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# Worldwide Waters: Laurasian Flood Myths and Their Connections

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# Worldwide Waters: Laurasian Flood Myths and Their Connections

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in  
The Department of Literature.

By  
Logan McDonald

Under the mentorship of Joe Pellegrino

## ABSTRACT

In various cultures, stories of great floods have arisen, and many scholars agree that the writers of these stories based their accounts on an actual flooding event. However, these narratives vary in characters, plot, and even their meaning to each culture. This thesis examines several Laurasian flood narratives, perhaps the most ancient narratives in Western literature, including those of the Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Sumerian, and Israeli cultures. These civilizations all rose and existed in close proximity to one another, which makes the historicity of a flooding event more probable. A structural examination of the narratives and a comparison of their commonalities allows for a consideration of the civilizations from which they came.

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To God: Thank you for answering all of my prayers and for always giving me hope. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

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## INTRODUCTION

“The flood continued forty days on the earth; and the waters increased, and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth” (NRSV Gen. 7:17). This text from the Biblical book of Genesis tells the story of Noah, the only righteous man on earth, who survives the flood that God uses to bring judgment on evil mankind. However, the Israelite culture is not the only culture to possess a flood story within its mythology and traditions. The Mesopotamian and Egyptian cultures all possess flood stories in their collective mythologies as well. All of the stories focus on a flood, but that is not the only characteristic that they share. The traits of their characters, the reasons for the floods, and the results of those floods all appear to be similar. Because of the similarities between these stories, many historians believe there was actually a historical flood that likely covered the majority of Laurasia, if not a larger part of the world. Many scholars also see flood stories as a sort of creation myth as well because in the flood stories life is destroyed and then built up again. “Like the creation narrative, it is part of our basic cultural heritage” (Westermann 51). These cultures were so close together that they likely passed these tales among them, but each changed the story so that they could consider it their own as well as emphasize the values of their own culture. The oldest recording of a flood myth that we have is the Mesopotamian story about Atrahasis. However, this does not mean that this is the oldest of the Laurasian flood myths, just the oldest recorded one known. These cultures and their mythologies have become well-known tenants of ancient literature and have affected many of the tales that came after them. Each culture used their flood narrative for a specific purpose as well, passing on knowledge to those who came after them. Their importance can be seen by the fact that they are still taught and

analyzed in modern times. The flood narratives of Laurasia also show how cultures impact each other and how literature can connect people of all civilizations.

Although Laurasia is most commonly associated with the northern portion of Pangaea, for all purposes of this paper, Laurasia will be considered as the area that we call the Middle East, the place many consider the cradle of Western civilization, which would have been a portion of the Laurasian continent of Pangaea. According to Michael Witzel, there is a common Laurasian myth structure that runs throughout many of the major cultures that were part of Laurasia.

#### LAURASIAN mythology

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##### **Creation from nothing, chaos, etc.**

Father Heaven/Mother Earth **created**, separated

**Father Heaven** engenders:

Two generations (“Titans/Olympians”):

Four (five) generations/ages

heaven pushed up, sun released

current gods defeat/kill predecessors

killing the dragon/sacred drink

##### **humans: somatic descendants of Sun god**

they (or a god) show **hubris**,

are punished by a **flood**

**Trickster** deities bring culture

humans spread, emergence of “nobles”

local history begins

##### **final destruction of the world,**

**new heaven and earth emerge**

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*Figure 1. Basic Laurasian Mythology*

(Witzel 323)

These basic tenets are followed by the majority of the major cultures when compiling their own mythologies. However, each culture may have slight changes to the

structure because each culture had a certain portion of the story that they wanted to emphasize.

The dating of the various Laurasian flood myths is complicated. Most students of world literature are used to hearing that the Epic of Gilgamesh (which contains the flood story of Utnapishtim) is the first extant Western text. Contemporary scholars, however, offer a different perspective. Each competing timeline and claim to primacy is seemingly well-supported through archeological dating practices, as well as other discipline-specific methods. For the purposes of this study, I will not jump into this dating fray, and so will choose one respected timeline, proffered by Dutch historian Jona Lendering. Ultimately, since I am not constructing a stemma of stories but rather addressing the similarities and differences between them, the dating of the stories does not matter. It is only their intertextuality that is under consideration here.

In most of these Laurasian empires, two large rivers dominated the landscape and the lives of those who lived near them: the Tigris and the Euphrates. The word *Mesopotamia* itself means “land between the rivers” (“Mesopotamia”). This area was the center of the Fertile Crescent, known for its rich, moist soil which could produce abundant crops. Surpluses could be traded, which helped all the empires who settled in and overtook this spot to grow in both size and power. Mesopotamia owed its prosperity in large part to the flooding of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Rain was not always plentiful in the region; the only consistent source of fresh water came from these floods. The Mesopotamians relied on the water brought by the floods for drinking, for their livestock, and for watering their crops. The floods also attracted fish and waterfowl, both sources of food for the inhabitants.

Most importantly, the floods improved the soil in the area, allowing for more widespread agriculture. Most of the soil in the region was salty sand, not suitable for farming. The floods brought silt, which contained nutrients and minerals that helped crops to thrive. Fertile soil meant larger crop yields, which in turn meant more crops available to trade. As farming became increasingly profitable, farming settlements grew into villages, which then grew into cities. The new cities created a demand for new types of goods and services. Thus, Mesopotamia's economic growth depended, in large part, on the silt brought by the floods.

However, these floods were also problematic. The waters of the Tigris and Euphrates were essential to the life of the empires, but they also threatened them. During the flood time (March, April, and May), these rivers could carry forty times as much water as at their low stages ("Tigris and Euphrates Floods"). The flooding could also be inconsistent from year to year; one season's flood could have been ten or more times as great as that in another year. Early in the history of human occupation of the area, these floods flowed unchecked, and the rivers wrought destruction in terrible floods that inundated entire towns. It was not until the use of levees and irrigation dikes that the floods could be controlled to some degree. While these waterworks helped to control excessive flooding, they could not address the variability in the floods from year to year. Thus these cultures could not rely on a consistent renewal of the natural world; the world itself was unpredictable and even fickle.

