

The Book of Beginnings – Studies in Genesis

LESSON XXXVIII : GENESIS 8:1-14 – THE FLOOD: THE CLIMAX OF MABBÛL / WATERS DECLINE / RAVEN AND DOVES

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 translation used in these next few studies will be from this resource.

Episode 3 Theme: *God’s remembrance of Noah, the recession of the Floodwaters, the grounding of the Ark and the continued subsiding of the Floodwaters; the sending out of the birds by Noah and the eventual drying up of the water from the earth; God’s instruction for Noah, his family, and the animals to come out of the Ark and to repopulate the earth; Noah’s exodus from the Ark in response to God’s instruction and his sacrifice of an offering to God; God’s reception of the sacrifice, His resolve to never again destroy all life on earth, and His act of blessing Noah and his sons, followed by His command for them to repopulate the earth; God’s statement concerning the new order on the earth (with its provisions regarding eating and murder) and the establishment of His covenant with Noah, his descendants, and all creatures as signified by His bow; and the repopulation of the earth through Noah’s sons.*

Episode 3, Scene 1: Genesis 8:1-5; **Theme:** *God’s remembrance of Noah and His providential act of bringing a recession of the Floodwaters on the earth, so that the Ark ran aground on the mountains of Ararat; and the continued subsiding of the Floodwaters on the earth.*

¹ But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the beasts that were with him in the ark. And God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters abated. ² And the springs of the deep and the windows of heaven closed and the rain from the skies was restrained. ³ And the waters receded steadily, and the waters lacked at the end of one hundred fifty days. ⁴ And the ark rested on the seventeenth day of the seventh month on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵ And the waters continued to diminish until the tenth month. In the tenth month, on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains appeared.

Rabbi Cassuto’s translation:

v. 1 – *But God remembered / Noah
and all the beasts / and all the cattle
that were with him in the ark.*

*And God caused a wind to pass / over the earth,
and the waters subsided;*

v. 2 – *the fountains of the deep were closed, / and the windows of the heavens;
and the rain was restrained / from the heavens.*

v. 3 – *And the waters receded / from the earth / gradually;
and the waters abated / at the end of a hundred and fifty days.*

v. 4 – *And the ark came to rest / in the seventh month,
on the seventeenth day of the month, / on the mountain of Ararat.*

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

v. 1 – But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the beasts that were with him in the ark. — This is the first time God is said to have remembered someone, and this passage is a paradigm of what that means in practice. Note God’s concern for the animals as well as Noah (cf. Jon 4:11; Matt 6:26; 10:29) [Wenham, 1:184]

THE APEX OF THE MABBÛL NARRATIVE — *All the commentators consider 8:1 as the turning point of the narrative.* “Genesis 8:1 begins what is perhaps the most obvious thematic transition in the Flood account.... Everything in the account thus far has been leading up to this climax; from this point on, however, everything in the account moves away from this climax and toward a resolution. In other words, the global theme of the narrative to this point has been preoccupied with preparation for the Flood, followed by the catastrophic destruction of the earth and the life on it. From this point forward, by contrast, the narrative focuses on God’s restoration of the earth, the replenishing of life, and God’s covenant to never again destroy the earth again in the same manner.” [Boyd & Snelling, 690f; see also Wenham, 1:183]

‘GOD REMEMBERS’ = ‘GOD INTERVENES’ — *The unbeliever might say ‘God remembers’ implies that forgetfulness is possible for Him, which is clearly an absurdity. Man is bidden not simply to ‘remember’ the past but the future (e.g., Isa 47:7; Eccl 11:8), which suggests that the word is more equivalent to ‘think about’ than to a concept of recall. ‘God remembering’ always implies his movement toward the object, His acting toward someone because of a previous commitment.* For God to remember someone means that God extends mercy to someone by saving that person from death (8:1; 19:29) or from barrenness (30:22). No less than seventy-three times in the OT is ‘remember’ used with God as the subject. Most often (18 times) it is followed by the preposition ‘to,’ demonstrating that God’s remembrance is interpreted more as ‘an action directed toward someone, rather than a psychological experience of the subject.’ “*From a theological perspective, God’s act of remembrance is not the recollection of forgotten information, but the intervention of God on Noah’s behalf. This certainly involved God’s act of bringing about the recession of the Floodwaters, but it likely extends beyond that. The catastrophic forces at work during the time of the Flood were such that survival would be impossible apart from God’s constant providential – miraculous – protection.*” [Boyd & Snelling, 691; see also Kidner, 92; Hamilton, 1:299; Ross, 197]

