this prevailing phase of the Flood.

In verse 19, the waters are said to have “prevailed” (Heb. *gavar* in the perfect tense) “so mightily” (Heb. *meod meod*) “on the earth” (Heb. *al-haarets*) that “all the high mountains” (Heb. *kol-hehariym hagevohiyim*) “under the whole heaven” (Heb. *asher-tahath kol-hashamayim*) “were covered” (Heb. *wayekhussu* in the *wayyiqtol* tense). By reading the perfect tense at the beginning of the verse, we are to pause from the chronology and reflect on what is happening. The waters prevailed so mightily (the adverb is duplicated so as to add emphasis) over its rival (the land and its inhabitants) that there was no chance of escape. The double adverb (*meod meod*) is used 5 other times in Scripture. In Gen. 30:43, Jacob’s possessions “increased greatly” while working for Laban, in Num. 14:7 the Promised Land was “exceedingly good” according to the Hebrew spies, in 1Kings 7:47 there were “so many” bronze vessels that they could not be weighed, in 2Kings 10:4 the guardians of Ahab’s sons were “exceedingly afraid”, and in Ezek. 37:10 the army of the dry bones was “exceedingly great”. From these other uses it is apparent that the double adverb is meant to show an “exceeding prevailing” of the Flood waters. Most translations give an appropriate reading of this phrase.

So, what are we to make of the phrase all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered? The word translated “mountain” is the Hebrew word *har*, which can mean any feature of higher relief than the surrounding land. For instance, Samson carried the doors and the gates of Gaza up to the top of a *har* in Judges 16:3. Certainly this was not a high mountain, but just a hill. Indeed, the KJV and NKJV alone translate *har* in Genesis 7:19 as the “high hills” as opposed to virtually every other translation which reads the “high mountains”. So what’s the difference?...tens of thousands of feet of water. Did the Flood water cover the local hills or did it cover Mt. Everest? The ESV translates *har* as “hill” in 40 out of the 570 occurrences in the OT (7%), so, even though it is not the most frequent choice, it is still easily within the semantic range of the word. It is obvious then that the word alone cannot tell us the extent, we must look at the context.

We have already seen that the Flood was no more than roughly 20 feet deep by the end of the first 40 days (v.17). The next time marker we encounter is in verse 24 where the climax of the Flood occurs on the 150th day (read with 8:3). That tells us that in these six verses we are situated in the 110 days of the prevailing phase. The waters are increasing during these 110 days because the rains and the fountains have not been restrained (see 8:2). To see just how much the waters increase, consider the two options. For the Flood to cover the local hills requires possibly just a few more tens to hundreds of feet. If the Flood covered all the “high mountains” on the globe, there would have had to have been an additional 29,000 feet of water. The first 40 days brought about 6 inches of water per day. If that pace continued, there would have been another 55 feet during the prevailing phase. If the highest mountains on earth were covered, then the pace would have been over 260 feet per day! There is no biblical evidence that a sudden, not to mention astounding, increase in the floodwaters occurred on the 40th day. There is yet another logical problem with this outburst...where would all the water have come from? Let’s explore further for more contextual clues.

The next prepositional phrase under the whole heaven appears to provide the extent of the Flood. In English, we are left to imagine the Flood covered every mountain (or hill) everywhere on the globe. The phrase in Hebrew reads *kol-hashamayim* and is used elsewhere 6 times in the OT. In Deut. 2:25 it says that God will put the fear of the Hebrews on the people who are “under the whole heavens”. Clearly, this is a reference to the people who would have heard of and/or encountered the Israelites. There would have been no need for this fear to come upon the people of the Amazon rain forest as they would have no familiarity with them. This then is a local meaning of “the whole heaven”. Similarly in Job 37:3, where the thunder goes throughout “the whole heaven”, the meaning is localized to the observer. When he hears the thunder,

it is as if God's voice is going throughout the whole heaven. Meanwhile, someone on the other side of the planet hears nothing. The other few instances of the phrase can be interpreted as global in nature. Therefore, even though the phrase reads as global in English, it must be considered that it was meant to be local to the observer as in the verses mentioned above.

In verse 20 we again find a reference to water depth. The Hebrew in verse 20 is difficult, and how one translates it has vastly different implications with regards to the depth of the water. Did the waters rise 15 cubits (~23 feet) and cover the mountains (hills)? Or, did the waters cover the mountains (hills) 15 cubits above their crests. Supporting the former are the Darby, KJV, NKJV, NASB, YLT and the LXX. Supporting the latter are the ESV, The Message, NET, NCV, NIV, NIV, TNIV, NLT, RSV, NRSV, and the Latin Vulgate. The HCSB decided to support both views, including one in brackets. So which is correct? The answer may be uncertain although the former is a more literal reading of the Hebrew. As such, the more literal English translations favor it over the latter. The latter is favored by the more interpretive translations.

To arrive at a more likely interpretation we can test the feasibility of both renderings. For example, one would have to wonder how Noah would know that Mt. Everest was covered with 20 feet of water if he was floating in Mesopotamia. Potentially more likely is the scenario that Noah saw the waters rise up and over a familiar landmark. Once the waters rose 20 feet, that hill was covered with water. Another clue is in 8:4 which says the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat on the 150th day. If the water depth was 20 feet over the highest peak (Everest at 29,000 feet), then it would have been impossible for the ark to hit even the highest peak at Ararat which is only 16,854 feet above present sea level. Conversely, if the waters rose just above the hills of Ararat (not the actual mountain we know today), it would have been easy to see how the ark would have been grounded. Think of the sea level curve needed to cover Mt. Everest and then drop over 12,000 feet in one day for the ark to catch on to Mt. Ararat! Furthermore, we know from the verbs in verse 20 that *gavar* (prevail) is in the perfect tense as in verse 19. This is again followed by *wayekhussu* (covered) in the *wayyiqtol* tense. This is best interpreted as the perfect verbs setting the stage for the first action of a narrative (the *wayyiqtol*). That is, the waters prevailed upward 23 feet, *then* they covered the hills. In my opinion, the literal translations not only capture the Hebrew phrasing better, but they also provide a more realistic and believable water depth given the context. This now gives us a minimum water depth of 45 feet for the Flood (23 feet at day 40, and an additional 23 feet here). While that may hardly seem like the Flood we heard about in Sunday School, it is possible to wipe out all life in a valley at even those shallow depths. Keep in mind this is a minimum. The text gives no starting depth for the "additional" 23 feet, and it does not say this is *all* the water added during the prevailing phase. It could have started much deeper, and more could have been added. It may well have been that the additional 23 feet started after the 40 days, then the water covered the hills and kept rising.

Now may be a good place to summarize the events of the Flood so far. The first 40 days of the inundation saw the waters rise enough to lift the ark up off the ground (roughly half of its height, or about 23 feet). During the next 110 days, the Flood prevailed at least 23 more feet until the tops of all the hills under the whole skies were covered. Does this mean all the hills on earth were covered (global extent), or just the visible hills from the perspective of the observer, Noah (local extent)? The phrasing could mean either, but the context and water depth feasibility point to a more local extent of this prevailing phase so far.

In the next four verses we find five *wayyiqtol* verbs moving the account along to the 150th day for the Flood. In these verses, the results of the Flood are given and the fulfillment of God's purpose for the Flood given in 6:5-7,13 is seen. Again, the English versions give a sense of global destruction of all life, but is this how an ancient Hebrew would have understood the account? First of all, there is a seamless transition in the narrative from the waters covering the hills in verse 20 to the "dying" of "all flesh" in verse 21. This should be interpreted then as "all flesh" dying *after* the hills were covered with water. Presumably this indicates that the final living creatures on the land had migrated to the hills to escape the Flood. When the waters prevailed upward and over the hilltops, they perished.

