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Ancient Floods and Heroes

Biblical Beginnings

According to the Book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible, the earth and all living things on it were destroyed by a flood 1,656 years after its creation.[1] There was a notable exception to this universal destruction – Noah, and those that went with him into the ark. At the time of the flood, Noah was said to be 600 years old.

By the time of the flood, ten generations had passed since God had created Adam and Eve and had driven them out of the Garden of Eden for their disobedience. Noah was the direct descendant of Adam and Eve through their son Seth, third born after Cain and Abel. He was the son of Lamech who named him Noah saying, 'Out of the ground that the Lord has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands' (Genesis 5.29). The descendants of Adam were remembered mostly for their longevity. Lamech was 182 years of age when Noah was born. Methuselah lived the longest of all – some 969 years. Almost immortal, but not quite. He beat the next longest-lived – Jared – by

[1] There are variations on the length of this period between the Hebrew story and the Greek account in the Septuagint. Modern translations follow the Hebrew. The figure is calculated by adding together the ages of the patriarchs at the time of the birth of their key descendants (Genesis 5.1–32) and adding Noah's age in the year of the flood.

seven years and Noah by nineteen. No one in the Bible was ever again to live as long as Methuselah.

The shortest-lived was Jared's son Enoch. He survived on this earth only for some 365 years, 530 less than the next most short-lived. The shortness of his life was perhaps mitigated by the fact that the text suggests that, rather than dying, 'God took him' (Genesis 5.24). This was the source of the tradition in Judaism and Christianity that Enoch, like Elijah, had ascended into Heaven without dying. Life before Noah was long, and men were potent in those days. Noah was more than 500 years old when he became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth. As we will see, this longevity was not to last much beyond Noah.

Why did God decide to destroy that which, 1,656 years before, he had created and concluded that 'indeed, it was very good' (Genesis 1.31)? Tucked away between the story of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, the story of the murder of Abel by Adam's other son Cain, and God's decision to destroy it all and start over is the strange story of the sons of God and the daughters of men. Within the century before the flood, we read, 'When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose. Then the Lord said, "My spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh; their days shall be one hundred and twenty years." The Nephilim [the giants] were on the earth in those days – and also afterwards – when the sons of God went into the daughters of men, who bore children to them' (Genesis 6.1–4a).

In later Jewish and early Christian traditions, these verses were elaborated into a complex account of the origin of evil in the world as the result of the lust of God's angels for the daughters of men. Along with this went the fall of the angels from God's heavenly council and the populating of the world with demons and evil spirits. But in its original context, the story of the mating of the sons of God with the daughters of men, and the hint that the giants were their offspring, was intended as one that explained the reduction of the original longevity of human beings as a divine punishment for this commingling of the sons of God with the daughters of men.

The verses that followed the story of the sons of God mating with the daughters of men and producing offspring suggest that it was, for God, the last straw: 'The Lord saw,' we read, 'that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind upon the earth, and it grieved him to his heart' (Genesis 6.5–6). Where before God looked and saw that it was very good, now he saw 'that the earth was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon the earth' (Genesis 6.12). So, God decided, then and there, to destroy all humankind along with animals, creeping things, and the birds of the air (see Plate 1).

The humans that were to be destroyed were, for all intents and purposes, totally depraved, being made up of the descendants of Cain. With the exception of Noah and his sons, the descendants of Adam via his son Seth were already dead, Methuselah being the last of these. Methuselah died in the year 1656 after the creation, the

same year as the flood. The descendants of Cain, who had murdered his brother Abel, were to be destroyed, along with the giants, the descendants of the sons of God. Later traditions held that, among the misdeeds of the Nephilim (the giants), were cannibalism, sexual promiscuity, bestiality, and the drinking of blood. But they also taught men the arts of warfare and told women about cosmetics, adornments, and astrology. The only exception to the destruction of all was Noah, his family, and the creatures that he would take into the ark. 'I have determined,' God said to Noah, 'to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth' (Genesis 6.13). All in all, nothing was ever to be the same again.

Before the flood at least, Noah was a righteous man who 'walked with God' (Genesis 6.9). So, God decided to spare him and his nearest and dearest. God told him to build an ark and gave him detailed instructions how to do so. We can only assume that they were clear to Noah, for they are anything but clear to us. But we can probably say something like this. God told Noah to build an ark of 'cypress' (or planks of cypress), to make rooms in the ark (or cover the ark with reeds), and to cover it inside and out with pitch (see Plate 2). The ark was to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high. It was to be covered by a roof finished 'to a cubit above' (or with an overhang of one cubit).[2] How big was the ark? Well,

[2] For the bracketed details, see Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-creation, Re-creation: A Discursive Commentary on Genesis 1-11* (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2011), pp. 137–138. I am indebted to Blenkinsopp for this account.

uncertainty about the length of a cubit makes it difficult to determine. But we can probably say that a cubit was about 18 inches. In this case, the ark would be 450 feet long (137 metres), 75 feet wide (23 metres), and 37.5 feet in height (11.5 metres) – roughly half the length and two-thirds the width of a modern cruise liner.

God then announced for the first time how he was going to destroy the earth. It was to be death by drowning for everyone and everything – 'I am going to bring a flood of waters onto the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die' (Genesis 6.17). But Noah was to take his wife, his sons, and their wives, eight of them in all, into the ark with him. And along with his family, God instructed Noah to take two of every kind of living creature, a male and a female, animals, birds, and creeping things (see Plate 3). He was also told to take with him seven pairs of all clean animals and a pair of unclean animals, together with seven pairs of birds, male and female in each of these cases.[3] So as to keep them all alive, Noah was instructed to take sufficient food for all. The vegetarianism that was put in place at the time of creation was still the rule (Genesis 1.29–30), so no animals needed to be taken onto the ark to serve as food for others. Only after the flood was the mandatory vegetarian diet overturned (Genesis 9.2–4).

So, Noah built the ark and took his family and two of all living things into it. God shut the door behind them. The

[3] These two different lists of animals are the result of the Genesis story including two different sources for its story of Noah and the flood. See Chapter 7.

rains began when Noah was five hundred years old on the seventeenth day of the second month (see Plate 4).

On that day, 'all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened' (Genesis 7.11). In this case, God, as it were, reverse engineered his original process of creation. In the first chapter of Genesis, there was originally nothing but a watery chaos. In the middle of the waters God created a solid dome (a 'firmament') that separated the waters under and inside the dome from those that were above and outside of the dome. The dome was called the sky. God then gathered the waters that were under the dome in one place. These he called the seas. This allowed dry land to appear that he called the earth. Beneath the earth there remained the abyss or the deep. Now, as the flood began, the fountains from the deep beneath the earth burst upwards and the windows in the firmament above were opened. The waters poured up from below and down from above. It was a return to the chaos that was before the creation.