THE LORD ‘REMEMBERS’ THOSE WHO BELONG TO HIM — “*According to this, God’s remembrance denotes the revelation of his gracious will and pleasure, according to which he reveals to the wretched that help which before was hidden. A life of faith is the most difficult of all, – such a life as Noah and his sons must have lived, who could only cling to the hope of aid from heaven, since the earth was covered with water, so as to give them no ground of trust. It was, therefore, no vain word when the Holy Spirit says that ‘God remembered Noah.’ For it shows that from the day in which he first went into the ark, God had not spoken to him, nor made to him any revelation. He could see no ray of the divine mercy, but must sustain himself alone upon the promise he had received, whilst, in the meantime, the waters of death are raging all around him, as though God had indeed forgotten him.... O, my Christian friend, hast thou been a long time confined in a wearisome ark, whether it be of some difficult calling, or some painful state; ask not counsel of the charmer, but wait with patience until God, through righteous means, shall bring thee help therefrom.*” [Lange, 1:314]

And God caused a wind to pass over the earth, — “This crucial expression shows that the subsiding waters of the Flood are subject to God’s undisputed will. By contrast, in the Babylonian accounts ‘the gods were terror-struck at the forces they themselves had unleashed. They were

appalled at the consequences of their own actions over which they no longer had control.’ It is only the remembering of God that gives hope and makes new life possible.” [Waltke, 140]

CREATION ECHOED — Many see parallels with the wind (*rûach*) blowing to begin the process of drying the earth to God’s *rûach* hovering over the face of the waters at the beginning of the world’s creation, when the waters of the deep covered the earth. While in the story of Creation not an actual wind is meant – that is, a movement of air – but the Divine Spirit, the parallels are still apparent. “Blowing wind, retreating waters, and the emergence of drying land dominate the telling of the deluge’s reversal. The language of the passage echoes the description of Genesis 1, showing that God has set about making a new creation. There is a general correspondence between the progression of creation’s six days and chap. 8’s delineation of the new creation.

<i>First Day</i>	1:2 8:1b-2a	<i>‘earth,’ ‘deep,’ Spirit’ (rûah), ‘waters’ ‘wind’ (rûah), ‘earth,’ ‘waters,’ ‘deep’</i>
<i>Second Day</i>	1:7-8 8:2b	<i>‘waters,’ ‘sky’ ‘sky’</i>
<i>Third Day</i>	1:9 8:3-5	<i>‘water,’ ‘dry ground,’ ‘appear’ ‘water,’ ‘tops of the mountains,’ ‘appear’</i>
<i>(Fourth Day)</i>		<i>(No need for the re-creation of the luminaries)</i>
<i>Fifth Day</i>	1:20 8:7-8	<i>‘birds,’ ‘above the earth,’ ‘across (‘al p^enê) the expanse’ ‘raven,’ ‘from the earth,’ ‘from the surface (‘al p^enê) of the ground’</i>
<i>Sixth Day</i>	1:24	<i>‘creatures,’ ‘livestock,’ ‘creatures that move along the ground,’ ‘wild animals’</i>
	8:17	<i>‘creature,’ ‘birds,’ ‘animals,’ ‘creatures that move along the ground’</i>
	1:26 [9:6]	<i>‘man,’ ‘image’ ‘image,’ ‘man’</i>

The summary of the disembarking people and animals in 8:17-19, with its divine exhortation to *‘multiply ... be fruitful and increase’* is reminiscent of creation’s fifth and sixth days (1:20-22, 24-25, 28-30).” [Mathews, 1:383]

NO MENTION OF THE ROLE OF THE SUN – ANOTHER POLEMIC AGAINST PAGAN MYTHS — Note the sun plays no role in the drying of the waters. “The Torah does not refer to the heat of the sun as one of the factors contributing to the evaporation of the waters, although it would have been but logical to mention this detail. It may be that Scripture’s omission of this point was not unintentional. In the pagan myths stress is laid on the action of the God Samaš at the end of the Flood, when he shed his light in the heavens and on the earth; and Ziusudra or Utnapištim opened the window of the ship and let his light in and prostrated himself before him. In order to oppose this heathen ideology, which represents the sun as the deity that terminated the Deluge, the Bible ignored the incident and even avoided any specific mention of the dispersion of the clouds by the power of the sun and the wind.” [Cassuto, 2:101f; see also Hamilton, 1:300]

and the waters abated. — Hebrew, *vayyāsōkû*, *‘subsided, abated, decreased.’* The root refers literally *‘to bow down, to be brought low, to humble oneself’* and thus it speaks to the quieting, or becoming calm, of the violent turmoil of the waters that followed their eruption from the earth and the heavy pouring of the water-spouts from above.