We find then a list of creatures that perished: the creeping things (reptiles and small rodents), birds and other flying creatures, livestock, wild beasts, swarming creatures, and all mankind. This list is very reminiscent of the list on Days 5 and 6 in the Creation narrative in Genesis 1 (minus, or course, the sea

creatures). No mention is given of plants (as we will see, some plants survived the Flood (8:11), but the Flood was not meant to destroy them). With regards to the issue of the extent of the Flood, the question becomes “does this generalized list include all land-based creatures on earth?” The similar list in Genesis 1 evidently is not all-inclusive. The clues in that account are the local perspective of the observer and the lack of familiarity a 15th century BC Hebrew would have with things like algae, bacteria, ocean bottom dwelling fish, polar bears, kangaroos, etc... In my opinion, the similarity of the lists warrants keeping open the possibility of a localized perspective here in the Flood narrative despite the global-sounding language used in the English translation.

The phrase translated “the breath of life” in verse 22 is *nephesh-ruach chayyym* and is only used here in the OT. It is more precisely translated as “the breath of the spirit of life” as in NASB, HCSB, KJV, NKJV and YLT. Not even the LXX or the Vulgate translate “spirit” (*ruach*). It is clear that this phrase includes both humans and animals from the context. The similar phrase *nephesh chayyah* in Genesis 1:30 includes the beasts of the earth, winged creatures and the reptiles and small rodents. Even so, the text says that “everything” on “the dry land” had died. The word here for dry land is *charabah* and it is used only 6 other times. This is not the same word used in the Creation account for Day 3. On that Day *yavashah* appeared as God collected the waters together. The word used in 7:22 is the word used in the other three accounts of God parting the water to reveal “dry land”: the Red Sea (Ex. 14:21), the Jordan River (Josh. 3:17; 4:18), and the Jordan River again in Elijah’s time (2Kings 2:8). The remaining use is in Hag. 2:6 when God will shake the earth, the sea and the dry land. It is significant that *charabah* is used as opposed to *erets*. This word choice makes it clear that the issue is not the extent of the Flood (i.e. global or local), but the universality of the Flood waters destroying life on “dry land” as distinct from the sea. The verb form of *charabah*, *chareb*, literally means to make dry or to dry up (see Gen. 8:13). It seems then that the word is directing the reader to focus on land that was dry at one point, but is now covered with water, and that it will again be made dry (8:13). The emphasis is on the dryness of the land, not the extent of the land. Similarly, Moses uses *adamah* (ground) in verse 23 instead of *erets* to emphasize only the totality of land-based creatures as opposed to giving information as to the geographic extent of the Flood.

God is said to have “blotted out” (Heb. *machah*) these creatures from the face of the ground. This is the fulfillment of His prophecy given in verse 4. This verb is used 33 times in the OT and speaks of a complete wiping out or erasing of the subject. Just as our sins are wiped out in Is. 43:25 and remembered no more by God, so too these creatures were erased from existence and left no trace. One may wonder if this denies their remains even in the fossil record. Much is said in the global-Earth literature about the fossil record being evidence of the Flood, but most of the record is dominated by marine creatures. The Flood account focuses the reader on the destruction of land-based organisms without mentioning any detrimental effects on the creatures of the sea. While *erets* is used later in verse 23, it is clear that this is not a reference to extents, but rather to a reference to the land from which the land-dwellers were blotted out, and therefore must be a local reference.

It must have been an eerie feeling for Noah and his family as they floated above the hills. Verse 23 tells us that only he and those with him were spared from this watery judgment. Every other person they had encountered during the 100 years spent working on the ark is now dead. They had the witness of salvation through Noah and his ark. God patiently waited for people to believe and escape the judgment (1Pet. 3:20) but to no avail. The land and people Noah had known before were now gone, buried under the water column.

Verse 24 continues the account through to the 150 day time marker. The *wayyiqtol* verbs used in these verses give us the chronology. On the 40th day the waters lifted the ark off the ground (7:17). From that time on the waters prevailed and rose another 23 feet and covered the hills (7:19-20). After the highest hills were covered, the last remaining humans and the animals who were with them perished (7:21-23). The water has now reached its peak level on the 150th day.

Genesis 8:1-14 (ESV)

The Floodwaters decrease and the land dries

1 But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.

2 The fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained,
 3 and the waters receded from the earth continually. At the end of 150 days the waters had abated,
 4 and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.
 5 And the waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.
 6 At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made
 7 and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth.
 8 Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground.
 9 But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him.
 10 He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark.
 11 And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth.
 12 Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore.
 13 In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth. And Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry.
 14 In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth had dried out.

It should be noted that the chapter division marks an intuitive dividing place in the Flood narrative, but it is not a place where the storyline halts. Chapter 8 begins immediately with another *wayyiqtol* verb, *wayyizekor* (and [God] remembered). The text says that *elohim* remembered Noah and those with him on the ark. It is not that He had forgotten them, but that He was about to turn the Flood around and complete their deliverance. Verse 1 of chapter 8 should make it clear that the lists of animals in this narrative are incomplete and very generalized. For example, it says that He remembered Noah and the beasts (*chayyah*) and the livestock (*behemah*), but there is no mention of the creeping things (*remes*) or the winged creatures (*oph*) that we knew were in the ark from 7:14. The omission is not meant to say God did not remember them, but simply that the lists of the creatures are generalized and not meant to show completeness of all that exists.

Part “b” of the verse has the consequential action of *elohim*’s remembering the occupants of the ark. It says that God *wayyaaver* (caused to move – in the *hiphil* stem) a *ruach* (wind or spirit) over the *erets* (land). Here we have a few important details with regard to natural processes which most commentators fail to pick up on and expound. The processes mentioned here are incredibly difficult to reconcile with a geographically global Flood. First of all, a wind cannot blow over the entire globe all at once. Second, even if it did blow across the globe over a short period of time, it would never be able to remove all the water. This is the only process mentioned to decrease the water level. Certainly some water would soak into the ground, but that the wind is mentioned makes it the primary means. What does wind do to water? It evaporates it. We must assume a dry air to start. When dry air blows over water it essentially lifts water molecules off the wet surface and carries them away. This continues until the dry air stops coming in or until the air becomes saturated with water vapor. In the scenario of a global Flood, we would never be able to maintain an unsaturated wind. The net result would produce more rain, which in turn would perpetuate the Flood. Even if the air around the earth could miraculously over saturate with water vapor, it would produce a greenhouse effect that would make the earth’s climate inhospitable for Noah and his descendants. If the Flood were geographically local, the problem is alleviated. The waters would simply be swept away and would fall as rain elsewhere and the water cycle would resume.

The final *wayyiqtol* verb of verse 1 is *wayyashoku* (and they [the waters] subsided). *Shakhak* is only used 5 times in the OT and literally means to decrease or abate. The connotation here is that the Flood waters had reached their climax on day 150 and had now begun to decrease.

In verse 2 the storyline continues with the stopping of the events that started the Flood. After the waters started to subside, the fountains of the great deep and the windows of the heaven were closed (Heb. *sakhar*) and the rains (*geshem*) were restrained (Heb. *khala*). The idea of these two words is a restraining or

stopping of something that would have naturally kept going. The words are both in the *niphal* stem which connotes a passive voice meaning that an agent (God) performed the task on them. Just as He started the Flood with these actions, now He stops the natural causes of the inundation so that the waters can recede. Seeing how these actions ceased on the 150th day tells us that the duration of the rains were 150 days rather than the familiar 40 days. The word for rain (*geshem*) is interestingly only used twice in the Flood narrative, when it starts (7:12) and when it stops (8:2). As mentioned above, this word speaks of the heavy winter rains experienced in Palestine in the other uses in the OT (cf. Ezra 10:9 & Song 2:11). So the word is not used exclusively of the rains during the Flood, rather it was a rain that was familiar to the Hebrew people. While the torrential rains may have been seen before, perhaps their duration had not. And, certainly, they had not been coupled with the springs of the great deep, which brought the lethal blow to mankind here in Genesis.

