

## SESSION 53: THE EARTH DRIES OUT

Genesis 8:4-14

December 15, 2024

### PREFACE

I would like to begin by posing a question: ***Where did the ark come to rest?***

Most of us grew up thinking that the ark came to rest on Mt. Ararat—but that is not correct. Let's read the first portion of our passage.

### **Read Genesis 8:4-7.**

In the Flood narrative the Lord God has just turned His attention away from destruction to begin the restoration process. He has kept safe Noah and his family, along with representatives of the essential beasts, for, thus far, 150 days. Now He begins the necessary steps that will lead, eventually, to Noah and his charges once again standing on *terra firma*.

And in this day and age it is customary for our eyes to glaze over when confronted with the minutia in this passage. We are a generation with little patience for pedantic details. But here the details are important; for one thing, they demonstrate and affirm that we are not reading a fairy tale, but an actual account of an historical event. These details bring on-the-ground, realistic affirmation to the conclusion of a supernatural event. 📖

So let us at least acknowledge these important milestones—without dwelling on them *too* long.

v4

**In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested upon **the mountains of Ararat.****  
(emphasis added)

Back to our question. For once all of our common versions agree; the Hebrew is plural, *har*, “mountains”—that is, the mountainous portion of the kingdom of Ararat. In the Bible Ararat was the name of a region, a country, as in Jeremiah 51:27

**Lift up a standard in the land,  
Blow a trumpet among the nations!  
Set apart the nations against her;  
Summon against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and  
Ashkenaz...**

I have included once again in the handout the chart detailing the chronology of the Flood.

There are a number of peaks in that country's mountainous region, the highest being Mt. Masis, but more important than on which of these peaks the ark came to rest is the location of the *country* of Ararat itself. Look at the first map included on the back of the handout.

These mountains (and the ancient nation of Ararat) are located in the far eastern portion of modern Turkey, nudging up against modern Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the northwest tip of Iran. The genius behind God's choosing that location for those in the ark to disembark is seen when we look at the second map.

This was a perfect location from which to repopulate the earth! From this corner of today's Turkey, from this spot Noah's three sons and their descendants could easily migrate in all four points of the compass. As we looked at in Session 44,

- **Japheth** was the ancestor of a number of tribes and peoples associated with the regions to the north and west of the Middle East—especially Anatolia (parts of Turkey) and the Aegean Sea. That is, the upper NW of the Middle East, bleeding into the Caucasus and even into Eastern Europe.
- **Ham** was the father of *many* peoples and tongues; some names which stand out: Canaan, Nimrod, Babel (i.e., Babylon), Accad, Ninevah, Philistines, Jebusite (early dwellers in what would become Jerusalem), Gaza—and, not least, Egypt (through Mizraim, Ham's son).
- **Shem**, Noah's firstborn, is the most important. He is not just the father of all "Semites" (including the Hebrews), but Luke 3:36 confirms that Jesus the Messiah was born through Noah, Shem, and Arphaxad (i.e., Arpachshad).

These are just the ones chronicled in the immediate line from Noah and important to the biblical narrative. We can well imagine various families and tribes gravitating north and east, around today's Caspian Sea, and even beyond Egypt into western and southern Africa. The ark came to rest in a perfect spot for repopulating the earth.

Note that the ark would have "grounded" upon a mountain peak before any of the mountains would have been visible. This would not occur until seventy-four more days passed (v5).

#### **VV6-7: THE RAVEN SENT OUT**

Then it happened at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made; and he sent out a raven, and it went out flying back and forth until the water was dried up from the earth.

The raven, being a scavenger bird that will eat just about anything—including carrion and garbage—would find sufficient sustenance to survive outside the ark. If he required places to rest, he could have used the exposed peaks of the higher mountains. Thus, no doubt happy to be free of it, he does not return to the ark.

The Hebrew literally reads, “and it goeth out, going out and turning back,” which suggests the raven periodically returned to the ark, perhaps to perch on its roof; but all of our modern versions just translate this “back and forth,” or “to and fro.”

#### **Read Genesis 8:8-12.**

#### **VV8-9: THE DOVE SENT THE FIRST TIME**

Then he sent out a dove from him, to see if the water was abated from the face of the land; but the dove found no resting place for the sole of its foot, so it returned to him into the ark, for the water was on the surface of all the earth. Then he stretched out his hand and took it and brought it into the ark to himself.

Having a more selective diet, which leans toward seeds and grains, and only occasionally earthworms and insects, the dove found nothing. Unlike the raven, the dove is also more particular about where it alights, requiring a clean place. Since the passage informs us that “the dove found no resting place for the sole of its foot,” Noah thus deduced that there was yet no cleared portion of dry land. (The dove would *not*, like the raven, perch atop a floating dead body.) Finding no food or ground suitable for him, the dove returned to the ark.

#### **VV10-11: THE DOVE SENT THE SECOND TIME**

Then he waited yet another seven days; and again he sent out the dove from the ark. And the dove came to him toward evening, and behold, in its beak was a freshly picked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the water was abated from the earth.

A week later Noah tries again with the dove—note the definite article: the same dove as before.

This time the dove returns that evening bearing proof that plants are beginning to sprout. Note too that the waters are falling with sufficient speed that Noah considers seven days time enough for different results. This time the dove found a clean and dry spot to land during the day. Leupold offers more about this event.

*Leupold:* Doves are not considerate birds who bring men tokens of the state of affairs upon the earth. That this dove brought a leaf in its beak is to be attributed alone to an impulse divinely directed. The “fresh olive leaf” ... (*taraph*) indicates that it had just been plucked, and was not an old one swimming in the waters. So, being fresh, it pointed to an olive tree then in foliage. Though these trees will grow in water, yet they are found only below certain levels. So Noah could conjecture about how far the water level must at least have gone down into the valleys.