v. 2 – And the springs of the deep and the windows of heaven closed and the rain from the skies was restrained. — Using the same imagery, v. 2 describes the reversal of 7:11, 12 which told of the earth’s bursting ‘*springs of the great deep*,’ the opened ‘*floodgates of the heavens*,’ and the falling ‘*rain*.’ The ‘*springs of the deep and the windows of heaven*’ were ‘*closed*,’ Hebrew, *sākhar*, ‘*seal, block*,’ common in Akkadian: *sekēru* for blocking waters. [Mathews, 1:385; Wenham, 1:184]

v. 3 – And the waters receded steadily, — “Reversing 7:17, 24. Exactly the same description is given of the Red Sea returning to its place in Exod 14:26, 28, and the Jordan likewise, in Josh 4:18, the other great saving acts associated with water in the OT. Here the waters are pictured as returning to their normal place, above the sky and below the earth.” [Wenham, 1:184]

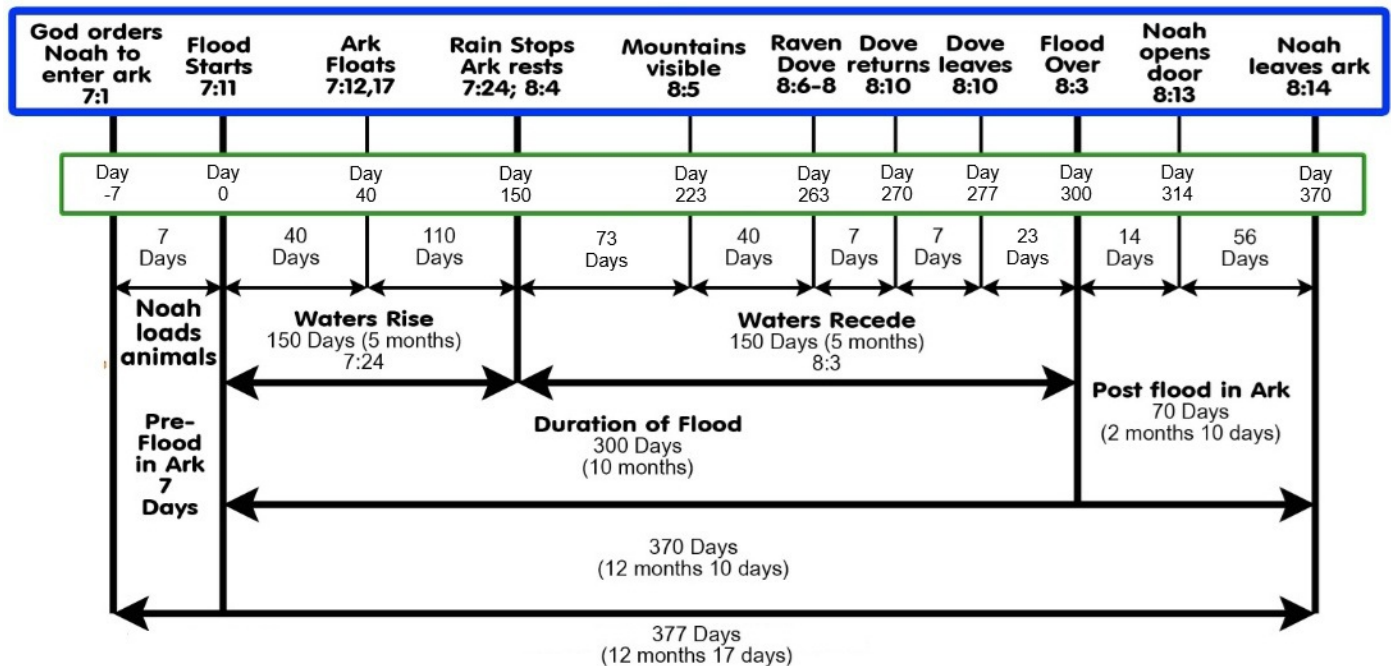
THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE EARTH — “Wind, waves, and evaporation, however, could hardly account in themselves for more than a minor lowering of water level. Somehow there must also be a drastic rearrangement of terrestrial topography, with continental land masses rising from the waters, and ocean basins deepening and widening to receive the waters draining off the lands. This is, in fact, exactly what happened according to Psalm 104:6-9: ‘*Thou coveredst it [the earth] with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys [or better, according to the ASV, ‘the mountains go up, the valleys go down’] unto the place which thou hast founded for them. Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.*’ ... Once the crust began to move (the previous land surfaces downward to form the new ocean basins, the previous sea bottoms and their new deposits of stratified sediments upward to form the new continents), the waters began to drain off the emerging lands, ‘*returning from off the earth continually.*’ The expression in the Hebrew indicates a quite rapid subsidence, as would be expected under the circumstances just outlined.” [Morris, 206f]