These uncertain and likely catastrophic events would certainly play a role in the mythology of the peoples living in these areas, specifically the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Sumerians. This is likely why their flood stories play such a central role in their

collective mythologies. Such untamed and unpredictable natural events could only be caused by some superhuman entity, one with a grudge against humanity, one who was willing to wipe out entire civilizations. In the face of such obvious unchecked and destructive power, the people of these cultures could resort to one of two explanations: either those superhuman beings were truly malevolent, or humans had done something to cause such a drastic display of force. Given that these floods could also provide great benefits, these cultures saw that their deities were not inherently predisposed to hate humanity, for they had showered the humans with so many good things. So the only option, then, was to consider that humans must have done something egregious to call forth such a response from benevolent deities.

The Egyptians, however, had a different view of flooding. Every year in mid-July, the Nile River would rise and flood Egypt. The flood was so consistent that the ancient Egyptians knew when it would come and their prosperity depended on when the flood would come, and how much water it would yield (Feeney, 26). As with the Tigris and Euphrates, the flooding of the Nile made the land fertile. The Egyptians were quick to harness the potential of this land through the use of basin irrigation, and, rather than trade away most of their surplus agricultural products, they stored these surpluses for use in years when the flooding of the Nile was at a lesser volume. This made Egyptian agriculture the most secure and productive in the Near East and Laurasia, and by 3100 BCE the Nile Valley supported what was the world's first large nation state. Flood control, central administration, and providing for the possibility of scarcity separated the both the cultures of Egypt and those of the Fertile Crescent as well as their understanding of the destructiveness of floods.

The plots of the Laurasian flood myths, especially those of Babylon, Sumer, and Assyria, share many common traits, although some elements of each myth remain unique to that particular myth. One likely reason that these stories share the most in common is because these three empires made up Mesopotamia. Babylon was the southernmost part of Mesopotamia; Sumer was the middle portion, and Assyria made up the north.

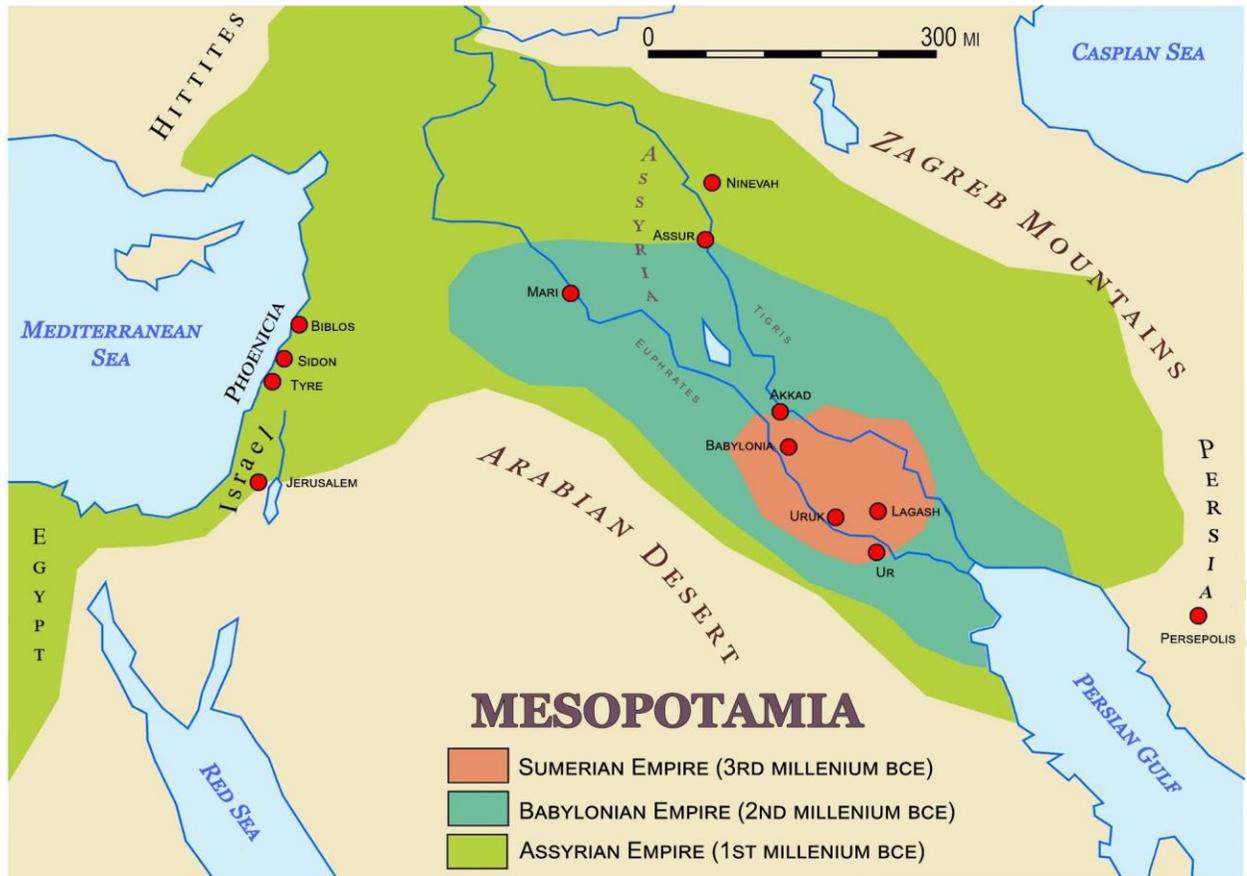


Figure 2: Map of Mesopotamia and Its Ancient Empires. (Vigara "Ancient Cities: Mesopotamia")

