

The Book of Beginnings – Studies in Genesis

LESSON XXXV : EXCURSUS – CHRONOLOGY OF THE MABBÛL

*“In the course of events leading up to the flood it should be noted how patient and longsuffering God is with sinful people. He gives them much time to repent and turn from their wicked ways. But his tolerance is not without end; he will not hold his wrath for ever. His justice on offenders does not always come by the same path, or at the same pace, but it does come. **One should not misconstrue God’s forbearance as an eternal reprieve from judgment.**” [Currid, 1:198]*

CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE — Along with my usual references, this and the following Flood lessons will be using much material from ‘*Grappling with the Chronology of the Genesis Flood*,’ Steven W. Boyd & Andrew A. Snelling, editors; Master Books, Green Forest AR; first printing 2014; sixth printing 2022.

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE MABBÛL

As we look at the chronology of the Mabbûl, there are questions which are debated; e.g., when did the Mabbûl peak (at 40 days, 150 days, or before 150 days)? Did the rains stop after 40 days or after 150 days? Important to our study is what the narrative says at 7:4, 12, 17 (‘40 days’), 7:24 (‘150 days’), 8:3 (‘150 days again’), and 8:6 (‘40 days again’). Let us look at some of the particulars.

IS THE 40 DAYS INCLUSIVE IN THE 150 DAYS? — Not actually a controversial subject (I have read none which disagree with this conclusion) but one which is not considered by most merely reading the story of the Mabbûl in passing. The question is whether the initial 40 days / nights part of the 150 days mentioned in 7:24 or separate?

“The data in 8:3-4 would support including the forty days within the one-hundred-and-fifty-day period, for there we are told that the ark rested upon one of the mountains of Ararat one hundred and fifty days after the Flood began:

Flood begins (1st of 40 days) on Noah’s 600th year, 2nd month, 17th day (7:11)

Ark rests on mountain on Noah’s 600th year, 7th month, 17th day (8:4) (i.e., 150 days later, possibly to be understood as 5 months of 30 days each).” [Hamilton, 1:298]

So all considering the chronology of the Mabbûl accepts the 40 days / nights must be included in the initial 150 days; if not, there is no way to reconcile the dates given within the narrative. A minor point but one worth mentioning.

WHEN DID THE RAINS STOP? — At first glance a seemingly silly question considering the following verses:

‘For after seven more days I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made.’ (7:4)

‘In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights.’ (7:11,12)

‘Now the flood was on the earth forty days. The waters increased and lifted up the ark, and it rose high above the earth.’ (7:17)

But as with all the Word of God, we must compare Scripture-with-Scripture. As we continue to read we note the following:

‘And the waters prevailed on the earth one hundred and fifty days. Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided. The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were also stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained.’ (7:24; 8:1,2)

So on one hand we read of rains ‘40 days and 40 nights,’ but later we read ‘the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were also stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained’ after 150 days. **Again, no contradictions, just clarifications of the events!** While no one knows without question, many I have studied (and the theory with which I most agree) explain this as follows:

“It poured for 40 days and nights, during which time the waters rapidly covered the earth. Evidently, it continued to rain lighter for another 110 days, making a total of 40 + 100 or 150 days of rain (7:24; cf. 8:4).” [Boyd & Snelling, 203]

“Why does the text specifically state that the windows of heaven were opened and it rained for 40 days and 40 nights? Well, later on in Genesis 8:2, we read that 150 days after the Flood began, the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped. ***This means it did continue to rain after the first 40 days and nights. What is the 40 days and nights referring to then? I suggest two ideas: (1) The rain continued after the first 40 days and nights but not as intensely as it did for the first 40 days and nights. (2) During the first 40 days, the floodwaters increased until they covered the earth and the Ark was lifted up. At the end of the 40 days the highest places on the earth covered by around 25 feet of water.***” [Ham, 190f]

I believe this best explains ‘fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were also stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained’ in Gen 8:2.