receded – Hebrew, *vayyāshūvhû*, literally, ‘*returned.*’ **Gradually, continually, steadily** – Hebrew, *hālōkh vāshōvh*, literally, ‘*going and returning.*’ “As a rule, the commentators pay no special attention to the verb *shūvh*, which occurs twice here, and merely explain generally that the waters were reduced. ***But since the text emphasizes this verb, it is clear that it refers to the waters returning to the places whence they issued. The waters came from both the heavens and the great deep and returned to each of them. Since God now wishes to restore the world to its normal state, it is essential that the waters should return to their sources, and that the reservoirs of upper and lower waters should be replenished....*** The process is, of course, protracted: the waters return, going and returning – little by little. When the fountains burst forth, the waters gushed out from there with force and speed, and when the windows of the heavens were opened, the water poured down from them fast and furious; but now that these openings, below and above, have been closed, the waters recede slowly, by a gradual and continuous movement, according to the normal way of nature.” [Cassuto, 2:102]

(Cassuto) and the waters abated at the end of a hundred and fifty days. – (Boyd & Snelling) and the waters lacked at the end of one hundred fifty days. — As discussed in lesson 36, while not without dissension, the majority of conservative scholars believe the waters ‘*prevailed, were mighty*’ for the first five months of the Mabbûl, after which time the waters began to recede off the earth. From lesson 36:

“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]

Note the translations given here (both of which render the Hebrew correctly). Our English word ‘abated’ means ‘to decrease in force or intensity, to decrease in amount or value’ according to Mirriam-Webster. The Hebrew word used here is from the root *chāsēr*, ‘to lack, to be without, to decrease’ (thus the translation by Boyd & Snelling). So if the young earth scientists are correct, the Floodwaters ‘prevailed’ upon the earth for the first 150 days, at which time they began to slowly recede over a period of 150 days.



v. 4 – And the ark rested on the seventeenth day of the seventh month — Exactly five months after the commencement of the *Mabbûl*, assuming lunar months. “By the ark coming to ‘rest’ (*nûach*, v. 4), the passage is reminiscent of Noah’s naming (see 5:29). In a play on ‘Noah’ (*nōach*) the author indicates that the patriarch achieved, in a most unexpected way, the hopes of his father Lamech.” [Mathews, 1:385]

on the mountains of Ararat. — Which specific mountain the Ark rested upon is unknown; the expression ‘on the mountains of Ararat’ only connotes a mountain – unspecified – in the land of Ararat. “‘Ararat,’ known as ancient Urartu in Assyrian records, was an extensive territory and bordered the northern Mesopotamian region. It reached its political zenith in the ninth to sixth centuries B.C. Urartu surrounded Lake Van with boundaries taking in southeast Turkey, southern Russia, and northwest Iran. Among the mountains of modern Armenia is the impressive peak known today as Mount Ararat, some seventeen thousand feet in elevation, which the Turks call Byk Ari Da. ‘Mount Ararat’ as a geographical designation comes from later tradition. During the eleventh to twelfth centuries A.D., it became the traditional site known as the place of Noah’s landing. Verse 4, however, does not specify a peak and refers generally to its location as the ‘mountains of Ararat.’ ‘Urartu’ (Ararat) is mentioned seldom in Scripture (2 Kgs 19:37; Isa 37:38; Jer 51:27), and it had no special significance in the history of Israel’s religious or national life. *The search for the ark’s artifacts has been both a medieval and a modern occupation; but to the skeptic such evidence is not convincing, and to the believer, while not irrelevant, it is not necessary to faith.*” [Mathews, 1:385f; see also Cassuto, 2:103; Wenham, 1:184f; Hamilton, 1:301] “Creation geologists don’t believe the Ark could have landed on what we today call Mount Ararat, as this mountain was formed at the end of the Flood due to volcanic activity forming

certain mountains, including Mount Ararat. Obviously, as Moses (inspired by God) compiled the text of Genesis, he would have used names in the post-Flood world that people would be familiar with to understand where these events occurred. But we really don't know the exact location of where the Ark landed, except it was in the area we today call the mountains of Ararat." [Ham, 199]

v. 5 – And the waters continued to diminish — literally, 'they were going and diminishing.' The waters became less and less day by day.