In any event, the waters had reached their climax and had then receded (Heb. *shuv*). *Shuv* is used over 1000 times in the OT and literally means to return. The waters were returning to where they originated, presumably the deep. The deep here most likely refers to the oceans. This may add credence to the view that a natural dam broke to unleash the ocean, or unleash a spring, in Genesis 7:11. Here the waters return to their source. The text says that they returned “continually”. In the Hebrew, “continually” is translated from *halok washuv*. You might notice the word *shuv* in that phrase, which is our word for “recede” above. Literally this phrase would mean “going and returning” as in the YLT and the Vulgate. Much has been made of this phrase and its geologic implications. Barrick (pp. 277-278) says that “Such [ebbing and flowing] movement on a grand (up to continental) scale, augmented by either the absence and/or emergence of land barriers... would doubtless have a profound effect in the shaping of the earth’s surface.” It appears that he is reading way too much beyond the text. There is nothing in the context of verse 3 that has any geological connotation. The obvious exception would be the carrying of some sediment back into the sea during the draining of the area. Besides reading too much into the text, the idea that this caused rapid sedimentation and erosion is ineffective and improbable. Ineffective in that the two actions cancel out geologically. Improbable in that there are no worldwide examples of geologic strata that have been rapidly laid down and then eroded. Also, with deep water over the entire globe, waves, no matter how big, would have no effect on the sediment on the sea floor (the water column is too deep). Keep in mind this is after the life on land had perished. This means that the actions Barrick proposes would have mixed up sediment and the remains of the living organisms and effectively mixed them up across the globe. That simply is not the case in the rock record. Instead, what we find are organized assemblages of fossils that are very analogous to modern environments of deposition. For example, if the global Flood view is correct here, we should find layers of rock with randomly placed fossils of humans with trilobites, and dinosaurs with apes and fish, and kangaroos with jellyfish and lilies. These combinations, or any other non-intuitive grouping of organisms, are found nowhere on earth. Rather than read all this into the Bible, we should let it speak to us. All it says here is that the waters “continually” made their way back to their starting place.

Three actions of the waters are mentioned here on this 150th day of the Great Flood. They subsided (*shakhak* - 8:1), they receded (*shuv* - 8:3), and they abated (*chaser* - 8:3). These words all basically say the same thing; that the waters are lessening.

That we are still on the 150th day is evident in verse 4. The verse begins with yet another *wayyiqtol* verb, *wattana* (and [the ark] rested). It says that on the 17th day of the 7th month (the 150th day), the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. According to TWOT, the word *nuach* (rest) has connotations of “being settled in a particular place with overtones of finality” (# 1323). When the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat (Heb. *hare Ararat*), it was done moving. This brings the total days of Noah and his crew at sail over the waters to a close at 110. It is interesting that the text says “mountains” (*har* is here the plural *hare*) and not Mount Ararat.

The importance of the fact that the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat on this 150th day cannot be stressed enough, because it deals a fatal blow to the idea that the entire globe was covered in water during the Flood for several reasons. First, the text says that the mountains were covered (7:19-20), and that the tops of the mountains were not visible for another 74 days (8:5) (it is noted here that the global Flood view requires observation from God’s global perspective. This global perspective will be challenged below as well). To cover Mt. Everest with water and have the ark rest on the mountains of Ararat on the same day is

impossible! Everest is almost 13,000 feet higher than any mountain near Ararat. Some in the global Flood community point out that in Psalm 104:6-9 it states that as the floodwater retreated the “mountains rose” and the “valleys sank down”, saying this is evidence that tectonics lifted the mountains up to their present height after they were covered (Snelling, *Earth’s Catastrophic Past* (2010), pp. 473-474; 704-705). However, this argument fails for two reasons. Not only does the Genesis text clearly state the tops were not visible when the ark rested on near Ararat (meaning Everest had not “popped” up and out of the water before the ark rested), this Psalm is not even referring to the Flood. Rather it refers most definitely to the Creation Week and the events of Day 3. Faulty exegesis and faulty logic have led these commentators to an impossible hypothesis. If one adheres to a global Flood theory, they MUST acknowledge the fact that Everest was at its present height at this point in the Flood and account for the contradiction. Additionally, Mount Everest contains sea lilies and other marine fossils in the limestone cap at its crest. This is evidence that it was at one time underwater. There are two explanations: either the floodwater covered the crest of the mountains (already shown to be impossible based on the biblical text, not to mention the geologic problems with this), or the sediments were lain down on the sea floor, and were thrust up to their present position (completely prior to and independent of the biblical Flood. The latter is preferred because of the very well documented plate movement causing India to collide with Asia to create the Himalayan Mountain chain. Again, Mount Everest was most definitely at nearly its present height before the Flood, because if the Flood were global, it could not have appeared above the waters before the ark landed near Ararat. If Everest had popped up after the ark landed, then it must have “shot up” rapidly almost three miles in just 74 days! However, verse 2 of Chapter 8 tells us the possible tectonic factors had been shut off before the ark landed.

Secondly, if the waters were only about 23 feet higher than the tops of the mountains near Ararat (as inferred from the draft of the ark), then there would have been hundreds of peaks that were never covered with water around the globe. If the Flood were global, that would contradict verse 5 when it says the mountain tops were not above the water for another 74 days. Therefore, the Flood must have been local.

Finally, in the 74 days that followed the ark resting on the mountain, the waters only decreased a *maximum* of about 23 feet (the assumed draft of the ark) until the mountain where the ark rested was above sea level. Why is this important? Well, the text says in verse 14 that the earth was dry only 146 days after the mountain tops were visible. If the only factor used in decreasing the water was the wind (8:1), and it only decreased the water by 23 feet in 74 days, there is no mention of any other resources used to make the water decrease another 10,000+ feet in the next 146 days to dry up the entire area around the mountain where the ark landed. All these factors mentioned above should make it clear from the account of the ark landing that a globe-covering Flood is *not* what the author of the text wanted us to envision.

So where exactly did the ark land? We don’t know for sure. The land of Ararat is mentioned 3 other times in the OT (2Kings 19:37; Is. 37:38; Jer. 51:27) and 1 time in the Apocrypha (Tobit 1:21). Two of the OT uses and the Apocryphal occurrence refer to the same event. The two sons of the Assyrian King Sennacherib had assassinated their father in the temple of his god Nisroch. Immediately afterwards they are said to have fled to the land of Ararat (2Kings 19:37). It could be assumed then that the land of Ararat is within or near the extents of the Assyrian Empire. This covers virtually all of the land between the Black, Caspian, Mediterranean and Red Seas and the Persian Gulf. This encompasses the entire Mesopotamian Valley and includes present-day Mount Ararat. However, the capital of the Empire was Nineveh, which was along the Tigris River in northern Iraq, and it is likely that the land of Ararat is quasi-near there. Many have associated the land of Ararat with the ancient Assyrian province of Urartu which was just north of Nineveh centered around present-day Lake Van in eastern Turkey. In accordance with that theory, it does make sense for Sennacherib’s sons to flee for the hills to the east after assassinating their father. It, therefore, could be reasonably assumed that the mountains of Ararat could apply to any in the chain from the Black to the Caspian Sea and down to the Persian Gulf (i.e. the eastern boundary of the Mesopotamian Valley). The Bible does not specify on which hill or mountain the ark came to rest, but it certainly does not have to be the highest peak (Mt. Ararat). It need only fit the biblical description, which states that it came to rest on the hill, and the surrounding peaks did not become visible for another 74 days. It is entirely within this description to have a local Flood that never eclipsed Mt. Ararat, as long as its peak was not visible to Noah (as implied by the perspective of the observer in verse 5 as being on the ark, and not God’s perspective from above looking on the entire globe).