The deluge continued for many days:

> [A]nd the waters increased, and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. The waters swelled and increased greatly on the earth; and the ark floated on the face of the waters. The waters swelled so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered; the waters swelled above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep. And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all human beings; everything on dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. He blotted out every

> living thing that was on the face of the ground, human beings and animals and creeping things and birds of the air; they were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark. And the waters swelled on the earth for one hundred fifty days.
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> (Genesis 7.17b–24)[4]

In the middle of this turmoil, God remembered Noah and all who were with him. As a wind swept across the waters on the first day of creation (Genesis 1.2), so too here, God made a wind blow over the earth. The fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rains stopped, and the waters gradually receded from the earth. On the seventeenth day of the seventh month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. By the first day of the tenth month, the tops of the mountains had appeared.

Forty days later, Noah opened the window of the ark and sent out a raven. It flew to and fro until the waters dried up. But we can assume that it didn't return to the ark. For Noah then sent out a dove to see if the waters had subsided from the land. But the dove too found no place to rest and returned to the ark. Seven days later, Noah again sent out the dove. It came back to him that evening with a freshly plucked olive leaf in its mouth. Noah then knew that the waters had begun to subside from the earth. He waited another seven days. The dove was again sent out and, this time, did not return to him (see Plate 5). So, Noah knew that the earth was dry.

[4] Genesis 7.17a, a different source to 7.24, has the flood lasting for only forty days. According to this source, Noah will open the window in the ark at the end of the forty days (Genesis 8.6).

God told Noah to leave the ark with his family – his wife, his sons, and their wives – and to take out with him every living thing that had been with him in the ark 'so that they might abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth' (Genesis 8.17). Noah's three sons were to be the originators of a new humanity (see Plate 6).

Then Noah built an altar to God, the first altar recorded in the Bible, and took one of every clean animal and one of every clean bird and sacrificed them on the altar. God smelled the odour from the sacrifice and was appeased by it. Although he recognised the evil inherent within the hearts of humankind, he determined that he would never again curse the ground because of humankind, nor would he ever again destroy every living creature: 'As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease' (Genesis 8.22). A new world had begun.

But it was a damaged world after the flood. Noah and his descendants had a different relationship with the natural realm. Humans and animals would no longer exist in the harmony of the original creation: 'The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea' (Genesis 9.2). The fear and dread of the animal realm was occasioned, no doubt, by the end of the vegetarianism of the first creation. Now, 'Every moving thing that lives shall be meat for you' (Genesis 9.3). The only prohibition was eating meat with the blood still within it. This taboo was also connected to murder. Both animals and humans would now be held to account for the taking of human life. To do so was to efface the image of God in man. Thus, 'Whoever sheds

the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed' (Genesis 9.6). This was an early statement of the equitable principle, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' It was a new creation, but only partly so. Humanity no longer had the innocence of Adam at the time of his creation. God recognised that 'the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth' (Genesis 8.21). Nevertheless, God now established a covenant with Noah, his sons, and all living creatures that he would never again destroy all life by a flood. The rainbow became the sign of that agreement.

Noah became the first man to plant a vineyard. And the first to become drunk. Righteous he may have been but, like Adam, he was brought undone by eating (or drinking) the fruit of a plant. In both cases, nakedness is involved, and shame follows. Lying unconscious and naked in his tent, he was seen by his son Ham who told his brothers Shem and Japheth. They took a garment and, laying it on both their shoulders, walked backwards and covered their father with it. When Noah awoke, realising that his son Ham had seen him naked, he cursed Canaan, Ham's son. The curse on Canaan provided a pretext for the later conquest of the abominable Canaanites, the descendants of Canaan, by the Israelites, the descendants of Shem via Abraham. Canaan was to be the 'lowest of slaves' to his brothers (Genesis 9.25). More generally, Ham's seeing his father drunk and naked was later to provide Biblical justification for the institution of slavery, for all those who were enslaved were the sons of Ham.

After the flood, Noah lived another three hundred and fifty years. Six hundred years old at the time of the flood, he died at the age of nine hundred and fifty.

The story of the flood in the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (third–second century BCE), has minor variations to that of the Hebrew version, mainly about the timing of events. Thus, where the Hebrew has the rain beginning on the seventeenth day of the second month, the Greek has it on the twenty-seventh day of that month. According to the Hebrew, the ark came to rest on the seventeenth day of the seventh month. The Greek has the ark coming to rest on the twenty-seventh day of that month. In the Hebrew version, the tops of the mountains are visible on the first day of the tenth month. By contrast, in the Septuagint, the mountains appear on the first day of the eleventh month.

The Christian Latin version of the Bible, the Vulgate (late fourth century CE), has slightly different dates again. The Vulgate agrees with the Hebrew version that the rain began on the seventeenth day of the second month. But it agrees with the Septuagint that the ark rested on the twenty-seventh day of the seventh month. While the Hebrew and Greek versions have the ark resting on Ararat, the Vulgate has the ark coming to rest on the mountains of Armenia. Whichever mountains it may have been, the Vulgate agrees with the Hebrew version, against the Greek, that the mountains were visible on the first day of the tenth month.

The story as outlined above follows the modern English versions, themselves translations of the original Hebrew text. There is general agreement that the Hebrew version of the book of Genesis received its current form around the year 500 BCE, sometime after the Jews had returned to their homeland from their exile in Babylon. The destruction of the world and the salvation

of the virtuous Noah spoke eloquently to a generation recently returned to Judah from Babylon. For them, it was a story of new beginnings. And the Jews returning from exile saw themselves, like Noah and his family, as a righteous remnant that remained after the disaster of the conquest of Judah, the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Jewish temple, and their deportation to Babylon in c.598 BCE.

We will deal in a later chapter with the possibility that two different versions of the story of the flood are combined in the Genesis text. For the moment, however, we can note that the Biblical story of Noah and the flood was not the only one. More than three hundred accounts of destructive floods can be found on every continent except Antarctica. And in many of these, as in the story of Noah, it is more than merely destructive. As Brian B. Schmidt puts it, 'In sundry traditions, the flood manifests a re-creative act, a new beginning for humanity. Where the gods seek to exterminate the existing generation by means of a flood, a miniscule remnant survive to become the founders of a new world order.'[5]

Mesopotamian Traditions

The story of Noah was not the only flood legend to come from the Ancient Near East. The flood story most like the

[5] Brian B. Schmidt, 'Flood Narratives of Ancient Western Asia,' in Jack M. Sasson et al. (eds.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), vol. 4, p. 2337. On non-ancient Near Eastern flood accounts, see Bernhard Lang, 'Non-Semitic Deluge Stories and the Book of Genesis: A Bibliographical and Critical Survey,' *Anthropos* 80 (1985), pp. 605–616.

Biblical account occurred in Tablet 11 of the Babylonian *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (thirteenth–twelfth century BCE). This text told the story of a mighty king of Uruk, Gilgamesh, who suffered a crisis when his friend Enkidu died: 'My friend, whom I loved, has turned to clay... [Shall] I not be like him and also lie down, never to rise again, through all eternity?'[6] He travelled to find Uta-napishti to whom the gods had given eternal life to see if he would tell him how he had found eternal life. In response to this, Uta-napishti told him the story of the flood.

The gods, said Uta-napishti, once lived in the town of Shuruppak that stands on the banks of the river Euphrates. The gods – Anu the father of the gods, Enlil the god of storms, Ninurta the god of war and farming, Ennugi the god of irrigation, and Ea the god of wisdom and magic – met in a secret council and decided to send down a great flood. In contrast to the Biblical account in which God decided to destroy everything because of human wickedness, here the divine decision to destroy the world was quite arbitrary.

