

An Exegetical Theology of Genesis 6-9

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I. Introduction

A. Terminology

The Genesis Flood is denoted in the OT by the technical Hebrew term *mabbûl*. The etymology of this word is uncertain, but perhaps derives from the root *ybl* "to flow, to stream" (Davidson, 2004, p. 62). All OT occurrences of this word refer to the Genesis Flood; all are in Genesis except Ps. 29:10. The occurrences in the Flood narrative are usually associated with *mayim* "waters" [*hamabbûl mayim, mē hamabbûl, hamayim l' mabbûl*]). The LXX and the NT consistently employ the Greek term *kataklysmos* ("flood, deluge") for this event (4 times in NT, plus once using the related verb *kataklyzō* ["flood, inundate"], 2 Pet. 3:6).

Besides the certain allusion to the Genesis Flood in the phrase *mē-Noah* "waters of Noah" (Isa. 54:9), many other possible OT allusions to the Noahic Deluge utilize a variety of Hebrew expressions: *zerem* "inundation, flood" (Isa. 28:2); *mayim kabbîrîm* "mighty waters" (Isa. 28:2), *mayim rabbîm* "great waters" (Ps. 18:17 [Eng. v. 16]), or simply *mayim* "waters" (Isa. 43:2; Job 12:15; Ps. 124:4); *nhārôt* "floods, streams" (Ps. 93:3); *rahab* "storm, Rahab" (Job 26:12);

šibbōlet "flood, flowing stream" (Ps. 69:3, 16 [Eng. vv. 2, 15]); and *šetep* "overflowing, flood" (Dan. 9:26; Nah. 1:8; Ps. 32:6). NT allusions to the Genesis Flood employ the Greek noun *hydōr* "water" (1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 3:6).

B. Extra-biblical Parallels.

Ancient flood stories are almost universal (up to 230 different stories known) (see Belli, et al., 2023; Frazer, 1918, 1:105-361; Nelson, 1931; Ham & Hodge, 2016, pp. 31-40;) and are by far the most frequently-given cause for past world calamities in the folk literature of antiquity (Thompson, 1955, 1:182-194). The stories nearest to the area of the Dispersion at Babel are the closest in detail to the biblical account.

Four main flood stories are found in Mesopotamian sources: The Sumerian Eridu Genesis (ca. 1600 B.C., see Jacobsen, 1981), the Old Babylonian Atrahasis Epic (ca. 1600 B.C., see Lambert and Millard, 1969), the Gilgamesh Epic (Neo-Assyrian version, ca. 8th-7th Cent. B.C., see Heidel, 1946), and Berossus' account (Babylon, 3rd cent. B.C., see Lambert and Millard, 1969, pp. 134-137).

While acknowledging that the text of Gen 6-9 affirms a world-wide Flood, most critical commentators further assert that the biblical narrative is either directly borrowed from other ANE Flood stories, or ultimately derives from a common original Mesopotamian Flood tradition. Terrence Fretheim is representative of the modern critical consensus: "the Genesis account should be related to a major flood in the Mesopotamian valley, which in time was interpreted as

a flood that covered the then known world (one severe flood has been dated around 3000 BCE).” (Fretheim, 1994, p. 388).

The major similarities between these ANE flood stories on one hand, and the biblical account on the other, have been rehearsed by many scholars, (see, e.g. Heidel, 1946; and Wenham 1987), these are conveniently summarized by Wenham (1987, pp. 163-164) as follows: (1) a divine decision to destroy humankind; (2) a warning to the flood hero; (3) the command to build an ark; (4) the hero’s obedience; (5) the command to enter the ark; (6) the entry into the ark; (7) the closing of the door; (8) the description of the flood; (9) the destruction of life; (10) the end of rain, etc.; (11) the ark grounding on a mountain; (12) the hero opens a window; (13) the birds’ reconnaissance; (14) the exit from the ark; (15) offering of a sacrifice; (16) the divine smelling of the sacrifice; and (17) a blessing on the flood hero. Aside from these similarities, there are also many differences, especially as it concerns the character of God (theodicy) and other theological issues, which will be pointed out throughout this paper.

C. The Historicity and Unity of the Flood Narrative

Proponents of a non-historical interpretation of the Genesis Flood narrative generally contend that Gen 6-9 is a mythological account, comprised of two different literary sources (Jahwist and Priestly) largely borrowed from earlier ANE mythological traditions, and woven together by a redactor for the primary purpose of affirming the theological distinctives of Israel’s faith.

Those advancing a non-historical interpretation often do acknowledge that the final redactor of Genesis intended the Flood narrative of Gen 6-9 to be taken as a literal account of

what actually happened as well as having theological significance. James Barr, former Regius Professor of Hebrew at the University of Oxford, summarizes: “[S]o far as I know there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the writer(s) of Genesis 1-11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that . . . Noah’s flood was understood to be worldwide, and to have extinguished all human and land animal life except for those in the ark.” (Barr, personal letter to David C. K. Watson, April 23, 1984; cited in Plantinga, 2001, p. 217).