So in verse 5, the storyline takes a slight break and we have the first time marker given for the waning stage of the Flood. The waters continued to abate (*halok wechasor* – a similar phrase to that mentioned above in verse 3: literally “going and returning”) for 74 days. On this 74th day (224th day of the Flood), the tops of the *hariym* (hills, mountains) were seen. Seen by whom? Naturally, the ones on the ark. This cannot be from the perspective of God, who could have seen them while still submerged. This indicates this account is based on the eyewitness of Noah and his family.

The storyline picks up in verse 6 with the *wayyiqtol* verb *wayehiy* (and it came about). Again, most modern English translations ignore this important word as it signifies a pickup in the narrative after a short break. Fortunately, the text tells us exactly how long this break had been since the tops of the hills were first observed above the water level; 40 days. At the end of 40 days (264th day of the Flood, and the 114th day since the water level peaked) Noah opened the window of the ark he had made and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth (8:6-7). It is apparent that even after 40 days of exposure above sea level, there was no satisfactory amount of land for the raven to rest. It flew “to and fro” (the Hebrew infinitive absolute *wayyetse yatso*). This is an emphatic flying back and forth looking for adequate land, but not finding it “until the waters were dried up from the earth”. How long was the raven flying to and fro? The text says the earth (land) was dried up (Heb. *yavesh*) 107 days later in verse 14 (verse 7 does not refer to verse 13 as a different Hebrew word for dried (*charev*) is used there). Of course, the waters only decreased a *maximum* of 23 feet during the first 74 days of the waning stage. Now in these next 40 days it appears it did not decrease much more. Only the hilltops must have still barely been visible, because the raven could not find a good spot to rest.

Verses 8 and 9 are similar except this time Noah sends forth a dove. It is inferred from the phrase “another seven days” in verse 10 that this first dove went out seven days after the raven. That puts us at day 271 of the Flood and day 121 of the waning stage. This dove went out to see if the waters had dried up, but it returned to Noah because the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. As mentioned many times before, *erets* is better translated “land” here because of the difficulties in the text for a globe-covering Flood. The difficulties are even more so here because if this is truly meant as the global earth, then the text is lying and is unreliable. Just 4 verses before, it was mentioned that the tops of the hills were made visible. This would contradict the statement made here in verse 9 if it were talking about the planet earth because not everything was covered anymore. Therefore this proves that *erets* should be translated as “land” and the Flood be considered local in extent. The statement here can ONLY be true if it is talking about the land in the valley which was still covered in water. Only the hilltops were still popping through the waters even 121 days after they had begun to recede. The dove found no resting place, and instead of flying to and fro until it did, it returned to Noah in the ark.

Seven days later (278th day of the Flood, 128th day of the waning phase), Noah sends out another dove. Interestingly, this time it comes back in the evening with a freshly plucked olive leaf in its mouth. Even more surprising is the next statement that then Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. Surely we are not supposed to understand this as the waters drop thousands of feet and an olive seed implants, shoots up and sprouts leaves in just one week! Again, the global Flood interpretation fails with these two bits of information in verse 11. First, the olive leaf (Heb. *aleh-zayith*) was “freshly plucked”. Some have suggested that this was just a floating piece of a pre-Flood olive tree, but that is not what the text says. It was freshly plucked (Heb. *taraph*). *Taraph* is only used elsewhere in Ezek. 17:9 where it speaks of fresh sprouting leaves. Others have suggested (Snelling, *Earth's Catastrophic Past*, pp. 140-141) that because the olive tree is a hardy tree, it could have grown on the rugged sides or tops of the mountains rather quickly, but that makes no sense based on Noah's conclusion of the waters having subsided from of the earth. Apparently this olive leaf that the dove found was just plucked from a living olive tree at some lower elevation out of Noah's sight. The only question is, how did the olive tree grow in just seven days? I suppose it is possible that the dove just flew the wrong way before and did not happen to find the tree seven days earlier, but that is a stretch, and not inferred from the text. The more likely explanation is that this tree either survived the Flood intact or it grew in an area that was unaffected by the Flood. Either explanation works, but the former makes more sense based on Noah's reaction. The text seems to infer that the leaf came from an area that was just recently under water. It is very difficult to understand this tree as having just grown from a seed that was floating on the waters and sprouted leaves in just one week as the global

Flood model requires. Again it is noted that the global Flood model fails to give an account of the olive tree, whereas it is quite reasonable to picture an olive tree that had been underwater for a few months as having been rejuvenated quickly after the waters subsided.

Noah then waits another seven days and sends out the dove again. This time it did not return to him. Why not? Presumably, because it found enough dry land and food to be self sufficient. This adds more difficulty to the global Flood interpretation as just 14 days earlier, the dove found nowhere to rest, and now it was out living off the land. Considering the floodwaters only subsided 23 feet in the first 74 days of the waning phase, these past two weeks would have had to have seen thousands of feet of decreasing waters around the globe. While Scripture is silent regarding any changes in the rate of sea level decrease, it seems more likely that it would have been steady rather than these enormous jumps that the global Flood model requires.

And it came about (*wayehiy*) on the 314th day of the Flood (165th day of the waning phase) that the waters were dried from off the earth. As Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, he saw that the face of the ground was dry (v. 13). There are a few important exegetical points in this verse which are traditionally overlooked. First, the proper translation of *erets* here is unmistakably “land” and not “earth”. The proof of this is in the parallel part “b” of the verse where it is the “ground” (*adamah*) that was dry. Additionally, we know that the “earth” is not dry because Noah would stay on the ark another 57 days until “the earth had dried out” (v. 14). Unfortunately, all English translations except the God’s Word (GW) and the NCV, translate *erets* as “earth” and thus give a false impression to the English-speaking reader. Second, the preposition *meal* (combination of “from” and “off”) is again used, and it is helpful in understanding the event described. Remember in 7:17 how the ark was lifted “from off” the earth (ground). The same idea is intended here. The waters were dried *from off* the surface of the ground, meaning there was a significant amount of land with no water on it. This does not mean it was not too soggy to walk on, only that the ground was visible. There may have still been a significant amount of puddles. That might account for the reason Noah stayed on the ark for another nearly two months. One can imagine the anxious feelings of those on the ark as they could see dry land, but still had to wait for God’s command to disembark.

Finally, on the 371st day of the Flood (221 days after the floodwaters peaked) the earth had dried out (v.14). It should be obvious here also that “earth” is a misleading translation. The planet had not dried out, only the land that was under the floodwaters. Again, only the GW and the NCV translate *erets* as “land”. In any case this is now 107 days now since Noah released the raven. It had now stopped flying to and fro looking for a place to settle (v. 7). Apparently the dryness (*yavesh*) of the land was now suitable whereas the dryness (*charev*) in verse 13 was not. The words are basically synonymous, but *charev* connotes a drying of what used to be a water body (TWOT #2725) whereas *yavesh* carries the idea of lack of enough internal moisture to sustain vegetation (TWOT #3001). The implications here may be that the land contained a few puddles, and the ground was still soaked after verse 13, but in verse 14 (57 days later) those puddles were evaporated, the soil had dried out and there was almost drought-like conditions. It is possible that the ground was so completely dry (see the NIV and The Message) that even plants were struggling to survive, although this may be stretching it a bit beyond its intended use. Regardless, the land in the vicinity of the ark was now dry enough for Noah and his crew to leave the ark.

Genesis 8:15-19 (ESV)

***Elohim* tells Noah and the animals to exit the ark**

15 Then God said to Noah,

16 “Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you.

17 Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.”

18 So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him.

19 Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark.