The gods had been sworn to secrecy. But the god Ea betrayed their plans to Uta-napishti in a dream. The reason why Uta-napishti was to be saved is not clear, although it is probably the result of his being a worshipper of Ea. Uta-napishti was told to build a boat. Its length and breadth were to be the same. It was to be one acre square and ten rods or 110 cubits high, covered with a roof.

[6] *Epic of Gilgamesh*, 10.245-8, in Christopher B. Hays (ed.), *Hidden Riches: A Sourcebook for the Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), p. 76.

It was to have six decks divided into nine compartments. He was to take on board 'all living things' seed,'[7] together with his gold and silver, his animals, his family, 'the beasts of the field, the creatures of the wild, and members of every skill and craft'.[8] When the boat was completed, with the weather turning threatening, Uta-napishti entered the boat and sealed the hatch.

The next morning, the storm arrived. It was so violent that 'even the gods took fright at the Deluge . . . and went up to the heaven of Anu, lying like dogs curled up in the open'.[9] Belet-ili the fertility goddess wept at the destruction of those she had helped create. The Anunnaki gods, wet faced in their sorrow, wept with her. For six days and seven nights, the storm continued. But on the seventh day, the wind died down, the ocean grew calm, and the deluge stopped. When Uta-napishti saw that everyone had been destroyed, 'down sat I, I knelt and I wept'.[10]

The ark eventually ran aground on the mountain of Nimush (in what is now Northern Kurdistan). On the seventh day after its grounding, Uta-napishti brought out a dove and released it. But when it found no place to land, it returned. Then he brought out a swallow and let it go. The swallow returned too, having found nowhere to land. Then Uta-napishti released a raven that found food and did not return.

Having disembarked from the boat, Uta-napishti made a sacrifice on the top of the mountain to the gods. Just as God had smelt the pleasing odour of the sacrifice of Noah, so the gods smelt the offering of Uta-napishti

[7] *Ibid.*, 11.27, p. 77.
[8] *Ibid.*, 11.86-7, p. 78.
[9] *Ibid.*, 11.114-6, p. 79.
[10] *Ibid.*, 11.138, p. 80.

and 'gathered like flies around the man making the sacrifice'.[11] The goddess Belet-ili arrived, wearing a necklace of lapis-lazuli with beads shaped like flies. She asked her beads to make her always remember this disaster. She would not endorse the god Enlil coming to the sacrifice because it was he who had brought on the flood. When Enlil nonetheless came and saw the boat, he was filled with rage. He demanded to know how anyone had escaped the flood, since 'No man was meant to survive the destruction.'[12]

After the god Ninurta told Enlil that it was Ea who had betrayed the plan of the gods, Ea chastised Enlil for attempting to destroy everything, arguing that it would have been better only to have punished those who had erred: 'On him who transgresses, inflict his crime! On him who does wrong, inflict his wrongdoing!'[13] Wolves, plague, or famines, he went on, would have sufficed to punish those who deserved it rather than destroying all with the deluge. Enlil then made Uta-napishti and his wife kneel, touched their foreheads, and conferred immortality upon them. 'In the past,' he declared, 'Uta-napishti was a mortal man, but now he and his wife shall become like us gods.'[14]

In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the hero of the flood received divine blessing, as did Noah. In the case of Noah, his descendants were to multiply and fill the earth. In the case of Uta-napishti, he and his wife received the gift of immortality, an option not available to Noah, since immortality was lost when Adam and Eve disobeyed

[11] *Ibid.*, 11.163, p. 81.
[12] *Ibid.*, 11.176, p. 81.
[13] *Ibid.*, 11.185-6, p. 81.
[14] *Ibid.*, 11. 204-5, p. 82.

God in the Garden of Eden. And after the sons of God had mated with the daughters of men, God had restricted the life of all those who were to follow Noah to one hundred and twenty years (Genesis 6.3). In the case of the Biblical story, the blessing of Noah was succeeded by a covenant between God and Noah, his descendants, and every living thing never again to destroy the earth by a deluge. The flood in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* had outcomes specific only to Uta-napishti and his wife, whereas the Biblical story had consequences for all those who came after. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Uta-napishti and his wife lived forever. In the Biblical story, Noah and his wife lived forever, but only through their descendants.

The parallels between the stories of Noah and Uta-napishti are reasonably clear. Without putting too fine a point on it, both accounts give a reason for the flood, both are the result of a divine decision to destroy, both give a reason for the salvation of their respective heroes, and each is commanded to build an ark and to enter it. Both Genesis and *Gilgamesh* contain parallel descriptions of the deluge, of the opening of the windows of the vessels, of the reconnaissance by the birds, and the exit from the ark. Both contain an account of the making of a sacrifice and the divine smelling of it. In each case, a promise was made to humanity: in the case of Genesis, the promise never to destroy all life again by a flood; in the case of *Gilgamesh*, the gift of immortality to Uta-napishti and his wife.

That said, the differences are also significant. Unlike the many gods battling it out for supremacy in *Gilgamesh*, only one God dominates the Genesis story, namely Yahweh. Moreover, the motives for the floods are quite different – human moral wickedness in Genesis, arbitrary

divine decision-making in *Gilgamesh*. In addition, in the Genesis story, Noah's righteousness is the reason for his salvation, whereas in *Gilgamesh*, the choice of Uta-napishti is not obvious. Most importantly, the accounts differ in their overall purpose. *Gilgamesh* is focused above all on the quest for individual immortality, granted in the end only to Uta-napishti and his wife. Genesis, by contrast, is the story of a new creation and a new covenant between God and humanity, one that, within the larger history of the Bible, will be followed by the covenants made by God with Abraham, Moses, and David.

The most likely conclusion to be drawn from these parallels within the texts is that the later Biblical editor was shaping his account of the flood from a tradition of Mesopotamian or Babylonian origin, to which he added distinctive elements of Israelite theology.[15] It is perhaps not surprising that Ancient Near Eastern flood myths should arise in Babylonia (Mesopotamia). As Ed Noort notes, '[T]he area that was known as Babylonia is prone to catastrophic disasters resulting from the irregular flood waters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and the southern storms that blow out of the Persian Gulf.'[16] The *Epic of Gilgamesh* was the most likely direct source for the Biblical account. But it was not the only Babylonian story

[15] See Gary A. Rendsburg, 'The Biblical Flood in the Light of the Gilgamesh Flood Account,' in J. Azize and N. Weeks (eds.), *Gilgamesh and the World of Assyria: Proceedings of the Conference Held at Mandelbaum House, The University of Sydney, 21–23 July 2004* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), pp. 115–127.