However, these scholars generally insist that the historical nature of the Flood narrative must be rejected in favor of recognizing its essentially mythological and theological (non-historical) character. Critical scholars generally reject the historicity of all of Genesis, including the patriarchal narratives. So, e.g., von Rad (1972, p. 40) writes: “the old, naive idea of the historicity of these narratives as being biographically reliable stories from the life of the patriarchs must be abandoned.” For von Rad and many other critical scholars, what is stated regarding the non-historicity of the patriarchal narratives applies even more to the “primeval history” of Gen 1-11, which is labeled as primeval myth, historicizing myth, tales, sagas, legends, or the like.

On the other hand, evangelical scholars tend to accept the historicity of the latter chapters of Genesis, but the early part of Genesis (chaps. 1-11) is often separated from the rest of the book, and in light of what is considered the “assured results” of modern scientific investigation, reject the notion of a literal world-wide flood in favor of a “rhetorical-theological reading” (see, e.g., Collins, 2018, pp. 193-194). It is argued that the “a local cataclysmic flood is intentionally

described as a global flood for rhetorical purposes and theological reasons” (Longman & Walton, 2018, pp. 91-99). A crucial question in this context is the following: can such partitioning of Genesis into “primeval” (non-historical) and patriarchal (historical) sections be justified within the text of Genesis itself, with the Flood narrative confined to the former (non-historical) section? To this we now turn our attention.

Two important literary-structural elements tie the Flood narrative together with the rest of the book of Genesis and support the internal unity and historicity of Gen 6-9: the use of the word *tôlēdôt* (“generations, account, history,”), 13 times in the book (Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1, 32; 11:10, 27; 28:12-13; 25:19; 36:1, 9; 37:2), and the symmetrical literary structure of the Flood narrative.

1. *Tôlēdôt*. Each narrative section of the book of Genesis begins (or ends) with the term *tôlēdôt* (Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1, 32; 11:10, 27; 28:12-13; 25:19; 36:1, 9; 37:2). The term means literally “begettings” or “bringings-forth” (from the verb *yālad* “to bring forth, beget”); it is a genealogical term, and implies that Genesis is the “history/account of beginnings.” (Doukhan, 1978, pp. 166-220; cf. Mathews, 1996, pp. 26-41). Walter Kaiser (1970, pp. 48-65) has carefully analyzed the literary form (genre) of Gen 1-11, in light of this *tôlēdôt* structure, and shown that this whole section of Genesis should be taken as “historical narrative prose.”

The term *tôlēdôt* is used as the heading for the Flood account (6:9), thereby connecting it with the rest of the book of Genesis and indicating that the author intended this narrative to be as historically veracious as the rest of Genesis. (Doukhan, 2016, pp. 32-33). One cannot logically accept that the author of Genesis intended only some sections of the *tôlēdôt* to be historical, such

as the accounts of the patriarchs, while others, such as the Flood account, would be only theological in nature. As Kenneth Mathews aptly states:

The recurring formulaic *toledôth* device [of the book of Genesis] shows that the composition was arranged to join the historical moorings of Israel with the beginnings of the cosmos. In this way the composition forms an Adam-Noah-Abraham continuum that loops the patriarchal promissory blessings with the God of cosmos and all human history. The text does not welcome a different reading for Genesis 1-11 as myth versus the patriarchal narratives. . . . [I]f taken as theological story alone, the interpreter is at odds with the historical intentionality of Genesis. (Mathews, 1996, pp. 41, 111).

2. *The Symmetrical Literary Structure of the Flood Narrative*. Scriptural narratives are often placed in intricate and symmetrical literary forms, such as chiasms (reverse parallelism) or panel writing, to highlight important theological points in the narrative without distorting the historical account (Dorsey, 1999, pp. 15-44). The chiastic literary structure of Gen 6-9 has been recognized by numerous scholars (e.g., Anderson, 1978, p. 38; Shea, 1979, pp. 22-23; Anderson, 2014, p. 648; Hoffmeier, 2015, p. 50; Turner, 2017, p. 55; Johns, 2022, p. 65) and provides weighty evidence for the unity of the Flood narrative instead of dividing these chapters into an amalgam of textual units (J and P) as suggested by the Documentary Hypothesis (Cassuto, 1964, pp. 30-34; Shea, 1979, pp. 8-29). A close reading of the Flood narrative as a coherent literary whole, with particular attention to the chiastic structure, resolves apparent discrepancies in the Genesis account (Wenham, 1978, pp. 336-348; Shea, 1979). In the literary structure of the Flood narrative, the genealogical frame or envelope construction (Gen 5:32 and 9:28-29) plus the secondary genealogies (Gen 6:9-10 and 9:18-19) actually provide powerful indicators that the account is intended to be factual history. The **chiastic** literary structure of the Flood narrative, as analyzed by Shea, is displayed below:

Chart I:

The Chiastic Structure of the Flood Narrative

E The flood proper

b' The flood crests
The ark rests
God remembered Noah
(8:1-5)

a The flood rises. **a'** The flood abates
(7:17-24) (8:6-12)

D Preliminary to the Flood D' After the flood

d Enters the ark **d'** Exits the ark
(7:11-16) (8:13-19)

c Brings in clean animals **c'** Noah's sacrifice
(7:6-10) (8:20-22)

b Brings in clean animals **b'** Noah's diet
(7:1-5) (9:1-7)

a My covenant with you **a'** My covenant with
(6:11-22) you (9:8-17)

C Secondary genealogy C' Secondary genealogy
(6:9-10) *šahat* (9:18-19)

B Prologue: man's B' Epilogue: man's
wickedness (6:1-8) wickedness (9:20-
27)

A Primary genealogy A' Primary genealogy
(5:32)
(9:28-29)

This detailed chiasmic literary structure of Genesis 6-9 argues for the unity of the Flood narrative instead of small textual units (J and P) as suggested by the Documentary Hypothesis (Cassuto 1964, 30-34; Shea 1979). A close reading of the Flood narrative as a coherent literary whole, with particular attention to the chiasmic structure, resolves apparent discrepancies in the Genesis account (Wenham 1978; Shea 1979; Hasel 1980, 49-50, 150-151).

As will be discussed below, the Genesis Flood narrative presents profound theology. But this theology is always *rooted* in history. Any attempt to separate theology and history in the biblical narratives does so by imposing an external norm, such as Greek dualism, upon the text. Read on its own terms, the biblical narratives, including the Flood narrative, defy attempts to read them as non-historical theology.

II. An Exegetical Theology of the Flood

Numerous theological themes and motifs emerge from an exegetical study of the Flood narrative in Genesis 6-9. We explore some of these in the discussion that follows.

A. The Motive or Theological Cause of the Flood.

In contrast with the extra-biblical ancient Near Eastern flood stories, in which no cause of the flood is given (e.g., Gilgamesh Epic) or the gods decide to wipe out their human slaves because they are multiplying too fast or making too much noise (e.g., Atrahasis Epic and Eridu Genesis), the biblical account provides a profound theological motivation for the Flood:

humankind's moral depravity and sinfulness, the all-pervading corruption and violence of all living beings (“all flesh”) on earth (Gen. 6:1-8, 11-12), which demands divine punishment.

The first window into the sinfulness of the ante-diluvian generation is given 6:1-4. There has been much debate through the centuries as to the interpretation of Gen 6:1–4. Four major theories have been propounded as to the identity of the “sons of God” in this passage: (1) divine beings; (2) angels; (3) rulers; and (4) Sethites. This is not the place for a detailed discussion (see the overview of arguments for the various interpretations in Van Gemeren, 1981; Doedens, 2019). Several studies have reviewed the various interpretations and provided cogent evidence that the “Sethite” view best fits the literary context and overall flow of the book of Genesis (see Davidson 2007, 182-184). I find this evidence persuasive. The “Sethite” interpretation sees the “sons of God” as the godly line of Seth (described in the genealogy of Gen 5) intermarrying with the women from the line of Cain (described in Gen 4:16-24) who are called the “daughters of men.”

If it is accepted that the “sons of God” are the godly line of Seth, then v. 2 describes a situation in which the godly line has begun to accept the ways of the line of Cain: “they [the sons of God] took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.” The Hebrew of this verse, with the partitive preposition *min* (“from”) plus the noun *kōl* “all” seems to imply an introduction of polygamy into the marital practices of Seth’s descendants. I concur with David Clines’ translation: “taking for themselves wives of as many women as they chose” (Clines, 1979, p. 36; cf. Atkinson, 1990, 131). The implication of this translation fits the context of the Flood that follows: prevalent polygamy is given as one of the main ingredients in the “corruption” (Heb.

šahaṭ, niphal) of the earth that caused the Lord to set a probationary period of 120 years (Gen 6:3), and that finally prompted the divine decision to destroy (*šahaṭ, hiphil*) the earth by the Flood (Gen 6:5,11–13).

Regarding ante-diluvian humanity, “the LORD said, ‘My Spirit [*rûkhî*] shall not strive [*yādôn*] with man [*’ādām*, humanity] forever, for [*běšaggam*] he *is* indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years” (Gen 6:3). Each clause of Gen 6:3 is fraught with questions of translation and interpretation. I have dealt with these elsewhere (Davidson, 2018). In the first clause, I maintain, the term *yādôn* should not be translated “remain,” but “strive, plead.” The clause should be translated as with many modern versions: “My Spirit [the Holy Spirit] shall not always strive [*yādôn*] with humanity.” The Spirit is “striving for” the ante-diluvians, with divine grace pleading and interceding on humanity’s behalf. The thrust of the passage is not upon divine condemnation, but upon divine grace seeking to win over humanity to God, warning them of the consequences of their sins, and entreating them to exercise repentance and reformation.

