

# The Deluge

GENESIS CHAPTERS 6-9

## Prelude: The Birth of Noah

When Lemekh had lived eighty-two years and a hundred years,  
he begot a son.

He called his name: Come-To-Rest! (*Noah*) saying:

“*Zeh yenamenu!*

May this-one comfort-our-sorrow from our toil,  
from the pains of our hands coming from the soil,  
which Y<sub>HWH</sub> has *damned*.”

And Lemekh lived after he begot Noah  
ninety-five years and five hundred years,  
and begot (other) sons and daughters.

And all the days of Lemekh were  
seventy-seven years and seven hundred years,  
then he died.

When Noah was five hundred years old, Noah begot  
Renowned-One (*Shem*),  
Passionate-One (*Ham*), and  
In-Between-One (*Yefet*).

## Prelude: The Setting

AND SO IT HAPPENED, as humankind began to multiply over the earth and daughters were born to them, that the sons of gods (*bene elohiyim*) saw that the daughters of men were good and beautiful, and they took themselves women howsoever they chose.

And Y<sup>HWH</sup> said,

“My Spirit shall not abide in the human forever,  
for it is but flesh.

Let their days be a hundred and twenty years.”

The Fallen Ones (*Nephilim*) were then come on the earth and afterward as well—the sons of gods being united with the daughters of men who bore them children.

They are the heroes of yore, the men of renown.

## The Deluge

And Y<sup>HWH</sup> saw that the evil of the human creature was great on the earth and that every scheme of his heart’s devising was only perpetually evil. And Y<sup>HWH</sup> regretted having made the human on earth and was grieved to the heart.

And Y<sup>HWH</sup> said, “I will wipe out the human race I created from the face of the earth, from human to cattle to crawling thing to the fowl of the heavens, for I regret that I have made them.”

But Noah found favor in the eyes of Y<sup>HWH</sup>.

These are the records of Noah.

*Noah was a righteous, wholehearted man in his generation,  
in accord with Elohim did Noah walk.*

*Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Yefet.*

*Now the earth had gone to ruin before Elohim,  
the earth was filled with wrongdoing.*

*Elohim saw the earth, and here: it had gone to ruin,  
for all flesh had ruined its way upon the earth.*

*Elohim said to Noah:*

“An end of all flesh has come before me,  
for the earth is filled with wrongdoing through them;  
here, I am about to bring ruin upon them, along with the earth.

*Make yourself an Ark of gofer wood,  
with reeds make the Ark,  
and cover it within and without with a covering-of-pitch.*

*And this is how you are to make it:*

*Three hundred cubits the length of the Ark,  
fifty cubits its breadth, and thirty cubits its height.*

*A skylight you are to make for the Ark,  
finishing it to a cubit upward.*

*The entrance of the Ark you are to set in its side;  
with a lower, a second, and a third deck you are to make it.*

“As for me,

*here, I am about to bring on the Deluge,  
water upon the earth,  
to bring ruin upon all flesh that has rush of life in it,  
from under the heavens,  
all that is on earth will perish.*

*But I will establish my covenant with you:  
you are to come into the Ark, you and your sons and  
your wife and your sons’ wives with you,  
and from all living-things, from all flesh,  
you are to bring two from all into the Ark,  
to remain alive with you.*

*They are to be a male and a female (each),  
from fowl after their kind, from herd-animals after their kind,  
from all crawling things of the soil after their kind,  
two from all are to come to you, to remain alive.*

*As for you,  
take for yourself from all edible-things that are eaten and  
gather it to you,  
it shall be for you and for them, for eating.”*

*Noah did it,  
according to all that Elohim commanded him, so he did.*

And Y<sub>HWH</sub> said to Noah, “Come into the ark, you and all your household, for it is you I have seen righteous before Me in this generation. Of every clean animal take you seven pairs, each with its mate, and of every animal that is not clean, one pair, each with its mate. Of the fowl of the heavens as well seven pairs, male and female, to keep seed alive over all the earth. For in seven days’ time I will make it rain on the earth forty days and forty nights and I will wipe out from the face of the earth all existing things that I have made.”