WHEN DID THE MABBÛL PEAK? — As mentioned in lesson 31, ***“While this may not initially appear to bear any ramifications for theology, it does impact the work of young-earth geologists and paleontologists who are basing their models on the biblical record.”*** [Boyd & Snelling, *Chronology*, 34] The majority of those who made comment on this issue teach the Mabbûl peaked at day 150; the next largest group teach the peak happened on day 40 but the waters were sustained until day 150; the smallest group teach the peak was on day 40, after which the waters begin to recede.

“By far, the most common position among conservative scholars on the chronology of the Flood is that the peak occurred on the one hundred fiftieth day.... [One source holds] that the first forty days of the Flood are included in the one hundred fifty days of ‘prevailing’ and are followed by two hundred twenty-two days of subsidence.” [Boyd & Snelling, 202]

COULD THE WATERS OF THE MABBÛL HAVE PEAKED AT DAY 40 BUT MAINTAINED AT THE SAME LEVEL UNTIL DAY 150? — In contrast with the above, a minority of those I am studying believes the Mabbûl actually peaked on the 40th day but the waters were maintained until day 150. I see very little difference between this theory and the previous but thought it worth noting.

“The verb *‘prevailed’* connotes here a continuing state: the power of the water upon the earth continued a hundred and fifty days, and did not decline in appreciable measure till after this period, which comprised, as we shall see later (8:4), the tremendous downpour of rain for forty days followed by another hundred and ten days.” [Cassuto, 2:97; see also Calvin, 1:277f]

WHEN DID THE WATERS BEGIN TO RECEDE? — While a few I am using in my studies believe the waters began to abate after the initial forty days (e.g., Mathews, 1:377), all do agree the waters began to recede no later than the 150th day:

“Old Testament scholars generally divide the chronology of the Flood into two periods – the one hundred and fifty days when the Floodwaters were prevailing, and the subsequent two hundred twenty-one days when the Floodwaters were subsiding. Most would therefore regard Day 150 as the time when the Floodwaters reached their maximum height, having totally inundated the earth and wiped out all land-dwelling, air-breathing animals.” [Boyd & Snelling, 179]

“Chronologically the 150 days must cover the five months from the coming of the flood (7:11) to the grounding of the ark (8:4). Evidently the first forty days of heavy rain (7:12) were followed by 110 days of the waters’ triumph. 8:4 makes plain that at least toward the end of the five months, the waters had begun to fall.” [Wenham, 1:183]

WHEN THE WATERS RECEDE IS IMPORTANT TO YOUNG EARTH SCIENTISTS — One of the important aspects of the *‘peak’* debate is its influence on the fossils deposited during the Flood. The following quotes are from Boyd & Snelling:

“This issue of when the Floodwaters reached their peak ... then seeming to subside and drain off the newly emerging land surfaces is crucial, because it would mark the complete decimation of all land-dwelling, air-breathing life. This in turn has implications for what animals might be expected to be fossilized in the rock record at this point during the Flood. If the peak height of the Floodwaters was instead reached on Day 40 of the Flood, rather than Day 150, and then the waters were sustained at that peak level until Day 150 before they then began to subside, then we might expect that it would be hard for land-dwelling, air-breathing animals swept away by the Floodwaters to survive in the Floodwaters for long beyond Day 40. *Again, this has implications for when during the Flood the land-dwelling, air-breathing animals would have been buried and fossilized in the rock record, and therefore for our ability to identify which levels in the rock and fossil records represent Days 40 and 150 of the Flood catastrophe.*” [Boyd & Snelling, 179]