#### **v12: THE DOVE SENT THE THIRD TIME**

**Then he waited yet another seven days and sent out the dove; but it did not return to him again.**

Now the family in the ark knew with certainty that the day of their release was close at hand.

God’s word, though filled cover to cover with mystery, with unblemished holiness, with the Godhead performing supernatural deeds, nonetheless is a very practical, sensible narrative of human life on earth. The next two verses demonstrate this through what at first might be considered redundancy.

**Read Genesis 8:13-14.**

#### **vv13-14**

We are never given a calendar year for the Flood; the time marks have been, from the outset, Noah’s lifespan.

**5:32 - And Noah was 500 years old, and Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.**

**7:6 - Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth.**

**7:11 - In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on this day all the fountains of the great deep split open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened.**

v13: Now it happened in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, on the first of the month, the water was dried up from the earth.

As the NIVs insert into the text, we know this refers to the six hundred and first year “of Noah’s” life. And I believe here is evidence that we should consider the numbers in charts like the one I have included as, so to speak, “*round numbers*.” Math is not my forte, I admit, and at this point the numbers seem to be confusing, but the chart we have does offer an explanation. For me the best explanation is that we understand that, first, the *event* of the flood does not end just because the ground *appears* (“the surface of the ground”) to be dry. And second, even though the narrative trips along quickly, there are time intervals embedded that are not mentioned. For example, by the end of v12, 285 days are accounted for; the very next line at the beginning of v13 occurs 29 days later, bringing the total to 314 days.

Anyone living where there is snow and possibly ice, or anywhere where the ground freezes, knows that in the spring the ground may *appear* dry, but walking on it can be like trying to walk on chocolate pudding. Once the ice below the surface of the ground thaws, it takes a while before it becomes really solid, and the same would be true for this incredible amount of water that has covered the earth for over ten months.

From v11 through v14 we have four references to the level of dryness in the earth’s surface. The last two seem redundant, but can be understood properly if we see these all as *incremental*—each one drier than the previous.

v11: “the water was **abated from** [i.e., moved off] the earth”

v13: “the **water** was **dried up**”

v13: “the **surface** of the ground was **dried up**”

v14: “**the earth was dry**” (emphasis added in all)

The venerable William Wilson in his *Old Testament Word Studies* (1870) helps us understand the difference. The Hebrew translated “dried up” in v13 (both instances, *charab*) means “to be dry in a lesser degree; it means only the taking away of moisture in general, or from the surface.”

The Hebrew in v14, however, (*yabesh*, [yaw-bashe']) means “to be so dry as to be ready to burn,” withered. In other words the earth was not *completely* dry of the flood waters until v14.

**Then Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the surface of the ground was dried up.**

Because the same Hebrew word (*mikseh*) is used for the skin covering for the tabernacle, some interpreters conclude that the roof of the ark was also “skinned.” But that is a silly and impractical argument; the roof of the ark had to withstand an incredible assault of rain and wind and crashing waves.

Noah has been patient to wait upon the Lord every step of the way, but now he feels confident to lift off—or probably more accurately, dismantle—the cover, the roof of the ark. He is confident the worst of it is over and is faced with not just a collection of humans, but a veritable cargo-load of beasts of every stripe—all suffering from acute cabin-fever after a year of being cooped up with each other.

I believe that the math shows the probability of Noah and his sons systematically dismantling the timbers of a fairly solid and well-engineered roof to the ark, which would take time. This would help explain the additional fifty-seven days between the removal of the roof and their actual departure; the work involved would be their occupation while waiting for God’s permission to leave the ark, which He does in v16; they will disembark in vv18-19.

#### **v14**

Meanwhile, during these fifty-seven days, the earth continues to dry out.

**In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.**

*Leupold:* A comparison with [Genesis] 7:11 nets the result that the total duration of the Flood was one year and ten days (375 days), at least that was the length of time that Noah was confined in the ark.

Or, the 371 days of the chart in the handout. Again, round numbers.

# SESSION 53

## The Earth Dries Out Genesis 8:4-14

Fig. 1. THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE FLOOD<sup>a</sup>

There were forty days during which the rain fell .....	40
Throughout another 110 days the waters continued to rise, making 150 days in all for their "prevailing" (7:24) .....	110
The waters occupied 74 days in their "going and decreasing" (AV margin). This was from the 17th day of the seventh month to the 1st day of the tenth month (8:5). There being 30 days to a month, the figures in days are 13 plus 30 plus 30 plus 1 .....	74
Forty days elapsed before Noah sent out the raven (8:6-7) .....	40
Seven days elapsed before Noah sent out the dove for the first time (8:8). This period is necessary for reaching the total and is given by implication from the phrase "other seven days" (8:10) .....	7
Seven days passed before sending out the dove for the second time (8:10) .....	7
Seven days more passed before the third sending of the dove (8:12) .....	7
Up to this point 285 days are accounted for, but the next episode is dated the 1st of the first month in the 601st year. From the date in 7:11 to this point in 8:13 is a period of 314 days; therefore an interval of 29 days elapses .....	29
From the removal of the covering of the ark to the very end of the experience was a further 57 days (8:14) .....	57
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>371</b>

### The Two Birds

The **raven**, being a scavenger bird that will eat just about anything—including carrion and garbage—would find sufficient sustenance to survive outside the ark. If he required places to rest, he could have used the exposed peaks of the higher mountains.

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### There is "Dry" and then There is "Dry"

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