The Babylonian culture has the oldest extant recorded flood story, *The Epic of Atrahasis*. This text focuses on Atrahasis, a primeval human, who goes on a journey to search for eternal life. In this story, the lesser of the Babylonian gods are forced to do what the gods above them tell to. They get tired of this, so they rebel against the gods above them. Left without a servant class, the upper gods create humans to do their

bidding. However, the gods forget to set a limit on human age, and the human population increases, as does the noise they make. This human clamor disturbs the gods, so Enlil, Lord of the Air and Earth, Guardian of the Tablet of Destinies, decides to send a flood to wipe out humanity. However, Enki, Enlil's half-brother and the Lord of the Earth and Waters, who created the humans, does not wish this to happen. He visits Atrahasis in a dream and tells him of his half-brother's plan to destroy humanity. He commands Atrahasis to build a boat for himself, his family, and a pair of every kind of animal. Thus all aboard the boat survive a storm that lasts seven days and floods the entire earth. The gods then decide create a way to keep the human population in check so that their noise will never get so loud again.

The Assyrian story, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* offers a similar plot. Many scholars believe that the flood portion of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is a later addition to an already-extant text, in order to bring it into accord with *The Epic of Atrahasis* (Enns par. 9). In this story, Gilgamesh experiences the death of his only friend, Enkidu, a being created by the gods to be the equal of Gilgamesh. In the throes of his loss, Gilgamesh decides to set out on a journey to find eternal life. He has heard of a lone survivor of a great flood, a human who received immortality from the gods, Utnapishtim. When Gilgamesh meets this survivor, Utnapishtim tells him that Enki, the same creator god from *The Epic of Atrahasis*, had promised not to tell humans of the divine plot to destroy them. Enki instead whispered a warning to the walls of Utnapishtim's house, and the walls then relayed Enki's warning to Utnapishtim. Enki told the walls to tell Utnapishtim to build a boat in the shape of a cube, then gather up his family and friends, along with every kind of animal, in it. In this version, the flood lasts six days and nights. After the rains are

over, Utnapishtim sends out three different kinds of birds, searching for some place where the flood waters have receded. After the third bird does not return (which means that it found dry land), Utnapishtim leaves the boat and offers a sacrifice to the gods. The gods decide to grant immortality and a type of divine status to him and his wife, and Ishtar gives Utnapishtim her necklace as a sign of remembrance. However, Utnapishtim cannot pass this immortality along to any other human, including Gilgamesh, because it was a gift from the gods.

The Sumerian story, *Eridu Genesis*, is a combination of elements taken from the Babylonian and Assyrian tales. The hero of this story is called Ziusudra. Enki whispers to the walls of Ziusudra's house, as in the Assyrian version. The flood lasts seven days in this story as well. Ziusudra makes a sacrifice to the sun god, Utu, while he is still on the ship, and is thereby granted immortal life and the right to live in the same land as Utu. While the story of Ziusudra is essentially the same as the one that Utnapishtim relates to Gilgamesh, the Assyrian addition of an interlocutor as the central hero of the tale is absent.

This collection of flood stories contains two outliers. The first is the Egyptian flood narrative contained in a number of places, most importantly in *The Book of the Dead*. There are various versions of the myth, but this distillation pulls the common elements from them. The basic format of the tale says that Re sent his daughter, Sekhmet, down to earth, as a manifestation of his anger, to destroy a part of mankind. Re was growing older, and humans had begun mocking him, and disobeying his laws, thinking that he was too old and feeble to enforce his rule. In short, they no longer feared his wrath. Re only wanted a portion of mankind killed, but once Sekhmet began killing, she

would not stop. She killed so many people that the blood of mankind flooded the land, creating a large lake of blood which she drank from. Re reconsidered his anger, and came up with a plan to halt the killing, tricking Sekhmet into drunkenness and regret.

The second outlier is not geographic but structural because of the monotheism of the Israelites. The story of Noah in the book of Genesis details a world-wide flood. Noah and his family were the only righteous people left on earth while everyone else rebelled against Yahweh. Yahweh decided to flood the entire earth, but He was going to spare Noah and his family. He commanded Noah to build an ark with specific proportions and to put two of every kind of animal on that ark (along with many more animals to be used for sacrifices). Noah was obedient. The flood lasted forty days and forty nights. When the rains finished, Noah lets out a raven, but it comes back. Then Noah sends out a dove, but it comes back, too. After seven days, he sends the dove out again, and it comes back with an olive branch. He waits another week and sends out the dove, but it does not return so he knew there was solid ground. Then Noah, his family, and all the animals get off of the ark, and Noah sacrifices to the Lord. God sends a rainbow as a sign that He will never flood the entire earth again, but Noah and his family does not receive eternal life like many of the other survivors in the other Laurasian stories.

The impetus behind these floods varies in degrees from the pettiness of the gods to the vileness of the human race. The Egyptian story details that the flood happens because mankind was no longer respectful and obedient to Re. In the Babylonian tale, the gods decide to flood the earth to decrease the population because the noise the humans make disturbs the gods. The gods in the Assyrian version do not have a reason for the flood. They simply want to cause one. In *Eridu Genesis*, the tablet does not contain all

the original parts of the story, but scholars believe that it likely had to do with noise again. The Biblical account tells that humans were wicked and because Yahweh is just, He would not allow the wickedness to continue.

The characters within these stories share many similar traits and experiences. For instance, all of the main characters are men. This shows that all of the cultures valued men above women, seeing them as the more important of the two sexes. These men are commanded or receive a warning directly or indirectly by a deity to build some form of vessel in order to survive the storm. They then survive the flood, some of them with their family members and various animals, such as Atrahasis, Utnapishtim, and Noah. The survivors are given a gift, usually eternal life or even the ability to become a deity. Some may argue that Noah does not receive eternal life, but according to Hebrews 11:7, Noah's faith was equated to righteousness which allowed him to one day have eternal life after death (NRSV). The heroes also received signs on occasion from the gods. Ishtar gives Utnapishtim a necklace, and God gives Noah and his family the sign of a rainbow as symbols of eternal life or never flooding the world again.