“The relative sea level then seems to have fluctuated, so that the Floodwaters retreated then advanced several times, progressively depositing further megasequences of fossil-bearing sediment layers.... *Today we find shallow marine creatures buried and fossilized in sedimentary rock layers deposited rapidly by water right across continents and even in high mountains, so in the past the ocean waters must have flooded the continents.* Only the revived and numerically modelled catastrophic plate tectonics model for the Flood event can explain how the ocean waters rose to flood the continents, how and where the fossil-bearing sedimentary layers were rapidly deposited, and how and when the mountains formed due to plate collisions. The catastrophic rifting of the pre-Flood ocean floor and supercontinent occurred when the *‘fountains of the great deep’* were broken up. Upwelling magma produces supersonic steam jets that entrained ocean water, carrying it up into the

atmosphere from where it fell as intense global rain (*'the windows of heaven'* were opened). The new warm ocean floor produced along the rift zones was less dense and rose, pushing up the sea level to flood the sprinting continental plates, which were moving at meters per second due to the concurrent runaway subduction zones fed stupendous volcanic eruptions above at the surface.... ***Answers to these questions have implications for the timing of deceleration of plate movements as the Floodwaters subsided and final plate collisions produced today's youngest mountains, thus enabling correlation of the geologic and fossil records with the biblical account of the ending of the Flood event.*** [Boyd & Snelling, 745ff]

THE WATERS 'PREVAILED' — The word translated '*prevailed*' (Cassuto) or '*were powerful*' (Boyd & Snelling) is the Hebrew word *gāvhar*. It is used four times in vv. 18, 19, 20 and 24 and according to Boyd & Snelling is an important word in our understanding of the Flood story:

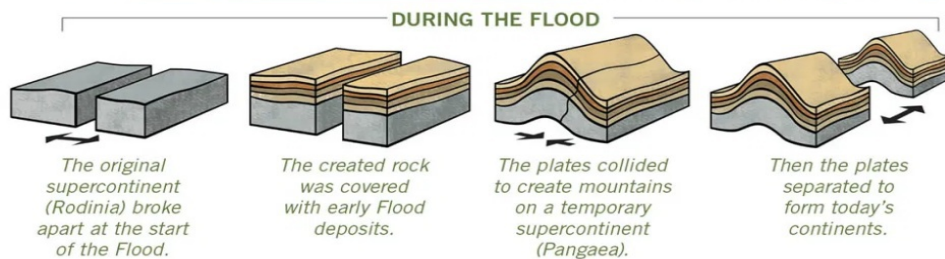
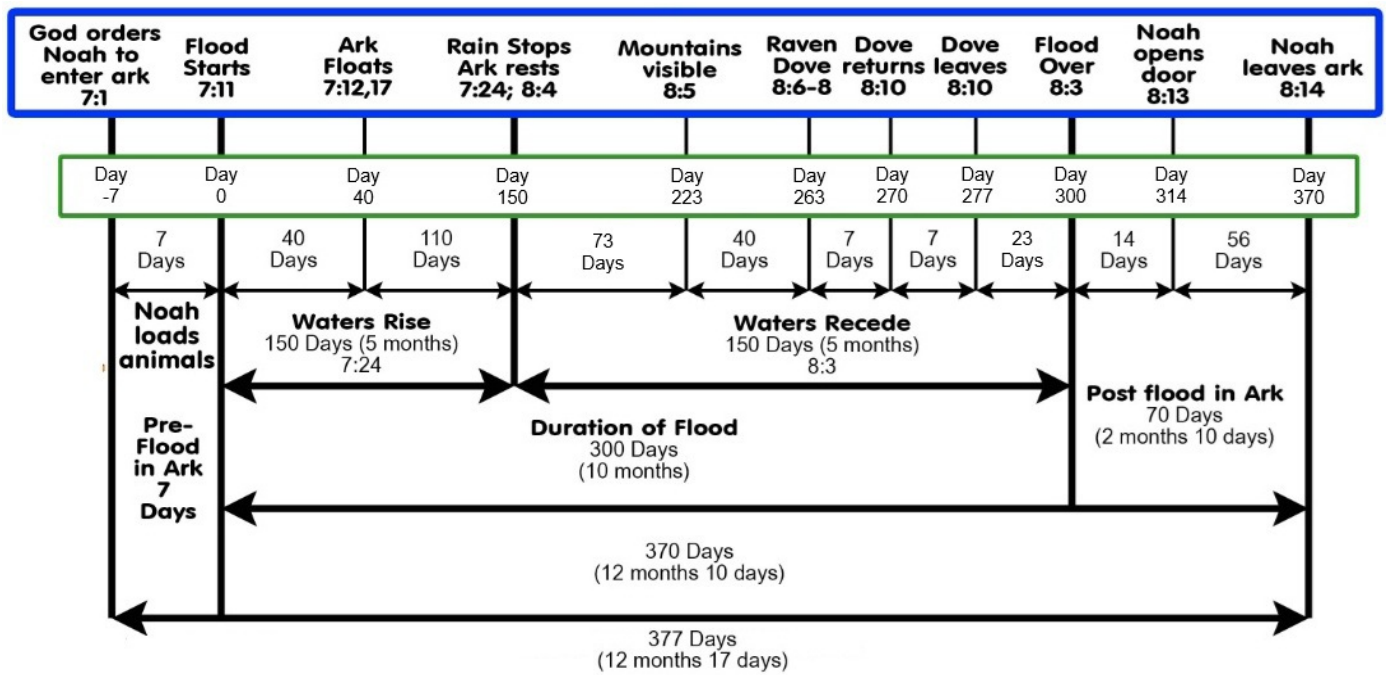
	<i>Rabbi Cassuto</i>	<i>Boyd & Snelling</i>
v. 18	<i>The waters prevailed / and increased greatly / upon the earth;</i>	<i>And the waters were powerful, and they increased greatly upon the earth.</i>
v. 19	<i>And the waters / prevailed so mightily / upon the earth</i>	<i>The waters were exceedingly powerful upon the earth.</i>
v. 20	<i>Fifteen cubits / upward did the waters prevail, / and the mountains were covered.</i>	<i>Fifteen cubits higher the waters were powerful and the mountains were covered.</i>
v. 24	<i>And the waters prevailed / upon the earth / a hundred and fifty days.</i>	<i>And the waters were powerful upon the earth for one hundred fifty days.</i>