until the tenth month. — "The meaning is not that until this month they diminished and no more. The word 'adh', 'until,' often indicates not the end of a process but the completion of an important part of it.... In our case, a significant phase in the course of the Flood is referred to, until the tops of mountains were seen." [Cassuto, 2:106]

In the tenth month, on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains appeared. — **The third dated event in the flood story is the appearance of the mountains.** "Some seventy-two or seventy-three days (counting the first day [assuming lunar months]) after the vessel landed, the waters had sufficiently retreated so that the peaks of the Ararat mountains became 'visible' to Noah (v. 5). It was the first sign of land, no doubt a solace for the weary sailor. *Whereas it took but forty days for the rains to submerge the earth, it would be five lingering months before the waters would completely subside. So Noah befriended patience and 'waited' (vv. 10, 12). When troubles come, they advance swiftly but retreat slowly.*" [Mathews, 1:386; see also Wenham, 1:185] Note Noah and his fellow passengers remain inside the Ark for almost five months before they disembark.

Episode 3, Scene 2: Genesis 8:6-12; **Theme:** *The sending out of the raven and then the dove by Noah, as well as the indications provided by the dove of the gradual recession of the water from the surface of the earth.*

⁶ And at the end of forty days, Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made. ⁷ And he sent out a raven, and he went back and forth until the waters dried up from upon the earth. ⁸ And he sent out a dove from with him to see whether the waters had lessened upon the face of the ground. ⁹ And the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, and she returned to him, to the ark, because water was upon the face of all the earth. And he stretched out his hand and he took her, and he brought her to himself, to the ark. ¹⁰ And he waited yet another seven days and he again sent the dove from the ark. ¹¹ And the dove came to him at the time of evening, and there was a freshly plucked leaf of an olive tree in her beak. And Noah knew that the waters had lessened upon the earth. ¹² And he waited yet another seven days and he sent out the dove, but she did not return to him again.

Rabbi Cassuto's translation:

v. 6 – And it came to pass / at the end of forty days,
that Noah opened / the window of the ark which he had made.

v. 7 – And he sent forth a raven, / and it went to and fro
until the waters were dried up / from the earth.

v. 8 – Then he sent forth a dove / from him,
to see if the waters had subsided / from the face of the ground.

v. 9 – But the dove did not find / a place to set her foot,

*and she returned to him / to the ark,
for the waters were / on the face of the whole earth;
so he put forth his hand / and took her
and brought her in unto him / into the ark.*

*v. 10 – He waited again / another seven days,
and once more he sent forth the dove / out of the ark.*

*v. 11 – And the dove came back to him / in the evening,
and lo, there were olive leaves, / fresh ones, in her mouth;
so Noah knew / that the waters had subsided / from the earth.*

*v. 12 – Then he waited again / another seven days,
and sent forth the dove; / and she returned not again unto him / anymore.*

“[Vv. 8:6-14 matches vv. 7:5-16] in that both are straight narratives with Noah and the animals as the principal actors, but whereas the earlier scene concentrates on one event, the entry to the ark, this one spans a long period during which the waters gradually subside. In the earlier scene repetition is used to bring out the hustle and bustle before the impending flood; here the repetition helps to convey the monotony of waiting inside the ark for the earth to dry out. The scene falls into 3 parts:

8:6-7 Noah opens the window and dispatches the raven

8:8-12 The dove makes three journeys

8:13-14 Noah sees the earth is dry....

The whole scene is dominated by Noah’s concern to discover whether the waters have retreated. The raven episode is then essentially an unsuccessful experiment: it brings back no evidence of any change in the situation. The dove does bring back some evidence, the fresh olive leaves, so that Noah concludes that the waters had lessened. But only when he removes the cover of the ark does he himself see that the surface of the soil is dry (8:13). Finally on the 27th day of the second month the earth has dried out. Thus the whole scene progressively builds to a climax. At the end there seems no further reason for Noah to remain in the ark.” [Wenham, 1:185]

v. 6 – And at the end of forty days, Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made. —

The ‘*forty days*’ can refer only to the period of time that Noah waited from the time the peaks of the mountains become visible (v. 5) until he sent out the birds. ‘*Window*,’ Hebrew, (*challôn*), not the rare term of 6:16; its meaning is not in doubt (see lesson 33). This window must have been on the side or roof of the ark; at least it did not allow Noah to see the waters receding which is why he resorts to sending out the birds. [Wenham, 1:186; Hamilton, 1:302f; Kidner, 92]

v. 7 – And he sent out a raven, — Note Noah was to take a pair of the unclean animals (7:2), seven pairs of clean animals (7:2), and seven pairs of birds, the assumption being no difference between clean and unclean since no distinction was made between them (7:3). The raven was an unclean bird, so if only a pair was originally taken upon the ark and Noah sent out one of that pair, there was a danger of the species being unable to survive after the flood.