This interpretation makes sense of the next clause of Gen 6:3, which I suggest has been almost universally mis-translated in the modern versions. Most versions read similarly in v. 3 b: “for he is indeed flesh.” But the word translated “for” is not simply the causative *kî* “because”, as found several times later in this chapter (vv. 7, 12, 13; cf. 7:1). It is rather the word *běšaggam*, which is a *hapax legomenon*. Scholars usually analyze this word as a combination of three Hebrew particles: *be* “in,” *šē* “which,” and *gam* “also, indeed”, together reading “in which also” or, in short “for, because.”

But why would Moses use this cumbersome method of stating cause, when throughout the chapter he has elsewhere consistently used the causal preposition *kî* “because”? Furthermore, the particle *she* “which,” a shortened form of *’ašer*, is *never* elsewhere used in the Pentateuch! Everywhere else Moses uses the full form of the word, *’ašer*. Thus it would be most unusual for him to employ the shortened form in this one place alone. In addition, as Hamilton (1990, p. 267) points out, if the translation “because” is the correct one, then “the verse says that the stimulus for God’s retaliation is man’s nature—he is flesh—rather than man’s activity. It is what man is, rather than what man has done, that incites God not to permit his Spirit to remain in mankind forever.” This interpretation flies in the face of the rest of the chapter, which sets forth specific actions of humanity as cause for bringing of the Flood, and not simply because of their nature of being “flesh.” Furthermore, the word *bāšār* “flesh” in the OT does not imply sinfulness, as it may sometimes in the NT, but rather refers to “what is frail, transient” (Koehler, et al., 2001, p. 164).

The marginal reference of the NASB has recognized an alternative interpretation to this expression, one which has been noted by many other commentators, one which commentators recognize “easily circumvents the awkwardness of this verse” (Hamilton, 1990, p. 268). The word can simply be a combination of the preposition *be* “in” and the infinitive construct of the verb *šāgag* (or *šāgâ*) “to sin, go astray, err” plus the third masculine plural ending *-am* “their.” Thus the clause would read: “in their going astray he/it [i.e., humanity] is flesh.” A number of the ancient Hebrew manuscripts support this reading (Ginsburg, 1966, p. 1021). While commentators like Hamilton find this solution attractive, the objection is raised by him that the verb *šāgag* describes “sins committed ‘inadvertantly’ [i.e.,] sins that result from negligence or

from ignorance,” and this does not fit the situation of the ante-diluvians “who act neither from negligence nor out of ignorance” (Hamilton, 1990, 268).

However, recent studies, including a doctoral dissertation by Eric Ellison (Ellison, 2021) have shown that the meaning of the verb *šāgag* is basically “to go astray,” and is not limited to inadvertant sins; it can describe “the whole range of sins that are non-brazen, i.e., not done rebelliously, ‘with a high hand’” (Davidson, 2022, p. 288). If this distinction is maintained in the usage in Gen 6:2, the verb *šāgag* is well-suited to describe the actions of the ante-diluvian world, and also the reference to “their going astray” precisely fits the theological context of the entire verse. In the first part of the verse, God states that His Spirit would not indefinitely continue to “strive for” or “plead with” humanity. In the next section of the verse, the clarification is made (not reason given) that “in their going astray” humanity is demonstrating its frailty and transience. By using the term *šāgag*, which indicates humanity’s going astray but not a “high-handed” sin for which there is no forgiveness (in harmony with usage in Numbers 15), God is implying that antediluvian humanity has not yet reached the point of no return. There is still probation lingering, before the antediluvians have (in NT terms) committed the “sin against the Holy Spirit” (Matt 12:31), i.e., become so hardened in sin that there is no longer any human response to the pleadings of divine mercy.

In this light, the last part of the verse also makes excellent sense. The clause “yet his days shall be 120 years” does not refer to God’s lessening the life-span down to 120 years, as would be implied if one takes the word *yādôn* as meaning “remain” (see discussion above). Rather, in harmony with the legal context of *yādôn*, understood as meaning “to strive/plead,” the

clause refers to a probationary period of 120 years before God brings executive judgment upon the ante-diluvian world if they do not repent and reform their ways. God recognizes the “going astray” of humanity in their frailty and transience, but also reckons with the fact that persistence in such “going astray” will ultimately lead from *šāgag* kind of sin (i.e., forgiveable), to “high-handed” or rebellious and defiant sin—sin against the Holy Spirit in which the sinner has become totally “corrupt” (*šāḥaṭ*) and thus unresponsive to the Spirit’s promptings. Such a condition of “corruption” is exactly what Gen 6:5–12 portray, followed by the executive judgment of the Flood. By utilizing the same word *šāḥaṭ* in Gen 6 for the nature of humanity as “corrupt” (*šāḥaṭ*) and for God’s decision to “destroy” (*šāḥaṭ*), the narrative implies that God’s destructive work in the Flood is simply allowing corrupt humanity to reap the consequences of their choice. “The divine act of destruction is not arbitrary. God ‘destroys’ what humanity had already ruined or corrupted; he mercifully brings to completion the ruin already wrought by humankind” (Davidson, 1996, 262; cf. Park, 2005, 48-52).