[16] Ed Noort, 'The Stories of the Great Flood: Notes on Genesis 6:5-9:17 in its Context of the Ancient Near East,' in Florentino Garcia Martinez and Gerard P. Luttikhuizen (eds.), *Interpretations of the Flood* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p. 7.

of the flood. It was preceded by the so-called *Epic of Atrahasis* (eighteenth century BCE), named after its hero Atrahasis ('exceedingly wise').[17]

In the primeval times, we are told, humanity was created by the gods to do the labour necessary to keep the world ticking over. Humanity multiplied to such an extent and became so noisy that the chief god Enlil could not sleep. Unable to reduce the human population through drought and famine, he finally decided to destroy all humankind by a flood. The compassionate god Enki was bound by an oath, against his wishes, to keep the plan secret. Nevertheless, Enki warned King Atrahasis of Enlil's plan to destroy the world by flood. He told him to destroy his house and build a boat to escape within seven days. It was to have a roof, upper and lower decks, and to be covered with pitch to strengthen it.

Atrahasis gathered the elders together and explained to them that Enki and Enlil had argued and that, since he was a devotee of Enki, he could no longer live on the earth of Enlil. It was necessary for him to leave in his boat to live with his own god. The boat was built and loaded with Atrahasis's possessions, birds, and animals. He sent his family on board and held a banquet. But Atrahasis could not eat. Because of the impending doom, 'his heart was broken and he was vomiting gall'.[18] As he sealed the door, the deluge began. Except for those inside the boat, all humanity was destroyed. The flood 'bellowed like a bull, / [Like] a whinnying wild ass as the winds [howled]'.[19] Enki

[17] W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atra-hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

[18] *Ibid.*, Tablet 3, 2.47, p. 93. [19] *Ibid.*, Tablet 3, 3.15-16, p. 95.

and the rest of the gods were deeply grieved at the loss of the creation. The mother goddess bitterly blamed Enlil. 'My offspring,' she lamented, '– cut off from me – have become like flies!'[20]

After seven days, the flood ended. Unlike in *Gilgamesh* and Genesis, we have no mention of the sending out of birds to determine if the waters were subsiding. However, as in *Gilgamesh* and Genesis, upon disembarking, Atrahasis made an offering to the gods: '[The gods sniffed] the smell, / They gathered [like flies] over the offering.'[21] Enlil relented on the further destruction of humans but required Enki and the mother goddess to organise them better, no doubt to ensure for himself a better night's sleep.

Greek and Roman Traditions

The Babylonian flood tradition became familiar to the early Hellenistic world via the *Babyloniaca*, a work intended to provide Greek readers with an introduction to Babylonian culture. It was written somewhere around 290–278 BCE by Berossus, a Babylonian priest capable of writing, if poorly, in Greek. Berossus, we can assume, was relying, like the Genesis editor, on a late Mesopotamian tradition. That the Biblical and Babylonian stories of the flood as told by Berossus were related was recognised by the Jewish historian Josephus (c.37–c.100) in his *The Antiquities of the Jews*. We can reasonably assume that he thought that they referred to the same event and that, naturally enough, the Biblical story was the original.

[20] *Ibid.*, Tablet 3, 3.44, p. 95. [21] *Ibid.*, Tablet 3, 4.35, p. 99.

'Now all the writers of barbarian histories,' he declared, 'make mention of this flood [of Noah]; among whom is Berosus the Chaldean.'[22]

According to Berossus, the God Cronos [Ea] appeared to Xisouthros in a dream and revealed that, on the fifteenth day of the month of Daisios (May), humankind would be destroyed by a flood. He ordered Xisouthros to build a huge boat – 900 metres long by 360 metres wide – and to embark on it with his family and closest friends. He was to load it with food and drink and gather all the winged and four-footed creatures into it. On the third day after the flood had come and swiftly receded, Xisouthros released some of the birds to see if they might find land. But finding neither food nor a place on which to alight, the birds returned to the ship. A few days later, Xisouthros again released the birds. This time they returned but with their feet covered in mud. On their third release, they did not return to the ship. Xisouthros knew then that the land had reappeared.

Xisouthros saw that the boat had come aground on a mountain in Armenia. He disembarked with his wife, his daughter, and the pilot. After setting up an altar and sacrificing to the gods, he and his wife, his daughter, and the pilot disappeared. When they failed to return, those who remained in the boat disembarked and searched for Xisouthros, calling out his name. A voice from the sky told them that, because of his piety, he, his wife, and the pilot had gone to live with the gods. The voice also told

[22] William Whiston (trans.), *The Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. 1, ch. 3, para. 6, p. 34. Available at https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I.

them that they were to return to Babylon. After hearing this, they too sacrificed to the gods and returned on foot to Babylon. A portion of the ship, Berossus reported, still existed in the mountains of the Korduaians of Armenia, and some of his contemporaries scraped pieces of bitumen off the ship, brought them back, and used them as talismans.[23] The tradition of relics of the ark began early.

Berossus' account of the flood was transmitted to the Christian world by the Christian Greek historian Eusebius of Caesarea (c.260–339 CE) and the Byzantine chronicler George Syncellus (d. after 810 CE) via the Greek scholar Alexander Polyhistor (c.110–c.40 BCE). Syncellus recognised the parallels between the stories of Noah and Xisouthros but went out of his way to emphasise the differences. Thus, after his account of the flood, he declared, 'All of the above is from Alexander Polyhistor, who in turn took it from Berossus, the false prophet of the Chaldeans [Babylonians]. It is possible for those wishing to understand correctly what really happened to refer to the holy writings of Genesis to see how much they differed from the above account of the Chaldeans, full of unbelievable stories.'[24]

The Greeks themselves had stories of great floods within their own traditions. In the fifth century BCE, for

[23] See Stanley Mayer Burstein, *The 'Babylonaica' of Berossus* (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1978), pp. 20–21. For a comparison of Berossus' and the Biblical accounts, see John Day, *From Creation to Babel: Studies in Genesis 1-11* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), ch. 4.

[24] Quoted by Day, *From Creation to Babel: Studies in Genesis 1-11*, p. 76, n. 45. See also Robert Bedrosian (trans.), *Eusebius' Chronicle: Translated from Classical Armenian*, p. 8. Available at https://archive.org/details/EusebiusChroniclechronicon/page/n7/mode/2up.

example, Plato had referred in his *Timaeus* to a great deluge which Deucalion, the son of Prometheus, and his wife Pyrrha survived.[25] So it is perhaps no surprise that Deucalion and his wife were to become the heroes of a Greek version of the Babylonian tradition contained within a collection of Greco-Roman myths known as *The Library*. These were attributed to the Greek scholar Apollodorus of Alexandria, and probably written in the second century CE. In this case, the Greek Deucalion was the equivalent of the Jewish Noah.

According to the account of Apollodorus, Deucalion was the husband of Pyrrha, the daughter of the first woman Pandora, and the son of Prometheus who, on account of his theft of fire, had been kept bound for many years on Mount Caucasus and subjected to his liver being eaten every day by a visiting eagle (and regenerating every night).

The flood was brought on by the god Zeus, although his reasons for doing so were not specified. Nor was any reason given for the salvation of Deucalion and his wife. On the advice of Prometheus, Deucalion built a 'chest' ('ark') and, having stocked it with provisions, embarked in it with his wife Pyrrha. By pouring rain from heaven, Zeus flooded the greater part of Greece and, except for a few who fled to high mountains, all men were destroyed.