The deities have some similarities as well. Although there are multiple gods in the stories of other cultures, the Hebrew culture only focuses on one God since they are a monotheistic culture. Some of the gods decide to flood the earth because of some fault of humanity, whether wickedness, or something more shallow, such as the noise they make. However, there is always another deity, or in the case of the Hebrew, the same one, that decides to save at least one person and sometimes their family. The Hebrew God is both merciful and just, allowing Him to both condemn and save. However, other cultures use multiple gods to explain different characteristics. The gods that help save humanity then

give orders to the humans on how to build the vessel in which they can survive. Some also give them orders about animals, while others have animals just arrive on the boat, likely sent by the gods. After the humans then survive the flood, the deities then bestow some sort of gift on the survivors. Although these cultures had their differences, many of their stories shared similar traits.

The relationships between the gods, or God, that rules over humanity are complicated and sometimes childish. The gods of the Babylonian story decide to send a flood on humans because the human population has grown so large that their noise disturbs the gods. In *Gilgamesh*, Utnapishtim tells him that “the hearts of the Great Gods moved them to inflict the flood” (“Tablet XI The Story of the Flood”). These gods did not even come up with a reason. They just simply wanted to. The gods of the Sumerian version are very similar to the gods found in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Enki tells Ziusudra that “the decision, that mankind is to be destroyed, has been made” (Lending “*Eridu Genesis*”). In the Bible, God sees that mankind is wicked and says, “I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created...for I am sorry that I have made them” (Gen. 6:7 NRSV). The majority of the deities then decide to kill mankind because they are either too loud or just from the desire to do so.

## THE FLOOD STORIES

The flood story that stand out the most from the others is the Egyptian flood narrative. Given their geographical location (outside of Laurasia), their experience with the regular flooding of the Nile, and their extensive water management procedures, it makes sense that this story does not completely follow the Laurasian myth standards. Re, the creator god, ruled over man. He took on the form of a man to be the first pharaoh and ruled for thousands of years, but since he was in the form of a man, he began to age. Mankind began to make fun of his old age and no longer took him seriously, not bothering to follow Re's rules. Re grew angry with the people so he called a meeting with the other gods he had created. Man knew nothing about this and so they continued to tease him. Re specifically sought counsel from Nun, the god in the form of the primeval waters. Nun was the only god older than Re, and had actually created Re. Nun told Re that he should send destruction in the form of his daughter (or, in some versions, the Eye of Re -- a manifestation of Re's anger), Sekhmet, upon mankind. All the other gods and goddesses agreed with Nun and encouraged Re to follow her advice. Re turned his eye upon man, and his daughter, Sekhmet, was formed. Mankind then fled and tried to run from Sekhmet, but she was too quick. Sekhmet took great pleasure in the killing and in the taste of the human blood she drank. Re called Sekhmet back to him to question her, and she told him of her killing. As Sekhmet continued to kill humans, however, Re began to pity mankind. Re tried then to stop her, but even he was unable to rein her in. He knew that the only way to stop her would be to trick her, so he sent messengers to the Nile to gather red ochre and told the women of his city, Heliopolis, to brew beer. Although Re's main purpose is to get Sekhmet drunk, beer was also used as a sacrificial item to the

gods. In order to satisfy Sekhmet, another item had to be offered, and beer was used in place of mankind. The messengers returned with the red ochre, and Re saw that the women had brewed seven thousand jars of beer. The other gods came down to Heliopolis to see how Re planned to trick Sekhmet. Re commanded the people of the city to mix the beers with the ochre. Then during the night, the people poured out the beer over the fields, covering the fields nine inches deep. In the morning, Sekhmet went out to look for men or creatures to kill, but she could not find any. All she could see was the red beer, which she believed to be the blood of those she had slain. She drank the beer and continued to drink, eventually becoming so drunk that she could no longer function or kill humans. She returned to Re that day without killing a single man. When she returned, Re changed her name to Hathor, and her nature was changed to one of peace. Re continued to rule, even though he grew old and knew that his time was passing and the time for younger gods to rule had come.

The epic of Atrahasis, the Babylonian flood story, begins after the gods are created but before the creation of man. The elder gods forced the younger gods to do all the work of creating and maintaining the earth, but after the younger gods finished digging the river beds of the Tigris and Euphrates, they rebelled against the older deities. Enki, the god of wisdom, suggests that they create a new being to do the work for them: humans. One of the gods, We-Ilu, known as “a god who has sense,” literally physical senses, not wisdom, sacrifices himself to be made into humans by Nintu, the mother goddess (Mark par. 4). Nintu add parts of We-Ilu, such as flesh and blood, into seven male and seven female human beings. The gods enjoy the relaxation they have now that humans have been created to do work, but soon, the human population grows and

becomes too noisy. The gods can no longer rest at ease with all the noise, and Enlil, the king of the gods decides that the human population has to be decreased. He decides to cast three plagues on mankind: drought, illness, and famine. However, Enki, the creator of mankind, tells humans how to end their suffering. Enlil, tired of Enki's games, asks the other gods to join him in sending a flood that will completely wipe out man. Enki warns "his servant, the kind and wise Atrahasis" (Mark par. 5) about the flood and tells him to build an ark and put two of every kind of animal on it. As the flood waters cover the earth, Nintu grieves the loss of the humans she helped create, and she longs "for beer in vain" (Mark par. 5). By longing for beer, this shows that Nintu misses the worship that she received from mankind. After the flood waters subside, Enlil and the gods regret their decision to flood the earth. They realize that they need humans, if only for the provision of their food (through human sacrifices). Enki reveals that Atrahasis has been spared, and even though Enlil had regretted his actions, he is still furious when he sees Atrahasis because Enki has tricked him again. Atrahasis brings the gods an offering, and they eat. The gods and this sacrifice calms Enlil down. However, they still need a way to address this problem of humanity. Rather than destroy humanity, Enki suggests the creation of a new group of creatures, where there will be women who cannot bear children, demons who will snatch infants away and cause miscarriages, and women consecrated to the gods who will have to remain virgins:

In addition, let there be a third category among the peoples,

Among the peoples women who bear and women who do not bear.