The Flood narrative not only introduces us to the description of humankind as “flesh” which has gone astray (Gen 6:3), but also, at the end of the 120 years provides a depiction of the human “heart” (Gen 6:5; 8:21). According to Gen 6:5, “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.” The condition of the human heart at the time of the Flood was totally depraved. Gen 6:5 reads: “every intent [*yeṣer*] of the thoughts [*maḥāšabôt*] of his heart was only evil continually.” The noun *yeṣer*, usually translated “intent,” actually means “inclination,” “bent,” or “propensity” (Koehler, et al., 2001, p. 429). At the time of the Flood, the wicked were

characterized by an “inclination” of the “thoughts/intents/inventions” (*maḥāšabôt*) of their heart that was only evil continually. After the Flood, those faithful remnant who came out of the ark are described with a subtle but significant difference (8:21). The *yešer* or “inclination”/bent is not of the thoughts/intents [*maḥāšabôt*] of the heart, but of the heart itself. The heart is the seat of the emotions, the essence of the moral nature of the human being. The text of Gen 8:21 describes the human heart as bent toward evil in its very nature, not the thoughts/intents constantly inclined toward evil, as at the time of the Flood. Humans still have a sinful nature, but the righteous are not allowing their thoughts/intents and actions to give in to their nature.

But at the time of the Flood, according to Gen 6:11-12, not only were every thought of the human heart of the antediluvians bent toward evil, “the earth was corrupt [*šahat*]. . . for all flesh had corrupted [*šahat*] their way on the earth.” The word *šahat* means to “be marred, spoiled, corrupted, ruined.” (Brown et al., 1983, pp. 1007-1008). Humans themselves had “gone to ruin” and they also had caused the earth to be ruined (Park, 2009, 45). The earth was also “filled with violence [*hamas*] because of them [sinful humans]” (v. 13). This violence included physical violence and brutality as well as nonphysical/ethical (verbal, cultic) violence, and the violence on the earth probably also extended to animal life (Park, 2009, pp. 52-61). Indeed, the earth was ripe for destruction. There was unmistakable motivation (theological cause) for the flood.

B. The God of the Flood (Theodicy).

God Himself makes provision for the saving of humankind (Gen 6:14-16). He “repents” (*nāḥam*), i.e. “is sorry, moved to pity, having compassion, suffering grief” (Gen. 6:6). God

"grieves" (*ʿāṣab*), the same Hebrew root used of the woman's "pain" and Adam's "anguish" in the divine judgment of Genesis 3; the implication is that God Himself takes up humanity's pain and anguish (Gen 6:6; cf. 3:16, 17). The divine act of destruction is not arbitrary. God "destroys" (*šahat*, v. 13) what humanity had already ruined or corrupted (*šahat*, vv. 11-12); He simply mercifully brings to completion the ruin already wrought by humankind.

The God of the biblical Flood is not only just and merciful; He is also free to act according to His divine will, and He possesses sovereign power and full control over the forces of nature. Yahweh's omnipotent sovereignty seems to be the theological thrust of Ps 29:10, the only biblical reference outside Genesis employing the term *mabbûl*: "Yahweh sat enthroned at the Flood [*mabbûl*]."

The choice of divine names throughout the Flood narrative, instead of indicating separate sources, seems to highlight different aspects of God's character: the generic *Elohim* when His universal, transcendent sovereignty or judicial authority is emphasized; and the covenant name *Yahweh* when His personal, ethical dealings with Noah and humankind are in view (Cassuto 1961, 35-36; Leupold 1956, 280-281).

Many contrasts between Yahweh, the God of the Genesis flood, and the other (so-called) gods of the ANE may be noted (see esp. Wenham, 1987, pp. 159-166). One finds a clear contrast between the monotheistic theology of the Genesis account and the polytheistic mythology of the ANE accounts. As already noted, the ANE deities are capricious: Anu and Enlil decide to destroy humanity because they have multiplied too much and are making too much noise so that the gods cannot sleep. The gods are also not in harmony with each other, but in conflict: the god

Ea (or Enki) inform the flood hero so that he could escape, much to the disgust of Enlil. In contrast to Yahweh's sovereignty over nature, as the Creator of the natural world, the gods of the ANE are bound by the forces of nature. The ANE flood stories recount the weakness and fright of the gods during the Flood. They were unable to control the Flood, and in their fright they "cowered like dogs." After the flood subsides, and the flood hero offers sacrifices which are acceptable to God, the differences between the character of Yahweh become even more evident. While both Yahweh and the ANE gods are said to "smell the sweet savor" of the sacrifice, the gods of the Gilgamesh Epic are depicted as "'crowding like flies around the sacrifice,' greedily jostling for places at the open-air barbecue. Since mankind had been created to feed the gods, obviously the latter had gone hungry while there were no men around to present offerings" (Wenham, 1987, p. 165). Wenham summarizes, "Throughout the flood story, then, Genesis paints a completely different portrait of God from the standard ancient theology. . . . God is not fearful, ignorant, greedy, or jealous. He is not annoyed by man's rowdiness, but but by his depravity. Not partiality but justice dictates the salvation of Noah" (Wenham, 1987, 165).