Deucalion floated in his boat for nine days and nights, and drifted to Parnassus. When the rain ceased, he landed and sacrificed to Zeus, the god of escape (or perhaps the

[25] See *Timaeus*, 22.b, Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (eds.), *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 1157.

god of very close shaves). Zeus sent Hermes to Deucalion to ask what he would like. Deucalion chose men. At the bidding of Zeus, Deucalion picked up stones, threw them over his head, and they became men. The stones that Pyrrha threw became women (see Plate 7). Thus was the world re-populated.[26]

Educated Jews and Christians knew the story of Deucalion and saw the parallels to that of Noah. Thus, for example, the Jewish Biblical exegete Philo (20 BCE–c.50 CE) noted the necessity of the Creator preserving one just man for a new creation, along with specimens of each kind of living creature, to make good the annihilation of the wicked of the first creation. 'This person,' he wrote, 'is called by the Greeks Deucalion and by the Hebrews Noah.'[27] Similarly, the Christian apologist Justin Martyr (c.100–c.165), always keen to align Christianity with the Classical tradition, remarked that the flood left no one but the one man with his family 'who is by us called Noah, and by you Deucalion, from whom again such vast numbers have sprung, some of them evil and others good'.[28] The occasional 'pagan' also seemed to have heard of the story of Noah. Thus, for example, the Greek philosopher Celsus (fl.175–177 CE) viewed the Biblical story as little more than a decadent version of the story

[26] See James George Frazer (trans.), *Apollodorus: The Library, Volume 1: Books 1-39*, 1.7.2. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), pp. 53–55.

[27] F. H. Colson (trans.), *Philo: Volume VIII*, 'On Rewards and Punishments,' 23, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939), p. 325.

[28] A. Cleveland Coxe (ed.), *The Second Apology of Justin*, ch. 7, in *ANF*, vol.1, p. 190.

of Deucalion. '[T]hey speak ... of a deluge,' he wrote, 'and of a monstrous ark, having within it all things [i.e. all living things], and of a dove and a crow as messengers, falsifying and recklessly altering the story of Deucalion; not expecting, I suppose, that these things would come to light, but imagining that they were inventing stories merely for young children.'[29]

In the second half of the second century CE, a work entitled *On the Syrian Goddess*, attributed to the Syrian satirist Lucian of Samosata (c.125–c.180 CE), was to tell the story of a universal deluge endured by Deucalion that combined Babylonian and Biblical elements. Unlike the story of Apollodorus, but like Genesis, Lucian attributed the reason for the flood to the wickedness of men and the salvation of Deucalion to his wisdom and piety. Unlike Apollodorus, there is no mention of Deucalion's wife Pyrrha, although, like Genesis, Deucalion took along a number of others, specifically his wives and children. Like other flood heroes, he embarked into a great ark. Unlike Apollodorus, but like Genesis, there arrived swine, horses, lions, snakes, and everything else that lived on the earth, all in couples, for Deucalion to take with him. They did Deucalion no harm, and the god Zeus imposed concord between the animals. There they all remained until the flood subsided.[30] Unlike Apollodorus, where the earth was re-populated as a result of a miracle orchestrated by Hermes, in *On the Syrian Goddess*, as in Genesis, the re-

[29] *Contra Celsum (Origen)*, bk. 4, ch. 41. Available at www.newadvent.org/fathers/04164.htm.

[30] See H. A. Strong (trans.) and John Garstang (ed.), *Lucian's* On the Syrian Goddess, 12 (Oxford, OH: Faenum Publishing, 2013), p. 45.

population of the world is made possible, we can assume, through those that Deucalion took along with him.

The story of Deucalion and Pyrrha was transmitted from the Greeks to the Romans. Thus, at the beginning of the first century CE, the *Metamorphoses* of the Roman poet Ovid (43 BCE–17/18 CE) contained a much more elaborate version of the flood suffered by Deucalion and his wife Pyrrha. In this case, the divine protagonist was Jupiter who wandered the earth to see if human beings were really as wicked as they seemed to be. He concluded that they were when King Lycaon served him a dinner of the boiled and roasted flesh of a human hostage. Jupiter's punishment was to turn the king into a wolf and a determination to destroy humanity. The gods were worried about the state of the world without humans, but they were reassured by Jupiter's promise that there would be a new humanity different from the first and from a wondrous origin.

At first, Jupiter pondered hurling volleys of thunderbolts and destroying the earth by fire. But mindful of the likelihood that this would destroy not only men but everything else, he chose instead 'To overwhelm humanity with an endless deluge / Pouring down from every square inch of sky.'[31] So he cut loose the south wind to pour rain down from the sky, the sea god to roll out huge waves, and the rivers to tumble unbridled down to the sea. Neptune himself struck the earth with his trident until

[31] Stanley Lombardo (trans.), *Ovid: Metamorphoses*, 1.272-3 (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2010), p. 13. See also, R. Scott Smith, 'Bundling Myth, Bungling Myth: The Flood Myth in Ancient and Modern Handbooks of Myth,' *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 16 (2015), pp. 243–262.

'All was sea, but it was a sea without shores.'[32] All humankind and most creatures drowned. Those who survived the waters succumbed to slow starvation.

Only the virtuous Deucalion and his pious wife Pyrrha were saved: 'Only one man left, from so many thousands / Only one woman, each innocent, each reverent.'[33] Their boat landed on Mount Parnassus, the only place not covered by water. When Jupiter saw that the whole world was nothing but a stagnant pond, he quietened the storm. He told Triton to blow his conch horn and to signal the waters to withdraw. The world was restored.

Deucalion and Pyrrha visited the shrine of the goddess Themis to inquire of her how the world could be repopulated: 'Tell us, O Themis, how our race can be restored, / And bring aid, O most mild one, to a world overwhelmed.'[34] The goddess told them that they must go with veiled heads and loosened robes and throw their 'great mother's bones' over their shoulders. They were puzzled until Deucalion realised that the bones were stones in the great mother earth. They did as they had been ordered, and the stones thrown by Deucalion became men and those thrown by Pyrrha became women. 'In no time at all,' we read, 'by divine power, the stones / Thrown by the man's hand took the form of men / And from the woman's scattered stones women were born.'[35] The earth itself then spontaneously generated other forms of life: 'So when Mother Earth's diluvian mud / Again grew warm under the rays of the sun, / She brought forth innumerable species, restoring some / Of the

[32] *Ibid.*, 1.303, p. 13.
[33] *Ibid.*, 1.338-9, pp. 14–15.
[34] *Ibid.*, 1.392-3, p. 16.
[35] *Ibid.*, 1.428-9, p. 17.

ancient forms, and creating some new and strange.'[36] Thus was life restored to a new world.

As we have seen, stories of a universal flood that destroyed all humanity except for one notable man and a few of those close to him, along with the creation of a new world after the deluge, abounded in the Ancient Near East and in the Greek and Roman worlds. But it was the story of Noah in the book of Genesis, continually retold and reinterpreted over the succeeding centuries, that has remained down to our times as the definitive story of primeval humanity's wickedness and its partial redemption through the survival of Noah.