Let there be among the peoples the *Pastittu*-demon to snatch the baby from the  
 lap of her who bore it.

Establish *Ugbabtu*-women, *Entu*-women, and *Igisitu*-women and let them be taboo and so stop childbirth. (“Tablet III: Mankind Punished”)

Thus the overpopulation problem is solved. Atrahasis himself is then carried away to paradise to live apart from these new human beings whom Nintu then creates.

The story would have served, besides simply as entertainment, to explain human mortality, those misfortunes attendant on childbirth, even the death of one's child. Since overpopulation and the resultant noise had once brought down the terrible deluge which almost destroyed humanity, the loss of one's child could, perhaps, be more easily borne with the knowledge that such a loss helped to preserve the natural order of things and kept peace with the gods. The myth would have served the same basic purpose which such stories always have: the assurance that individual human suffering has some greater purpose or meaning and is not simply random, senseless pain.

Although *The Epic of Gilgamesh* includes various stories regarding the great adventures of the title characters, the flood story remains one of the most widely known and taught among them. Unlike the other stories where the gods have various and sometimes petty reasons for destroying mankind, Utnapishtim does not provide Gilgamesh with the reasoning of the gods in sending a flood. He says “The hearts of the Great Gods moved them to inflict the Flood” (“Tablet XI: The Story of the Flood”). One of the gods, Ea, promised along with the other gods to not reveal their plan to mankind. Instead, Ea whispers the plan to the reed wall of Utnapishtim’s house and reveals the plan of the gods to Utnapishtim. Although Ea starts by addressing the walls of the house, he quickly moves on to address the “man of Shuruppak, son of Ubartutu” (“Tablet XI: The

Story of the Flood”). Ea does not keep to the oath that the gods made. Instead, he directly breaks it in order to give Utnapishtim the directions he needs in order to survive the flood. Utnapishtim and his team of craftsmen get busy making the boat in the shape of a cube. When the flood finally comes, Utnapishtim loads up his family, the animals, and his craftsmen into his boat. The flood is so powerful and destructive that the gods are even frightened by it. Ishtar, the mother goddess, weeps for the destruction of humanity, wishing that she had not agreed to the flood. Many of the other gods feel the same way and weep with her. For six days and seven nights, the flood continues to rage, but on the seventh day, the flood finally begins to calm. Utnapishtim looks out and weeps at the sight of daylight and the human beings who have been covered by the clay stirred up by the flood. He looks around for land and finally finds some. Finally, their boat lands on Mt. Nimush, and they sit there for six days to make sure their boat is lodged and will no longer move. On the seventh day, Utnapishtim sends out a dove, but it comes back to the boat because it does not find a place to land. The next day, he sends out a swallow, and it also returns to him. On the eighth day on Mt. Nimush, Utnapishtim sends out a raven, and it does not return to him. When he knows it is safe to go out, he sends out all of the animals and sacrifices a sheep to the gods. He also pours different herbs and spices in seven different bowls and burns them. The gods smell the sacrifices and come down. Beleti comes down first, and she says that she will remember the sacrifices just like the lapis lazuli necklace around her neck. She tells the other gods to come to the sacrifices and to never forget this deed of Utnapishtim, but she forbids Enlil from coming because he was the one who had the idea for the flood in the beginning. However, Enlil comes down anyway and becomes enraged when he sees the boat. He realizes that a human

managed to survive, and he begins to yell at the other gods. He wonders how Utnapishtim survived, and Ninurta answers, “Who else but Ea could devise such a thing?” (“Tablet XI: The Story of the Flood”). Ea tells Enlil that he should not be mad at him but at himself because he was wrong to send the flood. Ea tells Enlil that he did not actually reveal the secret to Utnapishtim but that he sent it in a dream. Enlil’s temper is cooled, and he goes to into the boat, takes Utnapishtim and his wife by the hand, and leads them out of the boat. Then they kneel, and he touches their forehead and blesses them, saying, “Previously Utnapishtim was a human being./But now let Utnapishtim and his wife become like us,/ the gods” (“Tablet XI: The Story of the Flood”). Then Enlil commands that Utnapishtim and his wife must now live at the mouth of the rivers since they have been made immortal.

The Sumerian story, *Eridu Genesis*, tells the story of Ziusudra. As the word “genesis” implies, this story begins with the creation of man. It goes on to give a list of the kings and cities that ruled since the beginning of mankind. Enlil, the same god in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, decides to flood the world to destroy men. Although the portion of the text that included the reason for the flood was destroyed, most scholars believe the reason was the noise that men created. All the gods have to promise to not tell humans about their decision. Ziusudra, the king of Shuruppak and a priest, is a seer, meaning he has visions. In a vision, Enki comes to him and show him the council the gods hold and the decision they make in order to destroy humanity. He realizes the danger that people are in. Even though Ziusudra already knows what is happening, Enki comes down and explains it to him further. Enki commands him to build a boat, and although it is not specified the kind or amount, animals are also brought with him. The flood lasts seven

days and nights. Once the flood stops, Ziusudra gets off the boat along with the animals and offers a sacrifice to the gods. The sun god, Utu, comes down to see the sacrifice and is pleased, but Enlil is furious that a human has survived. Enki gives a speech, and Ziusudra is made immortal. He then moves to the land of Dilmun in the east where Utu first rises in the morning.