And Noah did all that Y<sub>HWH</sub> commanded him. Noah was six hundred years old when the Flood came, water over the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives came into the ark because of the waters of the Flood.

*From the pure animals and from the animals that are not pure  
and from the fowl and all that crawls about on the soil—  
two and two (each) came to Noah, into the Ark,  
male and female, as Elohim had commanded Noah.*

And it happened after seven days, that the waters of the Flood were over the earth.

*In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life,  
in the second New-Moon,  
on the seventeenth day after the New-Moon,  
on that day:  
then burst all the well-springs of the great Ocean  
and the sluices of the heavens opened up.*

And the rain was over the earth forty days and forty nights.

*On that very day came Noah,  
and Shem, Ham, and Yefet, Noah’s sons,  
and Noah’s wife and his three sons’ wives with them,  
into the Ark,  
they and all wildlife after their kind,  
all herd-animals after their kind,*

*all crawling things that crawl upon the earth after their kind,  
all fowl after their kind, all chirping-things, all winged things;  
they came to Noah, into the Ark, two and two (each)  
from all flesh in which there is the rush of life.  
And those that came, male and female from all flesh they came,  
as Elohim had commanded him.*

...and Y<sub>HWH</sub> shut him in.

And the Flood was forty days over the earth, and the waters multiplied and bore the ark upward and it rose above the earth. And the waters surged and multiplied mightily over the earth, and the ark went on the surface of the water. And the waters surged most mightily over the earth, and all the high mountains under the heavens were covered. Fifteen cubits above them the waters surged as the mountains were covered.

*Then expired all flesh that crawls about upon the earth—  
fowl, herd-animals, wildlife,  
and all swarming things that swarm upon the earth,  
and all humans;*

All that had the quickening breath of life in its nostrils, of all that was on dry land, died. And He wiped out all existing things from the face of the earth, from humans to cattle to crawling things to the fowl of the heavens, they were wiped out from the earth. And Noah alone remained, and those with him in the ark.

*The waters swelled upon the earth for a hundred and fifty days.  
But Elohim paid mind to Noah and all living-things,  
all the animals that were with him in the Ark,  
and Elohim brought a rushing-wind across the earth,  
so that the waters abated.  
The well-springs of Ocean and the sluices of the heavens were  
dammed up...*

...the rain from the heavens held back. And the waters receded from the earth little by little...

*...and the waters diminished at the end of a hundred and fifty days.  
And the Ark came to rest in the seventh New-Moon,  
on the seventeenth day after the New-Moon,  
upon the mountains of Ararat.  
Now the waters continued to advance and diminish  
until the tenth New-Moon.  
On the tenth, on the first day of the New-Moon,  
the tops of the mountains could be seen.*

And it happened, at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark he had made.

*...and sent out a raven;  
it went off, going off and returning,  
until the waters were dried up from upon the earth.*

And he sent out the dove to see whether the waters had abated from the surface of the ground. But the dove found no resting place for its foot and it returned to him to the ark, for the waters were over all the earth. And he reached out and took it and brought it back to him into the ark.

Then he waited another seven days and again sent the dove out from the ark. And the dove came back to him at eventide and, look, a plucked olive leaf was in its bill, and Noah knew that the waters had abated from the earth.

Then he waited still another seven days and sent out the dove, and it did not return to him again.

*And so it was in the six hundred and first year,  
in the beginning-month, on the first day of the New-Moon,  
that the waters left firm ground upon the earth.*

...and Noah took off the covering of the ark and he saw and, look, the surface of the ground was dry.

*Now in the second New-Moon, on the twenty-seventh day after  
the New-Moon, the earth was (completely) dry.*

*Elohim spoke to Noah, saying:  
“Go out of the Ark, you and your wife,  
your sons and your sons’ wives with you.  
All living-things that are with you,  
all flesh-fowl, animals,  
and all crawling things that crawl about upon the earth,  
have them go out with you,  
that they may swarm on earth,  
that they may bear fruit and become many upon the earth.”*

*So Noah went out, his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives with him,  
all living-things—all crawling things, and all fowl,  
all that crawl about upon the earth,  
according to their clans they went out of the Ark.*

And Noah built an altar to Y<sub>HWH</sub> and he took from every clean cattle and every clean fowl and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And Y<sub>HWH</sub> smelled the fragrant odor and Y<sub>HWH</sub> said in His heart, “I will not again damn the soil on humankind’s score. For the devisings of the human heart are evil from youth. And I will not again strike down all living things as I did.