THE RAVEN AND THE DOVE — “The story of the sending forth of the birds, which is recounted in a very similar form also in the Mesopotamian tradition, is easily understood, if we bear in mind the custom of the ancient seamen who, when they were on the high seas, used to send forth birds from their ships in order to learn from their flight if there was dry land near, and in

which direction it lay.... It is self-understood that only such birds can be considered for the purpose as are accustomed to fly long distances, like the raven and the dove.” [Cassuto, 106f] The raven and the dove represent two different types of birds capable of serving the purpose of whether dry land was near. Their similarities:

- they are similar to each other in size
- each one is characteristic of its class

But note their differences:

- the raven is black and the dove white
- the raven is regarded as a croaker with a deep, resonant croak, and a bird of ill omen; the dove is regarded as the symbol of innocence
- the raven is unclean, not fit for consumption nor sacrifice (Lev 11:15; Deut 14:14); according to rabbinic tradition, the raven was released first as expendable. The dove is a clean animal often used in sacrifice (Lev 1:14; 12:6, etc).
- the raven is a stronger bird and could remain in flight longer, going back and forth while deriving its food from floating carcasses (v. 7). The dove is a valley bird, released in order to determine whether the lower-lying areas were habitable.
- the raven lights everywhere, a scavenger bird with no qualms about resting on unclean surfaces; but the dove is particular where it lights, upon the plains and not in the slime and marsh.
- the raven is wild, living in isolation and has no direct relationship with human beings; only as a marvel is it recounted that ravens brought bread and meat to Elijah (1 Kings 17:6). The dove can be domesticated and become a pet, and is the symbol of beauty, gentleness, integrity and friendship; the maiden in the Song of Songs is often called ‘*my dove or my dove, my perfect one*’ (2:14; 5:2; 6:9), and her eyes and the eyes of the youth are compared to doves (1:15; 4:1; 5:12). The dove is a common figure in rabbinic literature of Israel.

(Cassuto) and it went to and fro – (Boyd) and he went back and forth — Hebrew, *vayy^etsē’ yātsô’ vāshôvh* ; literally, ‘*to come out, to go out*’ (2x) + ‘*return.*’ There are differences of opinions as to exactly what this phrase indicates.

- **the raven flew back and forth but whether it reentered the ark is uncertain** – “[This] means that the raven flew back and forth repeatedly, but whether it reentered the ark is uncertain. The absence of a specific statement in contrast to the dove (vv. 9, 11-12) suggests that it found a place to perch on the mountains and did not rejoin Noah.” [Mathews, 1:387; see also Wenham, 1:186]
- **the raven flew around then returned** – “True to its nature, the raven is concerned only with itself and pays no heed to man’s needs. It goes forth and comes back [literally, ‘*going and returning*’], goes and returns, and Noah can draw no inference from its going and coming.” [Cassuto, 2:110; see also Calvin, 1:279]
- **the raven flew away and did not return** – This best coincides with what follows. The LXX’s ‘*and it went forth and did not return,*’ followed by Syriac and Vulgate, misconstrued the Hebrew to clarify that the raven did not return to the vessel. “The raven is

a carrion eater and did not return because it found food on the mountain peaks. ”
[Hamilton, 1:304f] “The raven continually flew to and fro until Noah left the Ark when the earth dried (Ibn Ezra).” [Rabbi Nosson Scherman, *The Chumash: The Stone Edition*, or The Five Books of Moses in book form (Mehorah Publications LTD, Brooklyn NY) 2011, page 37]

until the waters dried up from upon the earth. — this could refer to one of two days. In Gen 8:13 it says, ‘*And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, that the waters were dried up from the earth;*’ but the narrative also states in the next verse that ‘*in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dried.*’ (Gen 8:14) It is unknown to which of these two days this verse refers.