It was *Yahweh* who shut the door of the ark (7:16) and sealed the eight people inside, saving them from the judgment against unrighteousness. Now it is *elohim* who gives Noah the OK to leave the ark. God tells Noah to bring out every living thing that is with you of all flesh...that they may swarm on the earth, and be

fruitful and multiply on the earth. This would be followed by the blessing on Noah and his family to do the same in Chapter 9 verse 1. This is then the second time God tells humans to multiply and fill the earth (see also Gen. 1:28). Unfortunately they did not listen the first time, because it says that man was just beginning to multiply on the earth in Gen. 6:1, which was just 120 years before the Flood. This ended catastrophically for the human race as they chose to disobey, stick together and rebel against God's will for them. Even more tragic is the fact that they would not listen this time either as we are told in Gen. 11:1-4. It is therefore obvious that when man has a common language, he tends to stick together. When they stick together, they tend to flock to corruption and pride. Therefore God had to intervene and it is only upon confusing the languages of the people, that they truly obeyed God's command to fill the earth. God knew in advance that His creatures would choose to rebel rather than follow His command, but in fitting with His character, He now gives them a second chance.

In fitting with *his* character, we are told that Noah again obeyed God (verse 18). Every beast (*chayyah*), every creeping thing (*remes*), every bird (*oph*), everything that moves (literally "creeps") on the earth, went out by families from the ark. Since the domesticated animals (*behemah*) are not included in this list, possibly they stayed with Noah and his family for sacrifices (v. 20) and herding. Interestingly, and not all too uncommonly, the LXX adds *kai panton ta ktene* (and all the cattle - and followed by the HCSB) in an attempt to harmonize and fill in a perceived omission, but this phrase is not found in the Hebrew. Also interesting is the English version of the Latin Vulgate (the Douay-Rheims) translates "cattle" but does not mention the birds or winged creatures. When discrepancies like this arise, we must always favor the original language which is Hebrew. Thankfully, most English Bible translators agree.

Genesis 8:20-22 (ESV)

Noah sacrifices to *yahweh* who makes a covenant with the earth

20 Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

21 And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.

22 While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

Next we see Noah building an altar to *Yahweh* (the personal Name of *elohim* that has been used in this account to show His intimate and saving relationship with mankind). He sacrificed some of every clean animal and bird. This preposition *mikol* (from every) simply means that every clean animal and bird taken on the ark was represented in the sacrifice. Therefore it is possible that Noah used the seventh of every animal and left three pairs to re-populate.

Yahweh was pleased with the sacrifice and said "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." It is interesting He would say that He would never again curse the ground because of man. This sounds very familiar to The Curse in Genesis 3 where God said "cursed is the ground because of you" (Gen. 3:17), speaking to Adam. There are six main words in the Hebrew language that basically mean "to curse". According to TWOT, their definitions are as follows:

- 1.) *Arar* – the absence of blessing
- 2.) *Qelalah* – the absence of a blessed state and the lowering to lesser state
- 3.) *Taalah* – curses as in a large broad category
- 4.) *Qavav* – having to do with actually uttering the curse
- 5.) *Naqav* – blasphemy
- 6.) *Zaam* – to defy or denounce

In the uses of "curse" prior to this passage we find, 1.) God's cursing of the serpent (*arar* – Gen. 3:14), 2.) God's cursing the ground because of Adam (*arar* – Gen. 3:17), 3.) God's cursing Cain from the ground for murdering Abel (*arar* – Gen. 4:11), and 4.) Lamech's prophecy that Noah would bring relief from the

cursed ground (*arar* – Gen. 5:29). The word here in Gen. 8:21 is *qalal* which is very similar in usage to *arar*. If we look at this closely, we can see the fulfillment of Lamech’s prophecy. *Yahweh* swears never again to curse the ground for man’s sake, which in effect cancels out the curse of the ground He proclaimed to Adam. This does not mean there will be no more thorns and thistles anywhere; it means that cultivating would be easier because of the Flood. Noah’s righteousness carried him through the Flood in the ark. By his righteousness he, with his family, was saved and could re-populate the newly cleansed land that God had previously cursed for Adam’s sin. This brings a completely different meaning to the phrase “cursed is the ground” than most Young-Earth Creationists would suggest. Far from meaning the entire Creation is cursed (which Romans 8 does not in any way suggest), the cursing of the land was over. The greater curse of our sin nature is still in effect (as Romans 8 *does* suggest, and verse 21 here states), but the land where Adam was sent in Gen. 3:23 was now refreshed. It had been renewed with nutrients, perhaps evidenced by the olive tree quickly perking up once the waters diminished.

It is interesting also, that it is *not* the Flood that was the curse, rather it was the instrument in removing the curse. Man was given as new start despite the fact God knew his thoughts and intentions are nothing but evil even from his youth. In addition to His promise to never again curse the ground, He says that He will never again strike down every living creature as [He had] done. So, the first part of the verse was a promise to never again curse the ground like He did for Adam, now there is a promise to not strike down every living creatures as [He had] done. This does not as much speak to the “striking down” as it does to the method. We know this from 9:11 and 9:15 where God promises there would never again be a “flood to destroy all flesh”.

The covenant in verse 22 sounds like a call to uniformitarianism, and indeed some Young-Earth Creationists have taken it as such (Snelling, *Earth’s Catastrophic Past* (2010), p. 282). In fact, Snelling even goes so far as to say that only now had the cycle of day-night been fixed. One wonders why some are so adamant about the Creation Days being 24 hours, only then to say that the day-night cycle became “fixed” after the Flood. There is an obvious contradiction here. So what is the true meaning of this covenant with the earth? First of all, we have seen that throughout the Flood narrative, the context has demanded *erets* be translated as “land” rather than “earth”. This seems difficult at first to reconcile here when terms like day, night, summer and winter suggest global phenomena. But, keep in mind not all the earth experiences these at the same time. Daytime in New York is nighttime in Moscow. Summer in Buenos Aires is winter in London. When Minnesota is experiencing cold, Houston could be experiencing heat.

One other major clue that Snelling and others have seemingly overlooked is that the processes in nature were “fixed” well before the Flood according to Scripture. It clearly states in Genesis 1:14 that the luminaries were supposed to be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years. God declared them good (LXX: *kalos* – useful in fulfilling a purpose) in Genesis 1:18, which means they were “fixed” and certainly able to be used for telling days and seasons. Even as early as Cain, we are told that people could farm and harvest crops (Gen. 4:3), which implies a knowledge of the seasons. It is therefore careless exegesis to state that these processes became fixed only after the Flood.

It seems then that this verse could still be talking about the local land and not the global earth. The word for “cease” here is *shavath* from which we get “Sabbath”. It would appear that Noah would have the assurance that the land he would occupy would experience no more sudden catastrophes which would cause any of these cycles to be interrupted again.

Chapter 8 brings the biblical account of the Flood to a close and segues into Chapter 9 with Noah’s covenant with God and the chronicles of his descendants. We started this narrative with a land that was filled completely with corruption. Noah alone stood righteous before God who sent a watery judgment to wipe out the corruption from His Creation. The eight crew members and the animals on board survived the 371 day journey because of *Yahweh’s* grace and salvation. God had given mankind a second chance. It is from these eight humans that we all descend (Gen. 9:19).

Summary: The Purpose of the Flood:

To begin an interpretive summary of the biblical Flood narrative, we need to first consider the purpose of that Flood. As mentioned above, that purpose is very clearly stated in Genesis 6:5-7.

- 5 The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.
- 6 And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.
- 7 So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them."

Verse 5 gives the reason for the Flood (the wickedness of man was great in the earth). Verse 6 gives *Yahweh's* response to man's wickedness (it grieved Him to His heart). Verse 7 then give the sentence of judgment that is the Flood (I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land). There should then be no argument over the clear purpose of the Flood: **to blot out *man* from the land**. Any attempt to add to this purpose to include any notion of geographic extent of geologic activity is to go dangerously beyond the text.

Summary: The Chronology of the Flood:

The next part of our synthesis will include the chronology of the Flood as given in Scripture. See the summary chart below.