*“As long as all the days of the earth—  
seedtime and harvest  
and cold and heat  
and summer and winter  
and day and night  
shall not cease.”*

Now Elohim blessed Noah and his sons and said to them:

“Bear fruit and be many and fill the earth!  
Fear-of-you, dread-of-you shall be upon all the wildlife of the  
earth and upon all the fowl of the heavens,  
all that crawls on the soil and all the fish of the sea—  
into your hand they are given.  
All things crawling about that live, for you shall they be, for eating,  
as with the green plants, I now give you all.  
However: flesh with its life, its blood, you are not to eat!

“However, too: for your blood, of your own lives,  
I will demand-satisfaction—  
from all wild-animals I will demand it,  
and from humankind, from every man regarding his brother,  
demand-satisfaction for human life.  
Whoever now sheds human blood,  
for that human shall his blood be shed,  
for in Elohim’s image he made humankind.

“As for you—bear fruit and be many,  
swarm on earth and become many on it!”

Elohim said to Noah and to his sons with him, saying:

“As for me—here, I am about to establish my covenant with you  
and with your seed after you,  
and with all living beings that are with you:  
fowl, herd-animals, and all the wildlife of the earth with you;  
all those going out of the Ark,  
of all the living-things of the earth.  
I will establish my covenant with you:  
All flesh shall never be cut off again by waters of the Deluge,  
never again shall there be Deluge, to bring the earth to ruin!”

And Elohim said:

“This is the sign of the covenant which I set between me and you  
and all living beings that are with you, for ageless generations:  
My bow I set in the clouds,  
so that it may serve as a sign of the covenant between me and  
the earth.

It shall be:

when I becloud the earth with clouds  
and in the clouds the bow is seen,  
I will call to mind my covenant  
that is between me and you and all living beings—all flesh:  
never again shall the waters become a Deluge, to bring all  
flesh to ruin!  
When the bow is in the clouds,  
I will look at it,  
to call to mind the age-old covenant  
between Elohim and all living beings—  
all flesh that is upon the earth.”

Elohim said to Noah:

“This is the sign of the covenant that I have established  
between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.”

## **1 Peter 3:18–22**

“[Jesus Christ], being put to death in flesh and yet being made  
alive in spirit, ...journeyed and made a proclamation to the spir-  
its in prison, to those...in the days of Noah when the ark was  
being fashioned, by which a few...were brought safe through  
the water, which also *prefigures the baptism* that now saves you—  
which is not a removal of the filth of flesh but rather the vow of  
good conscience to God...”

## Reading/Translation Notes

Primary translations by Everett Fox (“P”) and Robert Alter (“J”)

As edited by John Lein

- **Ark:** box or chest (unlike ancient parallels, this is not a boat with human steering or propulsion); also Moses’ *basket*. It measures 450’ x 75’ x 45’ and displaces 43,000 tons.
- **found favor:** Noah is chosen by God. A just, whole man. On his account, his entire family and lineage is saved.

### Commentary:

- The forces of chaos from Genesis 1:2 are released, and the world is uncreated by the same authority it was created.
- The withdrawing of the waters occur when “God re-mem-bers Noah,” he “pays him mind.” A triumph of mercy over judgement occurs when God *sees* his human.
- No act of the created reverses this judgement. There is no repentance or religious sacrifice mentioned. God decides to restore the rhythms and promises of creation on his own.
- Unlike some ancient parallels, judgement is based on sin and restoration on righteousness.
- The covenant of God is made with all re-created humankind.
- God changes his mind/God nullifies his plan to destroy/God restores. What might this have meant to a nation reflecting on Exodus and in Exile?