The flood story found in Genesis begins in chapter six, when humanity begins to multiply. Yahweh sees that the humans are wicked and is sorry He made them. He decides to wipe out mankind because of their evil ways, except for Noah, who is righteous. Yahweh tells Noah of His plan to destroy everything that lives on the earth. Then he gives him specific directions about how to build a boat to survive the flood. Yahweh tells Noah that He will make a covenant with him, that even though all other life will be destroyed, Noah and his family will survive. Yahweh then commands Noah to bring seven breeding pairs of all clean animals, and at least one pair of all other animals, onto the boat, along with food for his family and the animals. Noah does everything that he is commanded to do; when all is done Yahweh tells Noah to enter the ark with all of his household. He says that in seven days He will send the rains and floods, and they will last forty days and forty nights. Noah is six hundred years old at this time. After Noah, his family, and the animals are all on the ark, God shuts them in. The rains continue for the forty days and nights, but the water stays at the same level for 150 days. God remembers Noah and his family so He causes the water to recede, and at the beginning of the tenth month, the tops of the mountains could be seen. Forty days later, Noah sends out a raven that continued to fly until there was a place for it to land. Then Noah sends out a dove which returns to him because it has no place to land. A week later, he sends

out the dove again. The dove comes back in the evening, bringing back an olive branch, showing him that land was starting to return. After another week, Noah sends out the dove again which does not return to him. Then God tells Noah that it is safe for him, his family, and the animals to exit the boat. Noah builds an altar and offers sacrifices to God of every clean animal and bird. Then all the animals went out into the earth pair by pair to populate it. When God smells the sacrifices of Noah and finds them pleasing, He promises to never “curse the ground because of humankind...or destroy every living creature” (Gen. 8:21 NRSV). God blesses Noah and his sons and tell them to ““be fruitful and multiply”” (Gen. 9:1 NRSV). He tells them that all the animals will fear them, and that all plants and clean animals will be food for them. God then makes a covenant with Noah, his sons, and all of the animals that there will never be a flood to destroy the earth or all creatures. The sign that God gives of this covenant is the rainbow.

## THE DEITIES

The deities in these stories range from the petty to the holy. In the Egyptian story, the main two gods are Re and Sekhmet; however, Nun is also featured. Nun takes on the form of the primeval waters, the substance that creates things. He is clearly older than Re because he created Re. Re, although he is not one of the original gods because he was created by Nun, is the creator-god of the Earth, and the main divinity recognized by the Egyptian people. Unlike the original gods, he is not ageless, as he begins to appear like an old man in this story. This idea of a god who is susceptible to the ravages of time is a concept not often found among the pantheons of other religions. The growing disrespect shown him by humans pricks Re's pride (another quality that is more anthropomorphic than divine). His pride, and the vengeance that flows from it, are manifested in Sekhmet, who is sometimes positioned as "The Eye of Re" in order to signify that she is a part of Re himself made flesh. Sekhmet is clearly a very powerful goddess because, once she warms to her task, even Re cannot stop her from killing humans. She has to be tricked, making Re an early equivalent to the trickster deity which appears in many mythologies throughout the world. This shows that, although she is powerful, her unfamiliarity with humans and the earth as a whole (and even, perhaps, her lack of intelligence) leaves her vulnerable to deceit. But this inability to stop doing what she is doing also reflects on Re, who has lost control over his emotions, and is now subject to them rather than master of them.

In *The Epic of Atrahasis*, Enki is the first god that readers encounter. He is the god of wisdom, and he suggests the creation of humans in order to do the work for the gods. Enki is also a form of the trickster god because he continually foils Enlil's plans by

telling humans, or “accidentally” revealing to them, how they can survive the various curses that Enlil places upon them. Enki is also the first of the Babylonian deities to show compassion because he makes Atrahasis aware of the flood so that he can survive. After the flood subsides, Enki again shows himself to be the creative problem-solver by suggesting that a new group of creatures be created in order to decrease the human population. Enlil, the king of the gods, gets tired of Enki constantly saving humans, and he suggests a flood for the destruction of mankind because he finds mankind to be too noisy. However, Enlil shows remorse along with the other gods when he believes that he has completely wiped out mankind. When he sees that humans have survived the flood he caused, Enlil becomes enraged, showing that he is easily offended and insecure about his power over Enki, before the other gods convince him that it is a good thing that some humans were spared. Enlil has never had to consider the consequences of his actions before and realizes that he would have regretted if all humanity had been killed. Other gods that are featured in this story include We-Ilu and Nintu. We-Ilu represents the physical senses and appears to be selfless since he is willing to sacrifice himself in order to create humans. Nintu is the mother goddess, making it strange that she did not protest the destruction of her “children.” However, every mother gets fed up with noise from time to time until she realizes how much she loves her children. When the flood starts, Nintu instantly regrets it and wishes that her children had not been killed. Enlil and Enki work at cross-purposes to one another, showing the sides of judgment and mercy.

In *Gilgamesh*, where multiple gods desire the destruction of humanity, their justification for wanting this is not even revealed; they are inscrutable to humans. They simply feel the need or desire to send a catastrophic event on humanity, and act upon that

desire. The dichotomy of the god of judgment and the god of mercy appears again in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Enlil keeps his name, but the trickster god is called Ea in this narrative. Although all the gods promise not to tell humans about the flood, Ea finds a sneaky way to reveal the plans to Utnapishtim by telling the reed walls of his house. Ea is clearly creative; however, he is also outright rebellious, deceiving, and does not keep his promises, because he goes on to talk directly to Utnapishtim. Ea has a reputation among the gods, as well, for this sort of trickery because they immediately assume that it was his doing when they find Utnapishtim and his family alive. Ea is also extremely convincing and good at blaming others. He quickly turns the blame around on Enlil and says that he did not actually break his promise because the plan for the flood was revealed in a dream.