Phase	Flood Day	Event	Scripture(s)	Notes
Prevailing	1	Flood begins	Gen. 7:10-11	The fountains of the great deep were burst open, the windows of the heaven were opened.
	40	Ark is lifted off the ground	Gen. 7:17	The continuing narrative tells us that the ark was not moved until the 40th day of the Flood. The rain continued to fall past this date and increased greatly (7:18).
	150	Ark lands on the mountains of Ararat; floodwater's sources are restrained	Gen. 7:24-8:4	It was at the climax of the Flood that the ark rested on the mountain (or hill). On this date, the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed. The rain was restrained (8:2). The waters would now begin to decrease.
Waning	224	Tops of the hills were seen	Gen. 8:5	On this date, Noah could begin to see the tops of the hills rising above the waters. This is 74 days after the ark rested on its hill.
	264	Raven is sent out	Gen. 8:6-7	This raven was sent to scout out the land, but would fly around for the next 107 days until the land was completely dry.
	271	Dove is sent out the first time	Gen. 8:8-9	The dove was also sent out as a scout, but sufficient dry land was not found, so it returned to Noah.
	278	Dove is sent out the second time	Gen. 8:10-11	The dove was sent back out, and came back this time with a freshly plucked olive leaf. Noah now knew that the waters had subsided. This was only 7 days after he sent the dove the first time.
	285	Dove is sent out the third time	Gen. 8:12	This time, the dove found sufficient dry land for its purpose and did not return to Noah.
	314	Waters were dried from off the land	Gen. 8:13	The water had mostly dried from off the ground, but there was just enough left on, and soaked in, that Noah could not exit just yet.
	371	The land had completely dried out	Gen. 8:14	The different Hebrew word in verse 14, compared to verse 13, tells us that the ground was now completely dry so God tells Noah and his crew to leave the ark (8:15-19).

Commentators generally agree as to the duration of the Flood. It lasted exactly 371 days from its beginning in Genesis 7:11 until its complete drying out in Genesis 8:14. It should be noted that these are hard and fast dates in this narrative, and are therefore very helpful in determining the extents of the Flood, the rate and depth of the water increase, and the subsequent rate of decrease. While it should be made clear that God is fully capable of doing anything He chooses, and some of the rates could have been well outside of our current understanding, the text should *always* be our basis for starting our interpretation on these matters. We need not start with a supernatural explanation (unless clearly stated) if one exists within our knowledge of how the natural world operates.

Summary: The Extent of the Flood:

With the clear purpose of the Flood stated, and its chronology outlined from Scripture, we may now begin to address the geographic extent of the Flood. The traditional and historically accepted interpretation of the Flood narrative is that it covered the entire planet. In the last few centuries, however, many have

challenged that notion based on a deeper understanding of God's Word and His Creation. In the commentary above, I have brought out clues carefully from the text that support this notion that the Flood was only locally contained. Below is a list of those observations.

1. The sole purpose of the Flood was to blot out man from the face of the ground (Gen. 6:7), so it was only as extensive as the fulfillment of the purpose would necessitate (more on this below).
2. God tells Noah He is about to destroy the earth (6:13). We know that the earth remains (8:22), so this must be referring to a local piece of "land".
3. God tells Noah to line the ark inside and out with "pitch" (6:14). The proper understanding of this is that it is a secondary petroleum product. This means that enough of the fossil record was present prior to the Flood to result in the "pitch" which would waterproof the ark. The Flood was therefore NOT the cause of the entire global fossil record.
4. God said that everything that is on the earth shall die (6:17). We know that plants, fish and microorganisms did not perish and thrive today, so the extent of the word "earth" (*erets*) MUST have been local and does not speak of the entire globe, or else God lied to Noah.
5. The only other literal and historical reference to "the great deep" (7:11) in Scripture is in Is. 51:10 where it refers to the Red Sea (a local reference). The word "deep" can refer to the oceans, but it can also speak of groundwater (see Ps. 78:15). It need not refer to the global oceans.
6. The word for "burst forth" (7:11) does imply geologic activity, but is predominantly used in local settings such as the waters of the Red Sea "splitting" for the Israelites in Ex. 14:16; Ps. 78:13; Is. 63:12; the splitting of the rock for the water to gush out for the wandering Israelites (Is. 48:21; Ps. 78:15-to provide waters as from the deep); or the splitting of the ground (presumably an earthquake) (Num. 16:31; Mic. 1:4; Zech. 14:4).
7. The word used for rain (7:12) is the word the Hebrews used to describe the heavy but seasonal winter rains (cf. Ezra 10:9 & Song 2:11). This would infer that they were familiar with rains of this magnitude.
8. We know from the Hebrew that the ark was not lifted off the ground until the 40th day of the Flood (7:17). Assuming 23 feet of water was necessary to make the ark float (half the height of 45 feet), that amounts to roughly 6 inches of water accumulation per day for the first 40 days. This rate of water accumulation could NOT have flooded the globe, nor could it have any tectonic significance if it could not even lift the ark off the ground. The Flood, therefore, must have been local in geographic extent.
9. The literal translation of the Hebrew in 7:20 reads that the floodwaters rose 23 feet (15 cubits) and covered the hills. It does not say that it covered the mountains to a depth of 23 feet like some modern English translations. This proper translations takes away the difficulties of having the water rise 23 above Mt. Everest (29,000 feet), and on the same day (8:4) having the ark rest on even the highest peak near Ararat at only 16,000 feet. That is simply impossible. A local Flood solves this water depth problem providing for a minimum of 45 feet of water to potentially a few hundred feet based on the rates given in the text.
10. From the chronological sequence of *wayyiqtol* verbs, we know that "all flesh died" only *after* the water rose above the hilltops (7:20-21). This is only possibly in a local Flood. The reason being that the last remaining survivors would have fled to the hills to escape. They hardly would have climbed Mt. Everest to escape the Flood! Again, the Hebrew tells us this Flood was localized and the hills that were covered were within reach of humans.
11. God sent a wind to blow over the land and the waters subsided (8:1). This could not happen if the Flood covered the globe. First, the wind could not blow over the entire globe at the same time. Second, the wind would not be able to make the waters subside because as the water evaporates, it would saturate the air, blow to another location, fall as rain, and the Flood would be perpetuated. This wind would only make the waters subside in a local Flood. Then the water would be evaporated, blow to another location where there were no floodwaters, fall as rain, and resume the hydrologic cycle. This point is often overlooked by commentators.
12. The ark rested on the hills of Ararat (8:4) on the 150th day. The tops of the hills became visible 74 days later (8:5). This is only possible in a local Flood with a local perspective (i.e. Noah's). If the Flood was global, it demands a global perspective (i.e. God's). If the perspective were global then that means that the ark rested on the hills of Ararat BEFORE Mt. Everest "popped up" above sea level. This is impossible because Everest is almost 13,000 feet *higher* than any peak near Ararat.