v. 8 – And he sent out a dove from with him — “In our text we are not told when she was sent forth. Undoubtedly the meaning is not that Noah let her go immediately after sending the raven, since it is said of the raven that it went to and fro, and Noah could not have known this till several days had passed. Further, it is stated in v. 10: ‘*He waited again another seven days,*’ implying that he had already waited and that seven days had elapsed prior to this.... [It] is clear from v. 10 that according to the Biblical narrative seven days passed between the sending forth of the raven and the first time he sent the dove.” [Cassuto, 2:110]

from him, — “In connection with the putting forth of the raven Scripture does not say from him, but the expression is used in regard to the dove, thus indicating the friendly relations between Noah and her.” [Cassuto, 2:110]

to see whether the waters had lessened upon the face of the ground. — “He hopes to be informed (that is the sense of ‘*to see*’) by the dove’s behaviour on a definite point, namely, if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground, that is to say, if the waters had further abated since the ark had landed.” [Cassuto, 2:110f]

v. 9 – And the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, — A dove will only settle upon such places and objects as are dry and clean; its return to the ark signified to Noah there was still ‘*water on the face of the whole earth.*’

to set — Hebrew, *mānôach*, ‘*resting place;*’ rendered ‘*place where to set*’ forms a word-play with the name Noah, *nôach* (also see 8:4). “Literally, ‘*the dove found mānôach (resting place).*’ She looked for another Noah outside the ark, but finding none, she returned to the Noah she knew.” [Wenham, 1:186]

and she returned to him, to the ark, because water was upon the face of all the earth. And he stretched out his hand and he took her, and he brought her to himself, to the ark. — Another word-play: *vay^eshallach*, ‘*and he sent forth*’ (v. 8) and *vayyish^elach*, ‘*and he put forth.*’ [Cassuto, 2:111]

MAN’S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ANIMAL WORLD — Noah personally retrieves the dove (‘*he put out his hand, took it, and brought it into him.*’), an expression of affection without extrabiblical parallel. “The narrative speed, which has been racing through weeks in one verse, slows dramatically to focus on this one brief event. This series of verbs provides a cameo of Noah. He has the heart of a conservationist, modeling God’s concern to preserve the creation. Skinner says, ‘The description of the return and admission of the dove is unsurpassed ... for tenderness and beauty of imagination.’” [Waltke, 141] “But there is more to the comment than this. It shows the sort of relationship that ought to exist between man and the animal world (cf. 1:26-28; 2:19-20). Prov 12:10, ‘*A righteous man has regard for the life of his beast,*’ and various injunctions in the

law show a similar concern (Exod 23:4-5; Deut 25:4). Noah illustrates his righteousness not only by his piety toward God but by his devoted concern for the animals; he was an archetypal conservationist. This is another respect in which he is an imitator of God (cf. 8:1).” [Wenham, 1:186f]

v. 10 – *And he waited yet another seven days and he again sent the dove from the ark.* — All the commentators agree that from this statement we may assume it was seven days between the sending forth of the raven and the first dove, since here Noah waited ‘*yet another seven days.*’

v. 11 – *And the dove came to him at the time of evening,* — The dove returned at the time when birds are accustomed to return to their nest in order to spend the night.

and there was a freshly plucked leaf of an olive tree in her beak. — A twig containing several fresh and green leaves, torn-off a tree, the first testimony of life. As a fresh leaf, it was newly born and thus was confirmation that the earth again was yielding its herbage. The lower hills are well suited to the cultivation of the olive tree so Noah knew the waters had receded and that the trees growing on them had begun to put forth new branches and leaves. [Cassuto, 2:112; Mathews, 1:388; Lange, 1:310f; Carroll, 1:194f; Keil, 1:149]

freshly plucked — “The find was the more significant in that it was ‘*freshly plucked*’ (*ṭārāph* , [only used twice in OT, here and Ezek 17:9]), indicating that plants were growing again ready to feed man and beast (cf. 1:30), and that ‘*the waters had gone down on the earth.*’” [Wenham, 1:187]

Olive trees — Some interesting observations based upon the botanical characteristics of olive trees:

- Olive trees have incredible durability and regeneration rate
- Olive trees are difficult to kill
- Olive trees can survive even if the top of the tree is completely submerged under water
- Olive trees have fast growing leaves, so when the waters of the mabbûl receded, the tree could push out fresh sprouts fast
- Olive trees naturally thrive on mountain sides; they were one of the first trees to be exposed when the flood waters receded