C. Human Moral Responsibility.

The portrayal of humanity's moral depravity as the cause of the flood highlights human responsibility for sin. Noah's response of faith/faithfulness (*pistis*, Heb 11:7) underscores that accountability to God is not only corporate but individual: Noah found "favor" (*hēn*) in God's sight, he was "righteous" (*saddîq*), "blameless" (*tāmîm*) and "walked together" (*hālak*, Hithpael) in personal relationship with God (Gen 6:8-9; cf. the parallel with Enoch in Gen 5:22); he

responded in implicit obedience to His commands, in building the ark and entering with his family and the animals that were preserved (Gen 6:22; 7:5, 9; cf. Ezek 14:14, 20).

D. Eschatological Investigative and Executive Judgment.

When God said, "I have determined to make an end [*qēs*] of all flesh" (Gen. 6:13), he introduced the "eschatological" term *qēs* which in later Scripture became a technical term for the eschaton (last days). The divine judgment involved a period of probation (Gen. 6:3), followed by a judicial investigation ("The Lord saw . . ." Gen. 6:5; "I have determined," Gen. 6:13 RSV). Many scholars have recognized the existence of a divine investigative trial judgment here in the narrative before God brings the executive judgment of the Flood (Davidson, 2022, 405). Sarna (1989, p. 46) notes: "This phrase ["The Lord saw. . ."] has juridical overtones, implying both investigation of the facts and readiness for action." Likewise, Cassuto (1984, p. 57) recognizes the divine legal proceedings implied here: "[God, as it were, says:] sentence of destruction upon all flesh has been presented before My Court of Justice, and I have already come to a decision concerning it, and I am about to execute it." As a result of the legal proceedings, the divine sentence is given ("I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth. . .", Gen 6:7), and its execution (the bringing of the Flood, Gen. 7:11-24). The existence of a time of probation, and then an open legal trial, in which God makes known the corruption and violence of the antediluvians, is another indicator of God's justice in bringing the Flood, and of his mercy in seeking to save all who would choose to follow his directions.

The NT recognizes that the divine judgment of the Genesis Flood is a typological foreshadowing of the final eschatological judgment (see Flood typology, below).

E. The Noahic Covenant.

The word *bĕrît* "covenant" first appears in Scripture in connection with the Flood (Gen 6:18; 9:8-17), and the covenant motif is an integral part of the Flood narrative. The Noahic covenant comes at God's initiative, and demonstrates His concern, faithfulness, and dependability. He covenants never again to send a Flood to destroy the earth. This covenant promise flows from the propitiatory animal sacrifice offered by Noah (Gen. 8:20-22; Wenham 1987, 189-190).

Unlike the other biblical covenants, the Noahic covenant is made not only with humankind but with the whole earth (Gen. 9:13) including every living creature (Gen. 9:10, 12, 15, 16), and is thus completely unilateral and unconditional upon the response of the earth and its inhabitants. The sign of this everlasting covenant is the rainbow, which is not primarily for humankind, but for God to see and "remember" the covenant He has made with the earth (Gen. 9:16). It has been pointed out that the term for "rainbow" usually refers to the "bow of war" in the HB. The rainbow is in the shape of a war bow, but it is positioned so that any arrows would be shot upward, not down toward earth! "The beauty of the ancient conception thus becomes apparent: God shows the world that he has put aside his bow. Man knows of the blessing in this new gracious relationship in the stability of the orders of nature" (von Rad, 1972, p. 134; cf. Doukhan, 2016, pp. 162-163).

F. The Flood Remnant.

The Flood narrative contains the first mention in the biblical canon of the motif and terminology of remnant, Gen 7:23: "Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark

remained [*šā'ar*]." The remnant who survived the cosmic catastrophe of the Flood were constituted thus because of their right relationship of faith and obedience to God, not because of caprice or the favoritism of the gods, as in the extra-biblical ancient Near Eastern flood stories. This reference to the faithful remnant in Scripture is the foundation upon which a whole theology of remnant is built throughout the rest of Scripture (Hasel, 1974, 1988).

G. The Flood and Divine Grace

God's grace is revealed already before the Flood in the 120 years of probation granted the antediluvian world (Gen. 6:3) and in his directions for the building of the ark to save those faithful to Him (Gen. 6:14-21); and again after the Flood in His covenant/promise never again to destroy the earth with a Flood, even though human nature remained evil (Gen. 8:20-22; 9:8-17).