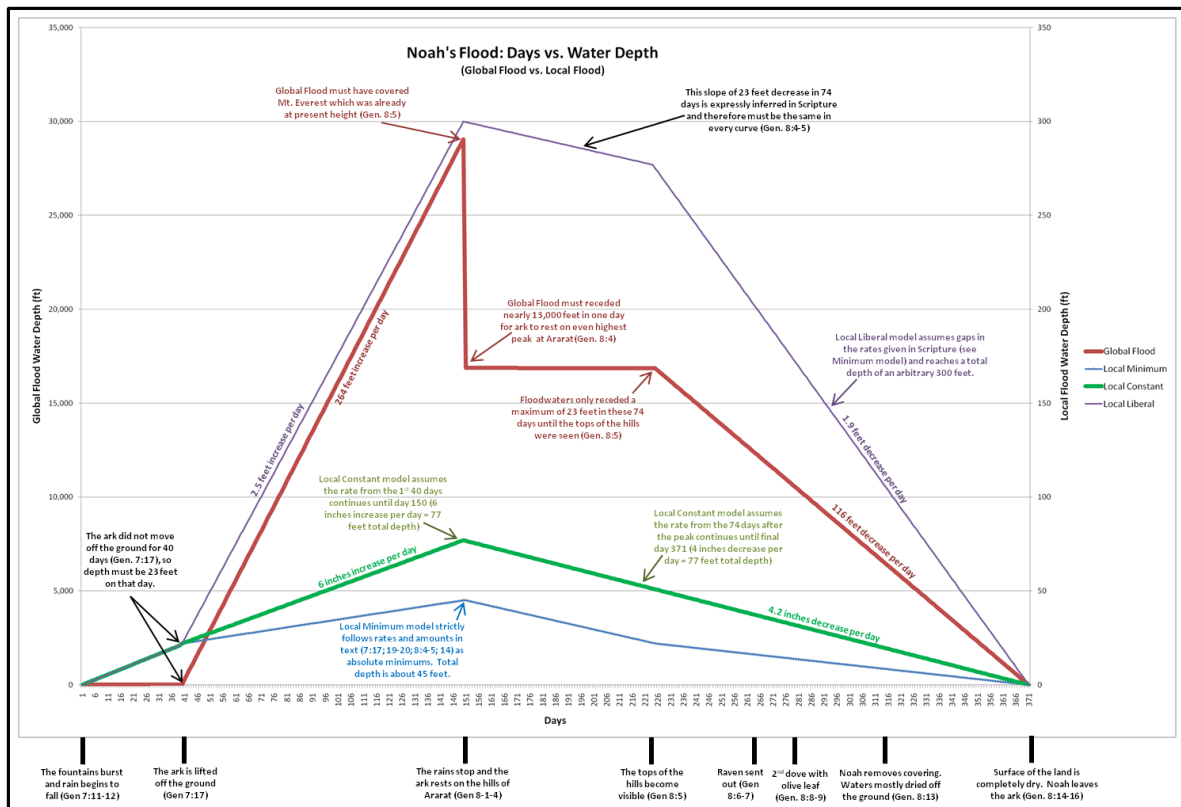
- There is no evidence that Everest was not at nearly its present height before the Flood. In fact, the text demands that it was. Since there are marine fossils on Everest's peak, it was once at the sea bottom. If the Flood were global, its peak must have "shot up" rapidly almost 3 miles in just 74 days! There is no indication from the text that anything like this happened. In fact, the Bible tells us that any possible tectonic forces (the bursting fountains) were shut off *before* this could happen. Again, the Bible gives us clues that the Flood was geographically local. The only way this could make sense is that the floodwaters reduced a maximum of 23 feet (half the height of the ark) after the ark rested on the hill in the next 74 days to make that hill become visible. That is a very reasonable 4 inches per day.
13. Since the floodwaters most definitely were only about 23 feet higher than the hills where the ark rested (8:1-4), then hundreds of mountains around the world would have been exposed and never covered with the Flood. The global Flood theory then contradicts Scripture when it says that all the mountains were covered (7:19-20) and were not visible until 74 days after the ark rested on the hills of Ararat (8:4-5). The Flood therefore must have been local so as to not contradict Scripture.
 14. The text says that Noah sent out a raven 40 days after the tops of the hills were seen, but the raven flew "to and fro" until the waters were dried up completely (8:6-7). It did not find sufficient exposed land to settle down. This implies that the waters only decreased slightly in this 40 days. If the subsequent rate of 4 inches per day continued, then the waters would have only gone down another 13 feet in the 40 days. This seems to fit with the raven not finding much land on which to live.
 15. In 8:8-9, Noah sends out the first dove to see if the waters subsided sufficiently. The dove found no place to rest because the waters were "still on the face of the whole earth". Again, Scripture contradicts Scripture if this Flood were global because in 8:5 it says that the tops of the hills were seen. Therefore, the "whole earth" ONLY can refer to the land where Noah would later disembark (i.e. the valley below the hills). This is yet another case where global-sounding English words do not refer to the whole planet, but a small local piece of it. The global Flood theory again contradicts the Bible.
 16. This same dove released in 8:8-9 does not find sufficient land and returns to Noah. Again this implies a slow steady decrease in the waters, and not the catastrophic subsidence required in the global Flood model. Perhaps the pace of recession is increasing as more land is exposed and funneling the evaporating wind (8:1). If that is the case, then the waters may have subsided a few more feet in the seven days since Noah released the raven.
 17. As the dove went out the second time, the Hebrew tells us it picked off a fresh olive leaf (8:11). This olive tree could not have survived a global Flood, and it could not have floated as a seed and implanted itself in a rocky mountain cliff face as some have suggested, and then grew and sprouted leaves in just seven days! Rather, the only explanation is that this olive tree survived the Flood as logically inferred from Noah's reaction that he knew the waters had subsided from the land (this comment makes no sense if the Flood were global because he already knew that some land was exposed, and it would still be a few months before he could get off the ark). This olive tree would have quickly rejuvenated itself at the sight of the sun after its watery burial for the past few months. This is only possible in a local Flood of minimal water depths and minimal energy so as to not bury the tree with excessive sediment.
 18. Noah sent this dove out a third time and it did not return to him (8:12). This is only 14 days after it found no land to rest on, and 7 days after it picked the fresh olive leaf. From the known decrease rate of 4 inches of water per day in the first 74 days of the waning phase (8:4-5), there must have been a rapid increase in the reduction rate for the rest of the Flood. Additionally the dove must have been released at just the right time to not see the olive tree (8:8-9), then to see it seven days later (8:10-11), then to find enough land to survive just seven days later still (8:12). Well over a thousand feet of water had to have decreased in just that 2 week period in the global Flood model! Not to mention the rapid soil formation inferred to grow the olive tree as depicted in Scripture. This "jerky" sea level curve is not inferred anywhere in the text, and is not desired as a feasible interpretation. In the local Flood model, the few feet to tens of feet of water recession would satisfy the Scriptural requirements, and this rate is in line with the other rates given throughout the Flood narrative.
 19. Verse 13 of Chapter 8 tells us that the waters were dried up from off the earth. This can only be true if the Flood were local in extent, because we know the earth is not dry now, nor was it then.

Additionally, this reference to “the earth” is later defined as just “the ground” in part “b” of the verse. This implies that most of the water was gone, but perhaps the ground was still drenched with water enough for Noah and his family to remain on the ark.

20. The “earth” had completely dried out as the Hebrew wording tells us in 8:14. We know this must refer to a local portion of “earth” because the planet is not completely dry today. This infers that the local area around Noah and the ark was so completely dry that it was safe for them to exit the ark. There was no need to wait until South America was completely dry for Noah to disembark. Therefore this reference is to a local Flood and a local drying.
21. Remarkably, if we use the rates of water increase and decrease inferred from just the biblical text itself (given in 7:17, 19-20; 8:4-5), we arrive at a very consistent water level curve of six inches per day increase and just over four inches per day decrease. Based on the timeline given in Scripture, this comes to a Flood depth of around 77 feet. This depth may be on the pessimistic side, but it is very reasonable to fulfill the purpose of the Flood. We cannot ignore the Scriptural clues given in regard to rates of increase and decrease as they reach nearly the same number of 75-77 feet!

Water Level Curves

From the clues given in the text we can graphically display the inferred water depth curves for each model.



The Global Flood curve is shown in red and should be followed on the left y-axis. The three Local Flood models should be followed on the right y-axis. Note the extreme jumps in the rates necessary for the Global Flood to be true. This simply does not make sense and in no way is inferred in the biblical text. Therefore this model should be disregarded. If we then look to the three local models, we see a minimum (blue) curve as required by the text, a constant (green) curve which keeps the rates given in the text constant, an a liberal curve (purple) which arbitrarily picks a maximum depth of 300 feet to account for any gaps in the rates that are not mentioned in the text. I would propose that since the constant rate model has virtually the same water depth (75-77 feet) based on rates of increase and decrease as given in the text, that this should be preferred working model for the Flood and any geologic implications. Of course, we should

keep in mind that a few gaps may be possible in the text as this is not the sole purpose of the account. The depth may have been slightly deeper, but probably not much based on the narrative we are given.