The Man of Righteousness

Considering the remarkable role that Noah plays in the primeval history recounted in Genesis 6-9, effectively as the second Adam of a new creation after the flood, it is surprising how little importance is accorded to him in the rest of the Old Testament and later in the New Testament. We catch only glimpses. He is listed in the first book of Chronicles as the tenth in a line of succession that begins with Adam, and is immediately followed by his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth (1 Chronicles 1.4). The Gospel of Luke (c.85 CE) includes him in a genealogy that begins with Jesus and stretches back via sixty-six persons to Noah, thence via nine more to Adam (Luke 3.23-38). The genealogy from Noah to Adam in Luke mirrors that in the first book of Chronicles.

When he is remembered, it is as an exemplar of righteousness. Thus, for example, the book of Ezekiel has God

[36] *Ibid.*, 1.450-4, p. 18.

declaring that, when the sins of any land are great, he sends sword, famine, wild animals, and pestilence upon it. In each case, it is said that even were those paragons of virtue – Noah, Job, and Daniel – in the land, they alone would be saved 'by their righteousness', and not even their sons and daughters would be spared (Ezekiel 14.12-20). How much more so, God declared, would he send these punishments upon Jerusalem for its sins. A punishment by flood is not mentioned. So, we can assume that the Noah that Ezekiel has in mind is the pious man delivered from the universal flood. We next encounter Noah in the book of Isaiah. God's promise to preserve humankind after the flood is here used as a source for God's enduring commitment to the preservation of Zion: 'This is like the days of Noah to me: Just as I swore that the waters of Noah would never again go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you and will not rebuke you. For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be destroyed' (Isaiah 54.9-10).[37]

New Testament references to Noah are similarly few. Aside from the mention in the genealogy in the gospel of Luke, we find five others – one in each of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, one in the Letter to the Hebrews, and one in each of the two Letters of Peter. All of these have an eschatological flavour. That is to say, they indicate that, just as Noah and his contemporaries were living in

[37] On possible allusions to the flood elsewhere in the Old Testament, see Jack P. Lewis, *A Study of the Interpretation of Noah and the Flood in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 8–9.

the last days before the destruction of the world by flood, so too early Christians were living in expectation of the return of Jesus, the end of the world, and the division of all people into the saved and the damned. Thus, for example, the Gospel of Matthew (c.90 CE) has Jesus preaching that the end of the world will come but that no one knows the day or the hour when heaven and earth will pass away. Nevertheless, as in the time of Noah, it will come suddenly: 'For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man' (Matthew 24.37-9, see also Luke 17.26-7).

The mention of Noah in the Letter to the Hebrews (c.70 CE) has a similar eschatological edge. Noah is listed as one of the eighteen worthy 'ancients' who acted 'by faith'. Noah is the exemplary person who, warned by God about events yet to come, builds an ark to save himself and his household. By doing so, he condemns the world and becomes 'an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith' (Hebrews 11.7). So the readers of the letter are being warned, like Noah, of an impending cataclysm from which they can only be saved by their faith. As Noah had to respond before the flood began, so the faithful must now act based on a warning about a judgement that is not yet perceptible to the eye.[38]

[38] See Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), p. 483.

The mention of Noah in the First Letter of Peter (c.80 CE) is imbedded within one of the most enigmatic passages in the New Testament.[39] Christ, we are informed,

> was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you – not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.
>
> (1 Peter3.18-22)

Within the Western tradition, the story of Christ's preaching 'to the spirits in prison' was the Biblical basis for the doctrine of the Harrowing of Hell. According to this doctrine, after his death but before his resurrection, Christ descended into Hell or Hades to give all the dead located there prior to the time of Jesus the chance to hear the teaching of Jesus and to have the opportunity of salvation.[40] In their original context in the First Letter of Peter, however, these verses have a quite different meaning. While going into heaven, Christ confirmed

[39] See John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), pp. 644–710. I am indebted to Elliott for this discussion.

[40] See J. L. MacCulloch, *The Harrowing of Hell: A Comparative Study of an Early Christian Doctrine* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1930). See also Philip C. Almond, *Afterlife: A History of Life After Death* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), ch. 2.

the imprisonment in one of the heavens of the 'sons of God' – the 'angelic spirits' – who mated with the daughters of men. The baptism of believers in the present was prefigured by the flood. Like Noah and his family in the primeval times, the faithful were saved in end times through the waters of baptism, as was Noah and his family through the waters of the flood. Having been 'made alive in the spirit', the resurrected Jesus Christ was at the right hand of God with the cosmic powers in subjection to him.

The imprisonment of the 'sons of God' or 'the angelic spirits' who sinned in the days of Noah is clearer in the Second Letter of Peter (c.90 CE). For there, God did not spare them, 'but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of deepest darkness to be kept until the judgment' (2 Peter 2.4). Nor did God spare the ancient world except for Noah who was 'a herald of righteousness' with seven others 'when he brought a flood on a world of the ungodly' (2 Peter 2.5). There is no mention in Genesis of Noah having attempted to preach repentance to his contemporaries. But the author of the Second Letter of Peter may have been picking up on a common tradition of his time, one which softened God's remorseless destruction of everyone without any opportunity of repentance. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus, for example, reported that Noah was uneasy at the actions of the sons of the angels and tried to persuade them 'to change their dispositions and their acts for the better; but seeing they did not yield to him, but were slaves to their wicked pleasures . . . he departed out of that land'.[41]

[41] Whiston (trans.), *The Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. 1, ch. 3, para. 1, p. 31.

Similarly, Book One of the Jewish *Sybilline Oracles* (early first century CE), a collection of prophetic utterances attributed to the ancient Sybil of Babylon, informs us that God told Noah to proclaim repentance to all the peoples so that all might be saved.[42] The Sybilline author then supplied Noah with a long speech in which he exhorted the wicked to change their ways (*Sybilline* 1.175-95). 'Men sated with faithlessness,' Noah declared, 'smitten with a great madness, what you did will not escape the notice of God, for he knows all things … Be sober, cut off evils, and stop fighting violently with each other, having a bloodthirsty heart, drenching much earth with human blood' (*Sybilline* 1.150-6).[43] Noah's attempt to persuade his contemporaries to change their ways will become a feature of the story in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim literature.

Noah and 'the Watchers'

If the Old Testament was surprisingly reticent about Noah, Jewish literature after the period of the Old Testament (c.400 BCE–c.100 CE), the so-called inter-testamental or deutero-canonical literature, is filled with stories about him. Thus, for example, the eschatological *First Book of Enoch* (c.200 BCE), traditionally ascribed to Enoch, the great-grandfather of Noah, contains an elaborate account of the 'sons of God', now called 'the

[42] I follow the dating of this section of the *Sybilline Oracles* by James Charlesworth. See James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Volume 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), p. 331.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 338.

Watchers'. This landmark elaboration of Jewish demonology is aligned with an expanded account of the story of Noah.

The disparate account of sons of God, the giants, the Nephilim, and Noah within Genesis is now woven into a coherent story. Thus, according to 'The Book of the Watchers' (chs. 1–36), the mating of the sons of God with the daughters of men was an act of rebellion against God that stemmed from their lust and resulted in the production of 'bastards' and 'half breeds'.[44] Two hundred Watchers, under the command of their chief Shemihazah, took wives for themselves from among the daughters of men and defiled themselves through them. They taught the women sorcery and charms and revealed to them the cutting of roots and plants (that is, medicine and magic). The women bore them giants who begat the Nephilim. Unlike in Genesis, the giants of Enoch were ruthless. They devoured the labour of men, killed and ate them, drank their blood, and ate one another's flesh. The giants would die in the flood, but the spirits that went forth from their bodies were evil. Unlike in Genesis, men were the victims, not the perpetrators of this wickedness, and they cried out for help to the four archangels – Michael, Sariel, Raphael, and Gabriel – who relayed the message from men to God.