But the theological (and literary, chiasitic) heart of the Flood account is found in the phrase "God remembered Noah" (Gen. 8:1; Anderson 1978, 38). The memory theology of Scripture does not imply that God has literally forgotten; for God to "remember" is to act in deliverance (see Exod. 6:5). The structural positioning of God's "remembering" at the center of the narrative indicates that the apex of Flood theology is not punitive judgment but divine salvific grace.

Numerous thematic and verbal parallels between the accounts of Noah's salvation and Israel's Exodus deliverance reveal the author's intent to emphasize their similarity (Sailhamer, 1990, p. 89). Various references in the Psalms to God's gracious deliverance of the righteous from the "great waters" of tribulation, may contain allusions to the Genesis Flood (Ps. 18:16

[Hebrew v. 17]; 32:6; 65:5-8 [Hebrew vv. 6-9]; 69:2 [Hebrew v. 3]; 89:9 [Hebrew v. 10]; 93:3; and 124:4).

Most commentators who mention the center of the Flood chiastic structure cite the statement “God remembered Noah,” but fail to include the rest of the verse: “and every living thing, and all the animals what were with him in the ark.” God’s grace extends to the animals! He preserved the animals in the ark, including seven pairs of each “kind” (Heb. *mîn*) of clean animals and two pairs of each “kind” (*mîn*) of unclean animals (6:19, 20; 7:2, 3, 8, 9). At this point, the questions may be raised, “What is the meaning of the Hebrew word for “kind”? “How could every species be preserved on the Ark? What about the dinosaurs? (Gen 7:2) I have dealt with these questions elsewhere (Davidson 2010b), and will summarize the basic points in the workshop which occurs later in this Conference.

H. The Chronology of the Flood and the Sabbath.

Unlike the ANE flood stories, the Genesis account of the Flood is intricately connected with time. Each phase of the Flood is precisely situated in time. Many studies have been focused upon the chronology of the Flood account (see the bibliography in Johns 2022), and we will look more closely at this issue in the Workshop B. As noted in the introduction of this study, various scholars have shown that the chronological markers of time more than one day in length are carefully arranged in a chiastic structure which presents the full course of the flood from its onset to its conclusion. The first half describes the crescendo of the Flood while the last half describes a parallel de-crescendo, with the thematic and hydrological center of the Flood account in the center (Gen 8:1). Shea (1979) has set forth the temporal structure as follows:

Chart 2:

The Chronological Chiastic Structure of the Flood Narrative

- e** The flood crests, the ark rests,
God remembers Noah (8:1)

- d** 150 days waters prevail. **d'** 150 days waters abate
(7:24) (8:3)

- c** 40 days of the flood. **c'** 40 days first birds
(7:12, 17) sent out (8:6)

- b** 7 days till the flood **b'** 7 days next bird
(7:10) sent out (8:10)

- a** 7 days till the 40-day storm **a'** 7 days last bird
storm (7:4) sent out (8:12)

Several scholars have in particular noted the matching seven-day cycles in the narrative, which echo the creation week, and intimate that the seventh-day of each cycle is intended to be read as referring to a Sabbath. Jaubert (1957) suggests that the calendar in Gen 6-9 follows the Jubilee calendar, and she calculates that the flood begins on a Sunday after Noah and those in the ark rest on the seventh-day Sabbath. Further, the five months when the ark floated during the period of “de-creation” concluded on a Friday. One could say, as Wenham (1987, p. 180) puts it, “the ark ceased traveling on Friday in order not to violate another Sabbath! Developing this chronology further, Wenham notes that other periods of time mentioned in Gen 7-8 reveal a

seven-day cycle connected with the Sabbath: “the flood, destructive phase of the waters, also seems to be over on a Friday (Gen 7:12), and Noah, like God, begins a new phase of activity on Sundays (8:6, 10, 12; cf. 7:10, 11). This suggests that he observed the previous day as a Sabbath, a mark of his righteousness perhaps” (Wenham, 1987, pp. 180-181). The foregoing analysis assumes that the antediluvian calendar was the same or similar to the Jubilee Calendar found in the Book of Jubilees, in which the calendar has 364 days and thus every year a particular date always falls on the same day of the week.

Johns (2022) analyzes the chronological data of the Flood data, using internal indicators found in the text which imply that Flood calendar is based upon 30-day months with a year of 360 days (cf. Gen 7:11, 24; 8:4). Johns argues that “the seven-day cycles of the Flood chronology are Creation cycles based upon a seven-day week that starts with a first day and ends with a seventh day or sabbath day (Genesis 1:3–2:3)” (Johns, 2022, p. 62). By linking Flood chronology with creation chronology, the seven-day wait for the start of the Flood (Gen 7:4, 10) and the seven day for the sending out of the birds in seven-day cycles (Gen 8:10, 12) ended on a Saturday/sabbath. Further detailed calculation of the Flood chronology according to these assumptions leads to the recognition of other events in the Flood that likely ended on a Saturday (Sabbath). The following chart presented by Johns (2022, p. 68) points to the probability that least eight events that seem to have occurred on the Sabbath:

Chart 3:

Warren Johns' Proposed Flood Chronology:

Genesis	Event	Biblical Date	Day of the Week
7:6	Noah's 600th birthday	1-1-600	Wednesday
7:7ff.	Starting to board the ark— humans and animals	2-10-600	Sunday
7:10	Seven days of waiting, the seventh being a Saturday	2-16-600	Saturday/sabbath
7:11	Beginning of the Flood	2-17-600	Sunday
7:12	40 days of rain ending	3-27-600	Friday
8:4	Ark rests on Mt. Ararat after 150 days	7-17-600	Wednesday
8:5	Water decreasing for another 150 days, ending on:	12-17-600	Saturday/sabbath
8:5	Tops of the mountains appear	11-1-600*	Tuesday
8:6	Raven sent out after 40 days (39 full days)	12-10-600	Saturday/sabbath
8:8	First dove sent out seven days later at end of 150 days	12-17-600	Saturday/sabbath
8:10	Second dove sent out after seven days; returns with leaf	12-24-600	Saturday/sabbath
8:12	Third dove sent out after seven days, but did not return <i>No delay after the 3rd dove sent and ark's opening</i>	1-1-601	Saturday/sabbath
8:13	Waters dried up; ark opened up on Noah's birthday	1-1-601	Saturday/sabbath
8:14	Noah exits the ark with his family and animals	2-27-601	Saturday/sabbath

While we cannot be absolutely certain concerning which calendar Noah used, the parallels with the seven days of creation week (Gen 1:3 – 2:3), and other passages in Scripture where a seven-day cycle has been widely recognized to refer to the weekly cycle ending on Sabbath (e.g., Exod 24:16), make it very likely that the Flood account is alluding to Sabbath as the seventh day in these seven-day cycles.

I. Flood Typology.

The typological nature of the Flood account is already implicit in Genesis. Gage (1984, 7-16) has shown how Genesis 1-7 is presented by the author as a paradigm for the history of the world; the reduplication of the motifs in Genesis only carries through the fourth narrative, implying that the fifth (universal judgment) will be fulfilled in the eschatological cosmic judgment. Isaiah provides an explicit verbal indicator that the Flood is a type of covenantal eschatology (Isa 54:9), along with several possible allusions to the Flood in his descriptions of the eschatological salvation of Israel (the "flood of mighty waters overflowing," Isa 28:2; "the waters . . . shall not overwhelm," Isa 43:2; God's "overflowing wrath," Isa 54:8; and the "windows of heaven," Isa 24:18). The prophets Nahum (1:8) and Daniel (9:26) depict the eschatological judgment in language probably alluding to the Genesis Flood.

The NT writers recognize the typological connection between Flood and eschatology. The salvation of Noah and his family in the ark through the waters of the Flood finds its antitypical counterpart in NT eschatological salvation connected with water baptism (1 Pet. 3:18-22; see Davidson 1981, 316-336). The Flood is also a type of the final eschatological judgment at the end of the world, and the conditions of pre-Flood morality provide signs of the end time (Matt 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27; 2 Pet.2:5, 9; 3:5-7).

The NT Flood typology assumes and *depends upon* not only the historicity, but also the universality, of the Flood to theologially argue for an imminent world-wide judgment by fire (2

Peter 3:6-7). Peter argues that just as there was a world-wide judgment by water causing the unbelieving antediluvian world to perish, so in the antitype there will be an end-time judgment by fire bringing about the destruction of the ungodly (see Davidson, 1981, pp. 326-327).

Conclusion

Although there are numerous similarities between the Genesis flood account and the ANE stories of a world-wide flood, major differences make clear that the biblical account is not borrowed from its neighboring nations, but to the contrary, presents a polemic against the faulty views of the world, of God, and of humanity present in these extra-biblical accounts. Various features of the biblical narrative of the Genesis flood affirm the historicity and unity of this account. Strong emphasis is placed upon theodicy---revealing the justice of God in bringing the flood in view of the prevailing wickedness in the world.

While presenting the necessity of judgment against the corruption and violence in this earth, at the same time the narrative reveals the heart of God seeking to save the lost, doing everything He could to save the creatures He had created. The bringing of the flood is actually God finally giving up the wicked inhabitants of the earth to the consequences of their own choice. The heart of the flood account showcases God's grace, as He "remembers" Noah and the humans, and yes, the animals with him in the ark. The flood narrative is rich in theological substance, the seedbed of such theological themes as the covenant and the remnant. God saves the remnant of His people on the ark, and covenants with them (including the animals and the entire earth) never to destroy the earth again with a flood of waters. The flood happens as a prefiguration of God's salvation of His people in NT times through the waters of baptism, and

also points to the final judgment where God's remnant people will be saved out the world-wide fiery conflagration by the saving grace of Jesus Christ! We need to preach and proclaim to our families, our students, our church members, our neighbors, our dying world---the good news of God's character of mercy and justice, and His saving grace as presented in the story of the Flood!

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