Enlil remains the same in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* as he did in *The Epic of Atrahasis*. Although it is not made known at the beginning, one of the other gods reveals that Enlil is the one who had the idea for the flood in the first place, and he is the one that must therefore take the blame. Enlil also does not take orders from any of the other gods because even though he is forbidden to come to the sacrifice of Utnapishtim, he still comes. This also shows that he is willing to compete for the sacrificial spoils. He also is quick to anger because as soon as he even sees the boat, without seeing Utnapishtim, he is outraged. He is also quick to blame others and is apparently not discerning about the character of the other gods because someone else suggests that it must have been Ea. After Ea blames Enlil instead, Enlil quickly shows remorse and is even the one to gather Utnapishtim and his wife, bless them with immortality, and lead them to their new home. The other gods that are featured in this story are women. Ishtar, the mother goddess, regrets the flood because it has killed humans. Beleteli is the first goddess to come down

to Utnapishtim's sacrifice, and she is bold and aware of her power because she forbids Enlil not to come to the sacrifice. She also says she will remember this so she clearly respects humans and their efforts to please the gods. The last goddess, Ninurta, is clearly more observant than Enlil because she is the one that tells him that Ea had to be the one to save Utnapishtim. Enlil is depicted as even more clueless in this version, and he seems much less powerful since many of the other gods talk down to him and make him appear foolish.

The deities in *Eridu Genesis* are much like those in *The Epic of Atrahasis* and *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Enlil remains the same petty god as in the Babylonian story by deciding to flood the earth to destroy humans, likely because they were making too much noise. He also is infuriated, again, when he learns that a human has survived. However, in this text, he is not rebuked or made calm. Enki is also present and remains the deity that goes behind the backs of the others. Only this time he does it by showing a vision of the gods meeting and discussing the flood. This likely means that he was not present on this occasion then and did not have any say in the flood. Enki also gives Ziusudra guidance on how to survive the flood. Enki later makes Ziusudra immortal. The only other deity present is Utu, the sun god, who is the first to learn of Ziusudra's survival because he is the first to arrive at the sacrifice that Ziusudra makes. Utu clearly has no issue that a human survived because after Ziusudra is made immortal, he goes to live in the land where Utu first rises in the morning.

Yahweh, in the flood story contained in the sixth through the ninth chapters of Genesis, stands out the most from the other gods, especially since all the other stories present multiple deities, while the story of Noah only consists of one. In this text,

Yahweh is righteous, and that is why He causes the flood, because the people are so wicked. Judaic monotheism ascribes a number of traits and characteristics to Yahweh so His characterization is multi-faceted. Yahweh is both the one who decides to send the flood and the one who saves humanity from it. He recognizes that wickedness should have a punishment, and righteousness should be rewarded, and must perform both of these functions himself. Yahweh also spares more animals than other gods, showing that He cares for his creation; He is deeply disappointed in the actions of humans, but also seeks to reward faithfulness and righteousness. Yahweh floods the whole earth, and after the earth is completely flooded for 150 days, causes the waters to recede. The text states that Yahweh "remembered Noah" and then caused the waters to recede, so this action is motivated by concern for the preservation and reward of the righteous. His care is also manifested when he specifically gives Noah directions to come out of the ark only when it is safe to do so. Yahweh then makes covenants and promises to Noah and his family to never flood the entire earth again. The flood story of Genesis 6-9 shows the rewards of righteousness and the punishments of wickedness.

Several of the flood stories share many common traits among the deities involved. They all have a god that sends out some form of punishment on human beings either through another god, Sekhmet, who inevitably causes a flood or through an actual flood. Re and Yahweh cause the flood because of human disobedience and wickedness. However, Enlil is much more petty than them, killing off man because they are too noisy for him. However, there is also a god that always saves a portion of humanity from death. Re saves the very people he was trying to kill through trickery, just as Enki and Ea do. However, Yahweh saves Noah and his family as a reward. Enki also chooses to save

Atrahasis because he is a faithful follower of Enki. The only other time this occurs is when Enki purposefully chooses Atrahasis because he is faithful to him. Nintu and Ishtar, the mother goddesses of *The Epic of Atrahasis* and *The Epic of Gilgamesh* also both grieve over the loss of humanity and regret the flood. Whereas the other floods just eventually end, this one specifically ends because Yahweh cares about the amount of time that Noah and his family have to spend on the ark. Yahweh also floods the whole earth, but it does not specify how much was flooded by the gods of the other stories. Yahweh stands out among the other gods in these myths. In other religions, they had a god to represent different human traits, both good and evil. However, in Israelite culture, they were monotheistic, meaning they had one God, and He only has good and righteous qualities while the devil and his demons are evil and wicked. Enlil and Enki both give the surviving humans immortality while Yahweh and Beleteli both promise to the man who survived the flood that they will remember them and the event of the flood. Although Beleteli does not make any promises to Utnapishtim like Yahweh does to Noah, this still implies that she will remember his sacrifice as a type of favor that she will later repay to him. In *Atrahasis* and the Egyptian story, gods require beer in place of humankind. Re uses it to satisfy Sekhmet's need for human blood as an alternate sacrifice, and in *Atrahasis*, Nintu, the mother goddess, longs for beer when humans are killed by the flood, partially because she is grieving the loss of mankind and because she no longer receives the sacrifices that they offered to her. As in the other stories, all the gods enjoy the sacrifices given to them by humans. The various deities of these flood stories showcase the values of their society and, in some cases, how humans should behave if they want to live in peace with these supernatural beings.

## THE HUMANS

None of the humans in these stories have control over their punishment or salvation. In the Egyptian flood story, the humans have even less; they have no personal identities. There is no human character that is singled out or named in this story. They are all grouped into one mass of people, all turning away from Re and all trying to escape the wrath of Sekhmet. There is no indication that certain people are being spared while others are not. People seem to be destroyed at random, based on their proximity to Sekhmet. Their change of heart is also collective. When they listen to Re and obey him in brewing the beer he will use to trick Sekhmet, they demonstrate both a communal repentance and the desire to work together to achieve a common goal. As a group they eventually come to recognize their situation, and the fact that their continued existence is solely due to the mercy of Re. They choose to amend their ways, and thus return to a more reverential stance toward Re.