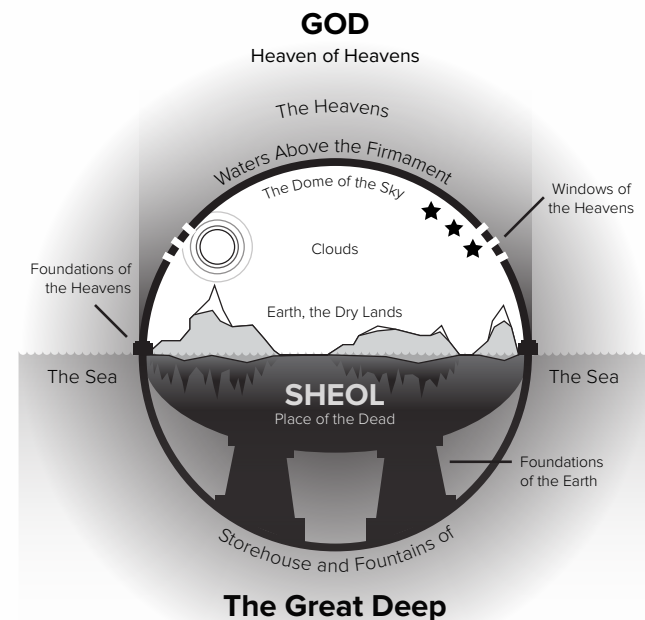
### Resources used

- *The Five Books of Moses* translation/notes by Everett Fox
- *The Five Books of Moses* translation/notes by Robert Alter
- *The Bible with Sources Revealed* by Richard Elliott Friedman
- *Genesis 1-11* by Westermann
- *The Jewish Study Bible* translation/notes
- *Intro to OT: Canon and Imagination* by Brueggemann & Linafelt
- Hebrew Names from Abarim-Publications.com

<b>Two Sources:</b>	“Yahwist” (J)	“Priestly” (P)
<b>Name of God</b>	YHWH	Elohim
<b>Animal Pairs</b>	7 pairs of clean, 1 unclean	1 pair of all animals
<b>Flood Source</b>	Rain for 40 days	Waters above and below the earth converge.
<b>Timing</b>	After 7 days, rain for 40.	Waters rose for 150 days, sank for another 150.
<b>Birds</b>	Dove sent three times.	Raven sent out, no return.

### Repeated elements:

- The destruction of humanity (6:5 & 6:11-12)
- Decision to destroy (6:7 & 6:13)
- Commission to enter Ark (7:1-3 & 7:18-21)
- Entering of the Ark (7:7 & 7:13)
- Coming of the flood (7:10 & 7:11)
- Death of all creatures (7:22f & 7:20f)
- End of the flood (8:2b-3a & 8:3b-5)
- Promise of nonreoccurrence (8:21b-22 & 9:17)



## Ancient Parallels (livius.org)

	<b>Eridu Genesis</b>	<b>Atrahasis</b>	<b>Gilgamesh</b>	<b>Bible</b>	<b>Berosus</b>	<b>Greece</b>	<b>Quran</b>
<b>Date</b>	3rd mil. BCE	c.1640 BCE	c.1100 BCE	c.1000-500 BCE	278 BCE	c. BCE?	C.600 CE
<b>Revolt</b>	?	lesser gods	?	giants?	monsters?	giants	—
<b>Hero</b>	Ziusudra	Atrahasis	Ut-napistim	Noah	Xisuthrus	Deucalion	Nuh
<b>Destroyer</b>	Enlil	Enlil	Enlil	YHWH	Enlil	Zeus	Allah
<b>Warning</b>	Vision	Dream	Indirect order	Direct order	Dream	?	Direct order
<b>Reason</b>	Noise?	Noise	?	Sin, giants	?	Sin, giants	Sin
<b>Cause</b>	Stormflood	Rain	Stormflood	Rain, fountains	—	Rain, waves	“from valley”
<b>Savior</b>	Enki	Enki	Enki	YHWH	Enki	Prometheus	Allah
<b>Period</b>	7 days	7 days	7 days	150/40 days	“quickly”	9 days	?
<b>Birds</b>	?	?	raven, dove, swallow	doves/raven	“several”	none	—
<b>Fate</b>	Eternal life	Eternal life	Eternal life	3 sons	Eternal life	3 grandsons	—