The Hebrew word *gāvhar* means '*to prevail, to be strong / mighty / powerful / great.*' The word is used to express '*triumph*' (in battle; Exod 17:11); thus the waters did not merely '*rise, rise more and more, kept increasing*' (NIV, NLT, Evangelical Heritage Version, Holman Christian Standard Bible) but '*overwhelmed, triumphed*' over the entire earth. Our English word '*prevail*' means '*to gain ascendancy through strength or superiority; to triumph*' according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, so either '*prevail*' (KJV, NKJV, ESV, ASV, NASB, RSV, Darby, Legacy Standard Bible, Modern English Version, et. al.) or Boyd & Snelling's '*were powerful*' (*'the waters completely overwhelmed,'* NET) gives a good sense of the complete destruction wrought by the Mabbûl. ***"The waters do not merely multiply greatly; they triumph. gāvhar, which occurs four times in this scene (vv 18, 19, 20, 24) is a military word for succeeding in battle (e.g., Exod 17:11)."*** [Wenham, 1:182] ***"The terrible, chaotic waters, which originally covered the earth, are implicitly likened to hostile warriors attacking and undoing God's creation. The rhythmic repetition of this term with the crescendo of the waters and the repetition of 'every living thing' mimics the rising of the waters and the pitching of the ark."*** [Waltke, 140; see also Morris, 201] So for the first 150 days of the Mabbûl, it was not just the earth being covered with peaceful, serene waters, the ark restfully floating along. But as mentioned the first 150 days was a total disruption of the entire planet, with ocean floors splitting and the antediluvian single-continent Pangea being torn apart to form our present day global structure. Tectonic plates were moving rapidly (a theory the secular scientists do not dispute although they relegate this happening over a period of millions of years). The movement of those tectonic plates would also cause repeated tsunamis, with the continental movements being the source of today's mountain ranges according to many young-earth scientists. ***This was truly a time of the waters and destruction 'triumphing' over our entire planet.***