SYMBOLOLOGY — “The detail of an ‘*olive*’ leaf too may have caused early readers to reflect on connections with the tabernacle, where olive oil fueled the menorah in the tabernacle (Exod 27:20; Lev 24:2-4) and was added to the mixture of perfumed oil for anointing tabernacle and furnishings (Exod 30:24-29). It was obviously something that pleased God.... Both anointing oil and dove had symbolic value in Israel for the empowering presence of the Spirit, especially the ministry of the messianic figure (e.g., 1 Sam 16:13; Ps 89:20; Isa 61:1). Jesus of Nazareth took up that ministry (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38), and at his public baptism all four Evangelists note that the Spirit came upon him in the form of a descending ‘*dove*’ (Matt 3:16 pars.).” [Mathews, 1:388] “In the Old Testament the olive tree is a symbol of peace and happiness (Hosea 14:6) and it may symbolize those ideas in the present episode. The flood has ended and it is replaced with tranquility and a new beginning.” [Currid, 1:208]

And Noah knew that the waters had lessened upon the earth. — Precisely what he wanted to know when he sent the dove forth the first time (v. 8).

v. 12 — *And he waited yet another seven days and he sent out the dove, but she did not return to him again.* — After a week Noah sends forth the dove once more but this time she did not return to him, showing the dove had found a place to rest, build a nest and sustain herself. Life begins to renew itself upon the earth.

Episode 3, Scene 3: Genesis 8:13, 14; **Theme:** *The drying of the waters from the ground, which is beheld by Noah, and the total drying of the earth.*

¹³ And in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, on the first day of the month the waters dried up from the earth. And Noah removed the covering of the ark, and he saw [that] the surface of the ground was dry. ¹⁴ And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was [completely] dry.

Rabbi Cassuto's translation:

v. 13 — *And it came to pass / in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, / the waters were dried / from off the earth; and Noah removed / the covering of the ark, and looked, / and behold the face of the ground was dry.*

v. 14 — *In the second month, / on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dried out.*

v. 13 — *And in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, on the first day of the month* — The reference, of course, is to Noah's life. "Special attention to the exact dates of the earth's drying indicates the importance attributed to the events they detail. 'First day of the first month ... six hundred and first year' (v. 13) with its emphasis on 'first' ('one') signaled a new 'year,' that is, the beginning of the new creation that God had accomplished through Noah's survival." [Mathews, 1:389]

the waters dried up from the earth. — Here the Torah narrates the story from an objective viewpoint; Noah at this time was unable to perceive this for himself, only being able to see through the window / hatch.

And Noah removed the covering of the ark, — Hebrew, *mikh^eseh*, 'covering' (a different word is used in 6:16). This same word is used of the hide cover of the Tabernacle (Exod 26:14; 35:11) and the skins which covered the holy vessels on the march (Num 4:8, 12; note Lange comments that does not demand the ark's cover had such a covering; "The deck of an ark on which the rain-storms spent their force, must surely have been of as great stability as the ark itself." [Lange, 1:311]). The rain having stopped, Noah removes the covering of the ark which allows him to look around upon the new earth. "Only by hoisting the 'covering' was Noah able to see the land below; he viewed the 'surface of the ground' for the first time. The NJB captures the excitement of the moment with the exclamation, 'The surface of the ground was dry!'" [Mathews, 1:389]

and he saw [that] the surface of the ground was dry. — Noah now sees for himself that which was just objectively stated previously in the first part of the verse. "The verbs of 8:13 and 14 rendered 'dry' in NIV differ. Even after Noah sees the earth has dried out (Heb. *chār^evhû* [8:13]), he waits patiently almost another two months until it is completely dry (Heb. *yāv^heshāh* [8:14]),

waiting for the divine word that it is safe to disembark.” [Waltke, 141]

v. 14 – *And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was [completely] dry.* — Commentators differ as to the length of the *Mubbûl*; as mentioned in previous lessons, the uncertainty rests upon the type of calendar being used, whether the year was a lunar or solar year, etc. While acknowledging the difficulties, I most agree with Boyd & Snelling’s conclusion of the *Mabbûl* being 370/371 days, as was also shown in the previous lesson’s Excel spreadsheet.

[completely] dry — the Hebrew word used here is *yāvḥ^eshāh* , recalling the state of the land at the time of Creation where it was said ‘let the dry land appear’ (Gen 1:9), the word used there being *hayyabāshāh* . “Eventually Noah sees for himself that the earth is dry. The double date formula and the threefold mention that ‘*the earth (land) was dry (dried out)*’ emphasizes the importance of this development. A new world is born from the watery grave of the old; a new era has begun. Nevertheless, it was a slow delivery: nearly two months elapsed between Noah’s looking out of the ark to see the earth is ‘drying,’ *chār^evhû* , till it was ‘dried out,’ *yāvḥ^eshāh* . This distinction between the two roots is also attested in Isa 19:5; Job 14:11; and Jer 50:38.” [Wenham, 1:187]