The end of the First Book of Enoch contains an account of the birth of Noah (chs. 106–107). There, the narrator Enoch tells us that he took a wife for his son

[44] George W.E. Nickelsburg, *A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81-108* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 10.9, p. 215.

Methuselah. She bore a son called Lamech who, in turn, took a wife who bore him a son who would come to be called Noah. Now when the child was born, 'his body was whiter than snow and redder than a rose, his hair was all white and like white wool and curly. Glorious was his face. When he opened his eyes, the house shone like the sun. And he stood up from the hands of the midwife, and he opened his mouth and praised the Lord of eternity.'[45] Believing that Noah was not his son but had been fathered by an angel, Lamech was afraid of him and sent his father Methuselah to Enoch who was living with the angels to find out the truth. Enoch told Methuselah that God was planning a flood of great destruction, but that Noah and his three children would be saved. Noah's physical appearance was not the consequence of having been fathered by an angel but of his righteousness and blamelessness. The story ends with a promise of eventual good things for the earth, for Noah will be the remnant that will survive the flood and renew the earth.

Meanwhile, back at the 'Book of the Watchers', God commissioned Raphael to imprison the watcher Asael (Shemihazeh's second-in-command) under the earth, Gabriel to destroy the giants, Michael to bind Shemihazah and the others who mated with the women and imprison them under the earth, and Sariel to tell Noah that the end is coming and how he might escape it.

Elsewhere in the First Book of Enoch, we find a different account of how Noah heard of the impending destruction, this time narrated by Noah. Terrified by an earthquake, Noah sets out for the ends of the earth to

[45] *Ibid.*, 106.2-3, p. 536.

speak to his great-grandfather Enoch. He learns from Enoch that, due to the wickedness of the earth's inhabitants, God is intending to execute a great judgement. He will punish sinful humanity along with the rebellious angels who have taught people forbidden secrets. But Noah will be preserved and established as the first of a righteous and holy humanity. The story ends with Noah having a vision of the angels of punishment who were ready to 'let loose all the power of the water that is beneath the earth, that it might be for the judgment and destruction of all who reside and dwell on the earth'.[46] Then Noah leaves Enoch to return home.

A slightly different tradition follows. Here, Noah reports that the word of the Lord came to him that he was blameless and that 'the angels are making a wooden (vessel)' that God will protect.[47] From it would come the seed of life so that the earth would not remain desolate. God promised not to bring temptation on the face of the earth again and to scatter and make fruitful those who descend from Noah. The eternal punishment of the fallen angels, the kings, and the mighty in a burning valley is then announced by Noah. The story concludes with Noah receiving a book that contains all the secret knowledge and the parables that were given to him by Enoch.

As in the First Book of Enoch, the author of the Book of Jubilees (second century BCE) attempted to create a coherent narrative from the Biblical account, both

[46] George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. Vanderkam, *A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 37–82* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 66.1, p. 273.

[47] *Ibid.*, 67.2, p. 273.

creating and omitting details, harmonising the Biblical story, and emphasising the dating of the events. Thus, we hear for the first time that Noah married a woman whose name was Emzara, the daughter of his father's brother (and thus Noah's cousin). The giants were the progeny of the sons of God (the angels) and the daughters of men. The whole earth – people, animals, birds, and creeping things – was corrupted, and wickedness was universal. God determined to obliterate all animate beings, being pleased only with Noah.

The judgement on all animate beings is then connected with the punishment of the angels and their progeny. God ordered that the giants should all kill each other: 'They began to kill each other until all of them fell by the sword and were obliterated from the earth.'[48] Their fathers saw them slaughtering each other. Soon afterwards, they were tied up and imprisoned in the depths of the earth until the great day of judgement. Jubilees then picked up on God's order to Noah to build the ark to save himself from the floodwaters.

Genesis spent little time detailing the life of Noah after the flood. But Jubilees fills in the blanks. After Noah, his family, and the animals disembarked from the ark, Noah offered the sacrifice of a bull, a ram, a sheep, goats, salt, a turtledove, and a dove to God who then made a covenant with Noah never to destroy the earth through a flood again. For their part, Noah and his sons swore an oath not to consume any blood that was in any animate being. The Noah of Jubilees is a priestly Noah, one who adheres

[48] James C. Vanderkam, *Jubilees: The Hermenaia Translation* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2020), 5.9, p. 25.

to the Festival of Weeks and the Festival of First Fruits. In short, we are told, Jewish festivals began with Noah. As in the Genesis account, Noah plants and celebrates his vineyard by becoming drunk. Later, he gives a long speech to his children. Land is allotted to his descendants.

Noah also becomes a physician and an apothecary, a new role built into, surprisingly, a new story about demons. Some fifteen years after Noah apportioned land to his sons, they came to him to report that impure demons were causing disease and death among his grandchildren. Despite the earlier passage that seemed to have them all locked up, these were spirits, offspring of the sons of God, who had remained free. Noah prayed to God to shut them up and hold them all captive. But Mastema, the leader of the spirits, appealed to God to leave a tenth of them free to punish wrongdoers, 'because the evil of humanity is great.'[49] God agreed to this but, suspecting that the demons would not operate fairly, told one of them to teach Noah all their medicines 'for their diseases with their deceptions so that he could cure (them) by means of the earth's plants'.[50] Noah wrote all the medicines down in a book that he handed on to his favourite son, Shem. Noah was, after all, a man of the soil, and it was not unreasonable that he came to be imagined as the original natural healer. He was a New Age man in more senses than one. And the story showed that Jewish medicine had priority, and therefore excellence, over that of other cultures. At any rate, we read, the evil spirits were stopped from pursuing Noah's children.

[49] *Ibid.*, 10.8, p. 43. [50] *Ibid.*, 10.8, p. 43.

A similar but expanded account of the birth of Noah appears in the so-called Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen) (first century CE), one of the original Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in 1946 by Bedouin shepherds in a cave near Qumran.[51] The text is fragmentary, but the overall narrative is clear. The birth of Noah in the Genesis Apocryphon is a slightly elaborated account of that in the First Book of Enoch. For when the appearance of Noah leads his father to the belief that Noah is the child of a Watcher, he questions his wife Bitenosh whether she had conceived by one of the sons of heaven. The Watchers did, after all, take wives from among female humans. So, he had some grounds for his suspicions. Weeping passionately, she replied, 'O, my brother, my Lord, remember my voluptuousness [. . .] in the heat of lovemaking, and my ardent response. I [am telling you] the whol[e] truth.'[52] Lamech was persuaded. But Bitenosh continued, 'O, my lord, my [brother, remember] my pleasure. I swear to you by the great Holy One, by the King of He[aven. . .] that this seed comes from you, this conception was by you, the planting of [this] fruit is yours [It was] not by any stranger, neither

[51] The relationship between the First Book of Enoch, the Book of Jubilees, and the Genesis Apocryphon remains a matter of scholarly dispute. See Daniel A. Machiela, *The Dead Sea Genesis Apocryphon: A New Text and Translation with Introduction and Special Treatment of Columns 13-17* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 9–17. The relation that is held to obtain between these three texts affects, in turn, the relative dating of each. On the flood story in the Dead Sea Scrolls more generally, see Florentino Garcia Martínez, 'Interpretations of the Flood in the Dead Sea Scrolls,' in Florentino Garcia Martínez and Gerard P. Luttikhuizen (eds.), *Interpretations of the Flood* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 86–108.