Summary: The Universality of the Flood:

We have seen that the English translations give an overwhelming notion that the entire planet was covered with water, even over the highest mountains at 29,000 feet above sea level. However, the original language and logistical issues regarding water depth and energy seem to point towards a local extent. We have also noted the difference between a “global” Flood and a “universal” Flood. The Bible leaves no doubt that the Flood was universal. That is, it completely fulfilled its purpose which was to wipe out the corrupt human population (6:5-7, 13). This fact is told here and is reiterated in the New Testament (1Pet. 3:20; 2Pet 2:5). To have a local Flood that fulfilled this requirement means that the earth’s human population was relatively small and was localized to one area. Is there any evidence of this in Scripture? Interestingly enough, there is. After the Flood in Genesis 11:1 it says that the “whole earth used the same language and the same words”. The very next verse says that “they journeyed east” to a “plain in the land of Shinar”. The word “they” obviously refers to “the whole earth (*erets*)” in the preceding verse. As we have seen above, *erets* can mean either the global earth, a local piece of land or a people group. The latter is intended here, and this suggests that the entire population was together, and they migrated to a plain. The reasons for migrating to a plain are obvious: for water and farming resources. Additionally, it says later in 11:3 that they did not want to be scattered over the face of the earth. This means it was their desire NOT to spread apart. This is in direct contradiction to God’s command to Adam (Gen. 1:28) and to Noah (Gen. 9:1). Man was never willing to obey this command for some reason. God knew that if the population insisted on sticking together they would get proud and join forces and try to become greater than their Creator. That’s exactly what happened at the Tower of Babel. As a consequence, God mixed their languages and forced His unwilling creatures to disperse and fill the globe (Gen. 11:8-9). It was not until after the mixing of languages that man migrated to the far reaches of the planet. With a common language, it was man’s prerogative to stick together and flock to the lowlands. So then we have a biblical analogy to the human social and behavioral patterns in the pre-Babel world. Prior to the Flood, all people had one language, and they corrupted themselves. By all being in the same geographical lowland, they became an easy target for God’s Flood. There was no escape, and there was no reason to flood the outer reaches of the globe where there were no corrupt people groups.

What then of the population that fell during the Flood? It has been argued from the YEC side that there could have been over 1 billion people on the earth at the time of the Flood. This argument also assumes there are no gaps in the genealogy on Genesis 5. In this genealogy we find that all of the patriarchs had sons and daughters in addition to the main son in the line. Calculations can be made to show a population in the hundreds of millions to over a billion, but this involves assumptions that are not found or even warranted in the text. Instead, we should look for clues in the text itself. As stated above, Genesis 6:1 says that the Flood narrative commences when man “began to multiply across the face of the land”. This takes place exactly 120 years before the Flood (6:3). It would appear then, no matter how many ways you calculate it, the population up until this time, no matter how long the time had been, was constant to only modestly increasing. Also, Noah did not have children until he was 500 years old (Gen. 5:32), and he only had 3 sons. While he may be an exception, the fact remains that people did not multiply before this time. This is in direct disobedience to God’s command in Chapter 1 verse 28. The Hebrew word for “multiply” in this instance shares a root with the word for “ten thousand”. While not to be taken literally, it may give an approximation for the earth’s population as “in the tens of thousands”. With all this *biblical evidence* in mind, we can now be confident that the human population was NOT in the hundreds of millions to billions. We cannot take recent population statistics and in anyway apply them to Noah’s day. This is not only illogical, it ignores the text of the Scriptures. The world population did not hit 1 billion people until around 1820 (an absolute *minimum* of 4,500 years after the Flood). It is therefore inconceivable that the population could have been anywhere near that high before the Flood. Rather the biblical data point to a relatively small human population that shared a common language and all lived together in the same geographical area.

Summary: The Geological Implications of the Flood:

If one believes that the Bible is the authoritative, inerrant Word of the Creator, then it is perfectly legitimate to let the biblical accounts that speak to earth history be the governing guide when interpreting earth

history. This is true even though the Bible does not specifically claim to be a science textbook. The only caveats are that one must interpret the passages correctly, practicing sound exegesis and constantly considering the original meaning to the original audience in context. That being said, we can press forward in discussing the geologic implications of the Genesis Flood.

Based on the evidence presented in this commentary, I propose that the Flood was universal in purpose, but local in geographical extent. There is not sufficient evidence given that the Flood covered the globe. In fact, there is ample evidence from the text that it was confined. Furthermore, I propose the Flood was approximately 75 feet in depth (although assuming some gaps in the rates inferred in the account, I am comfortable with depths ranging up to a few hundred feet).

The only possible reference to a geologic process given is actually the main cause of the Flood; the bursting forth of the fountains of the great deep. As mentioned above, it seems likely this is the breaking of some part of the land surface to release water from some container. This container could be a natural dam that broke to release its reservoir as can be seen throughout the recent geologic record. Or, possibly it could be the release of springs or geysers from an earthquake cracking the reservoir's seal. Either way, the terminology used most likely refers to a geologic event based on its usage in other places in Scripture. If we are honest, there are no other specific clues that have any geologic implications. Any attempt to find worldwide tectonic, sedimentation and erosion events in this text is special pleading that takes us way beyond the text.

So, the next logical questions would be, "What geologic evidence did the Flood leave behind?" and, "Where is the Flood located in the geologic column?" Many people have tried to place the Flood at different places in the geologic column. Every place seems to have profound problems when looked at on a global scale, however. The problem has been the lack of a good working model for the geologic implications of the Flood. Now that we have a solid working model, we can answer these two questions. Based on the biblical text, the Flood affected a very limited part of land, and was only about 75 to a maximum of a few hundred feet deep. Therefore, it should have left very little geologic evidence, perhaps only a thin layer of silt and mud.

As to where this layer would fit in the geologic column, the Bible gives us clues. Human beings were the target of God's watery judgment, so the Flood cannot be lower than their first appearance in the column. And, since the rise in water level may have been caused by the glacial cycles (i.e. melting and dam breaching, which is common in the recent geologic past), it most likely occurred during the last few tens of thousands of years. This would place the Flood in the uppermost part of the Pleistocene to earliest Holocene Epochs on the geologic column. In my studies, this appears to be the only place it could be put without contradicting either the Bible or the rock record.

Conclusions:

It should be noted now that the entire synopsis of Genesis 6-8 above has dealt *strictly* with the biblical text. Most Global Flood advocates have suggested that Christians who promote a local Flood do so not based on the Bible, but based on the word of secular scientists who say the earth is billions of years old. They are therefore called "Compromising Christians". The compromise is that of the authority of God's Word, and is therefore condemned and given as a warning to all who might be swayed in that direction. This commentary serves as a direct rebuttal to that notion, as the ideas formulated here come **ONLY** from the Scriptures.

The Bible clearly was not conveying the idea of a global Flood that resulted in vast tectonic upheavals of the earth's crust, and sent continents hurtling towards one another to rapidly form the highest peaks we see today. That idea is not presented in Scripture, and would have made absolutely no sense to a 15th Century B.C. Israelite listening to Moses dictate the words of this account.

In closing, I would challenge all those who advocate a global Flood that was responsible for most of the geologic column around the planet to take another *much* closer look at the text. Consider the implications of teaching a hypothesis like this to people that cannot be backed up either biblically or scientifically. My hope is that whatever side one determines to be correct that no detail is overlooked in the Scriptures, or the

rocks. It is this attention to the detail that will lead us to the correct interpretation of this most awesome of historical biblical events.

Dan Leiphart, 2010