ICE AGE FOLLOWING FLOOD — “Creation scientists also believe the Flood of Noah’s day generated an ice age that climaxed a few hundred years after the Flood. Because of warm oceans from tectonic movements and volcanic action resulting in a lot of evaporation, and dust in the atmosphere from volcanoes producing a cooling effect, this would have created conditions for snow and ice to form and cause the onset of a massive ice age. During this time, ocean levels would have been lowered, forming land bridges around the world in various places that enabled animals and people to move out into different places (such as Australia).” [Ham, 206]

<i>Chronology of the Mabbûl</i>		
7:11	year 600, month 2, day 17	Mabbûl starts, fountains of great deep broken up, windows of heaven opened
7:12		rain fell for 40 days / nights
7:13-16		Noah, family & animals enter the ark
7:17		rains continue 40 days, waters increase & lifted up the ark and it rose high above the earth
7:12,17	year 600, month 3, day 27	40 th day of flood
7:18		the waters prevailed & increased greatly, and the ark floated on the waters
7:19		the waters prevailed mightily that the mountains were covered
7:20		the waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them by 15 cubits
7:21		all flesh died that moved upon the earth, animals, birds, mankind
7:22		everything on dry land that had the breath of life died
7:23		God wiped out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man, animals, birds; they were blotted out from the earth; only Noah and those within the ark was left
7:24		the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days
8:1		God remembers Noah & the animals, God makes a wind blow over the earth and the waters began to subside
8:2		the fountains of the deep & windows of heaven were closed, and the rain from the heavens was restrained
8:3		the waters receded from the earth continually; at the end of 150 days the waters had abated; <i>note the 150 days mentioned here runs concurrently with the days listed below.</i>

8:4	year 600, month 7, day 17	on 7 th month, 17 th day of the month (150 th day of Mabbûl), ark comes to rest on Mt Ararat
8:5	year 600, month 10, day 1	the waters continue to abate until 10 th month, 1 st day when the mountains were seen (224 th day of the Mabbûl)
8:6,7	year 600, month 11, day 11	at the end of 40 days (264 th day of the Mabbûl) Noah opened the window and sent forth a raven; it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth
8:8,9	year 600, month 11, day 18	after 7 days (271 st day of the Mabbûl), Noah sends forth a dove to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; but the dove found no place to set her foot and returned to the ark, waters were still on the face of the whole earth; Noah puts out his hand and takes her back into the ark with him
8:10,11	year 600, month 11, day 25	Noah waits another 7 days (278 th day of the Mabbûl) and sent forth the dove again; the dove came back to him in the evening and in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew the waters had subsided from the earth
8:12	year 600, month 12, day 2	Noah waits another 7 days (285 th day of the Mabbûl) and sent forth the dove but she did not return to him anymore
8:13	year 601, month 1, day 1	year 601, 1 st month, 1 st day (314 th day of the Mabbûl), the waters were dried from off the earth; Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked and saw the face of the ground
8:14-19	year 601, month 2, day 27	2 nd month, 27 th day (370 th day of the Mabbûl), the earth had dried out; God said to Noah, go out from the ark, you and your wife, your sons and your sons' wives with you; bring out all the animals: birds, animals, every creeping thing; that they may swarm on the earth, be fruitful and multiply on the earth; so Noah when out, sons, his wife and his sons' wives with him; all the animals left the ark



Today's continents were once joined together because some mountain chains, such as the Appalachians (US) and Caledonians (UK and Scandinavia), are now separated by thousands of miles. But these mountains were not on the original supercontinent because they are made out of Flood deposits.

'Mountain Formations' from AnswersInGenesis.org
 The only way such mountain chains could form is for the original supercontinent to break apart, the plates get covered by layers containing dead animals, and then crash together temporarily. As these plates moved again, they took with them pieces of the mountain chain formed by the collision, one piece in the US and one piece in the UK and Scandinavia.