[52] 1QapGen, col.2, in Michael O. Wise, et al. (trans.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: Harper, 2005), pp. 91–92. Lamech's wife is named Betenos in Jubilees, 4.28.

by any of the Watchers, nor yet by any of the Sons of Heaven.'[53] Nonetheless Noah seeks reassurance from his father via Enoch.[54]

Noah himself then picks up the story, telling us that he is a righteous man who has been warned of darkness. He marries his cousin Emzara (mother of seed) by whom he had sons and daughters, taking wives for his sons from his brother's daughters and giving his daughters to his brother's sons, 'in accord with the law of the eternal statute'.[55] Like Deucalion and Pyrrha, Noah and Emzara were father and mother to a new humanity.[56] A Watcher now comes to Noah with a warning about a coming flood. Noah survives the flood with his family, the ark coming to rest on the mountains of Ararat. Noah leaves the ark and makes a sacrifice to God. He then explores the land and praises God for its fruitfulness. God then appears to Noah and makes a covenant with Noah and his sons that they should rule the land as long as they do not consume blood. The rainbow is given as a sign of this. Noah and his sons begin to cultivate the land, and Noah plants a vineyard. Many children are born to Noah's sons and daughters.

[53] *Ibid.*, col. 2, p. 92.

[54] See Aryeh Amihay and Daniel A. Machiela, 'Traditions of the Birth of Noah,' in Michael E. Stone, Aryeh Amihay, and Vered Hillel (eds.), *Noah and His Book(s)* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), pp. 53–70.

[55] Wise, et al. (trans.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*, col. 6, p. 94.

[56] See Michael E. Stone, 'The Axis of History at Qumran,' in Esther G. Chazon and Michael E. Stone (eds.) with Avital Pinnick, *Pseudepigraphic Perspectives: The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 133–149.

Four years after planting the vineyard, it produces wine for him, and Noah holds a festival to celebrate and to thank God. There is no mention here of Noah's becoming drunk, nor of his drunken nakedness being seen by his son Ham. Noah is, in this text, a patriarchal hero. Rather than drunkenness and shame, having fallen asleep, Noah has a vision of a cedar tree and an olive tree, along with an interpretation of it. He is the cedar tree who will have many shoots – that is, many descendants. But the majority will be evil, and 'the man coming from the south with a sickle in his hand, and fire with him' will punish those who rebel.[57] A long account of how Noah divides up the land among his sons, and his sons among their sons, brings the story to an end, the hero of the rest of the Genesis Apocryphon now becoming Abraham.[58]

Noah's narration in the Genesis Apocryphon begins with the words, 'The Book of the Words of Noah.'[59] There was a tradition within Jewish literature, after the time of the Old Testament, to ascribe books to important Biblical figures. The key figures in Genesis – Adam and Eve, Moses, Abraham, Shem, Isaac, Enoch, Jacob, Joseph, and so on – all have books ascribed to them. So, might there have been a Book of Noah that is now missing?

[57] Wise, et al. (trans.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*, col. 15, p. 97.

[58] On the Genesis Apocryphon, see Esther Eshel, 'The Noah Cycle in the Genesis Apocryphon,' in Michael E. Stone, Aryeh Amihay, and Vered Hillel, *Noah and His Book(s)* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), pp. 77–96.

[59] Wise, et al. (trans.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*, col. 5, p. 93. Noah is the narrator in cols. 6-17.

Aside from the Genesis Apocryphon, we find several references to writings by Noah in other texts. Thus, for example, as we noted earlier, in the Book of Jubilees, after Noah is taught the arts of healing by an angel, we read that 'Noah wrote down in a book everything (just) as we had taught him . . . and he gave all the books that he had written to his oldest son Shem because he loved him much more than all his sons.'[60] In a later passage in Jubilees, we hear of a number of regulations concerning the eating of sacrificial meat that are 'written in the book of my ancestors, in the words of Enoch and the words of Noah'.[61] Third, in the Dead Sea Scroll text known as the Aramaic Levi Document (early second century BCE), we read, 'For thus my father Abraham commanded me for thus he found in the writing of the book of Noah concerning the blood.'[62] In addition, as in the Genesis Apocryphon (cols. 6-17), so also in the First Book of Enoch (chs. 66–68.1), Noah speaks in the first person.

Was there then a Book of Noah? The uncertainties that surround the textual materials make it difficult to sustain the argument that there was. On the other hand, the references to it, together with the texts where Noah is the narrator, should make us wary of ruling it out. What we can say is that, in the period between the Old and New Testaments, there developed an array of traditions about Noah that were variously incorporated into a number of texts, both in the first and third

[60] Vanderkam, *Jubilees*, 10.13-14, p. 44.
[61] *Ibid.*, 21.10, p. 77.
[62] Jonas C. Greenfield, Michael E. Stone, and Esther Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document: Edition, Translation, Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 10.10, p. 91.

person – traditions about his birth, his priestly character, his sacrificial instructions, and his role as the father of Jewish medicine. Most importantly, the Noachic traditions had a highly developed angelology. It was one that emphasised that evil was not the result of the sin of Adam and/or Eve infecting later humanity, but rather the consequence of angelic (demonic) intervention in the world at the time of Noah, sufficient for God to begin again with a new humanity based on Noah and his family. Even then, evil continued due to the remnant of demons who survived the flood. In sum, the elaboration of the story of Noah and the flood in the Noachic traditions reflected the increasing importance and significance of Noah from the time after the Old Testament until that of the New.[63]

Within the Christian tradition, the view that evil was the result of the fallen angels had only a brief history. Saint Augustine (354–430 CE) ignored its literal meaning and gave only an allegorical interpretation in terms of the heavenly and earthly cities. The mainstream Christian tradition did accept the tradition that evil angels were present in the world, creating havoc. But it brought the fall of the angels to a time before the creation of Adam and Eve. This enabled the chief of the fallen angels, Satan, to play a role as the serpent in the Fall of Adam and Eve. The sin of Adam and Eve, rather than that of the sons of

[63] For an argument in favour of a Book of Noah, see Michael E. Stone, 'The Book(s) Attributed to Noah,' in Michael E. Stone, Aryeh Amihay, and Vered Hillel, *Noah and His Book(s)* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), pp. 7–26.

God before the flood, then came to be read as the event from which human wickedness ensued.[64] That said, it was only from Noah and his family that a new humanity was to arise after the flood.

[64] On the Watchers within the Christian tradition, see Philip C. Almond, *The Devil: A New Biography* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), pp. 1–15.