In the Babylonian story, Atrahasis and his family are spared. But they are not selected at random. He is chosen because he is faithful to the gods, especially Enki. He is also said to be a wise man and is clearly obedient to the will of the gods, as well, since he follows all of Enki's instructions. He reinforces his faithfulness by immediately sacrificing to the gods when he survives the flood and returns to dry land. Atrahasis is humble, and thus does not ask a favor of the gods. He does not request eternal life; it is given to him freely by the gods, demonstrating that he does not see himself as someone who is especially entitled or exalted.

*Gilgamesh* combines both of the previous traditions in the person of Utnapishtim. No reason is given as to why he is chosen to survive the flood. We may see his selection

as something akin to the randomness of survival in the Egyptian story. However, in building the vessel that will eventually save him and his household he shows himself to be obedient to the gods, because he follows the instructions of Ea. This characteristic aligns him with Atrahasis. Utnapishtim is set apart from the flood survivors in other texts through his meticulous attention to detail in constructing the vessel in which he will ride out the flood. In a tablet (Tablet XI) that takes a little over 200 lines to tell this entire story, over 30 lines are devoted to the preparation of the cube in which he and his family will survive. The design of this vessel is his own, and even years after the event he can still recall several arcane measurements and the quantities of building materials he used. At a structural level, the curious specificity of many of the details seems to exist in order to pre-empt various questions from any audience for this work. After the flood, Utnapishtim reaffirms his obedience to the gods, when he immediately offers sacrifices to them upon his return to dry land.

In *Eridu Genesis*, Ziusudra is the king of the city of Shuruppak, and he is a seer, meaning he has visions from the gods. He is clearly a political and spiritual leader among the people. He has a vision from Enki about the flood, and Enki comes down to to explain the coming events to him. His prophetic gift signals him as one who is favored by the gods (and perhaps even respected by them). His elevated status is confirmed when Enki personally bestows Ziusudra with his presence. Ziusudra continues to live in obedience to the will of the gods, and offers sacrifices to them.

Noah is a righteous family head who leads those in his charge in a manner that is pleasing to Yahweh. He is chosen by Yahweh to survive the flood because of this righteousness. He is an obedient man and follows exactly the incredibly specific

instructions that Yahweh gives him. No other flood story, not even Utnapishtim's oddly specific memory, has such a detailed description of the vessel in which the humans are saved. Yahweh is meticulous in explaining the construction of that vessel, and Noah is precise in his obedient labors. Here the ingenuity of Utnapishtim is given not to Noah (who merely works to his blueprint), but to Yahweh, signifying that the wisdom of the divine being far exceeds the wisdom of the humans. The details of Noah's disembarkment from the Ark are also presented at a level of specificity not seen in the other narratives. Noah's initiative in sending out four birds over a span of four weeks, to scout for signs of renewal on the earth before disembarking, is a nod to his own wisdom and ingenuity. Noah reaffirms his faithfulness and obedience by offering a sacrifice of clean animals to Yahweh immediately upon returning to dry land. Noah is also clearly special, because Yahweh responds to this by creating three covenants with Noah and his descendants.

The flood myths that focus on individual humans share a great deal of common material. The Egyptian story, unique both in its dating and in its communal focus, stands apart from these other stories in many ways. Nevertheless, there are some linkages between all of these tales. The human characters of these stories share a number of traits. They all face trials of various kinds. Even the nameless human characters of the Egyptian flood story suffer, just as do all the named humans of the other stories. All of the humans who survive in these narratives also are obedient, eventually, to the gods that command them. The Egyptian people are initially disobedient, but eventually change, after experiencing the wrath of Sekhmet. However, in the other tales, the overwhelming majority of the humans--those who are disobedient, or too noisy, or just pesky--do not have the opportunity to repent and reconsider their ways. For them, punishment is

immediate and final. Thus, in all the individual stories, all humans die, except for the survivors and their families and animals. Only a portion of humanity is killed in the Egyptian story. The individual stories also invert the use of sacrifice from their Egyptian model. The Egyptian people offer sacrifices to use sacrifice to stop the divine being from destroying them. Sacrifice there is petition and supplication. But the humans in the remaining stories offer their sacrifices in thanksgiving. They are not asking to be spared, for they have already been so. Rather, they are expressing their gratitude for a beneficence already bestowed. The final differentiation between the individual stories and the Egyptian is that in the individual stories humans are not the only thing preserved from the flood. Atrahasis, Utnapishtim, Ziusudra, and Noah all bring animals with them into their vessels, and thus save the Earth itself from lifelessness.

Within the stories focused on individuals there are also common narrative movements. All four men save the animals of the earth, preserving its ability to sustain human life. Utnapishtim and Noah both send out birds before exiting the ark to make sure that the land is dry and thus habitable. Atrahasis and Ziusudra do not save any of their family members (although they both save animals). Utnapishtim and Noah both bring their families onto the boat, and Utnapishtim also includes the workmen who created his floating cube. Utnapishtim and Noah seem fascinated by the engineering behind their vessels, while Atrahasis and Ziusudra barely mention their means of preservation. Utnapishtim and Noah both end up moored on a mountain when their boat lands. Atrahasis, Ziusudra, and Noah are all chosen by the gods to be preserved for a specific reason. Atrahasis is a faithful servant, Ziusudra is a king and a seer, and Noah is a righteous man who fears Yahweh. These men, sole survivors of this calamity, display the

characteristics valued by the cultures that created their stories. While the traits of faithfulness, self-control, and righteousness might seem to be both generic and universally praised, they are particularly useful in the service of the trait that ties them all together. These three traits are all necessary in order to live one's life in such a way that you do not merely avoid the wrath of the gods, but you also demonstrate the potential of humanity that the gods had in mind when humans were conceived.

## THE FLOODS

The flood of the Egyptian story comes from the blood shed by Sekhmet. The flood then is not the initial punishment but a second-hand consequence of the initial punishment of Sekhmet. She is the one causing the flood, not Re. There is no information on how long the flood lasts or takes to dry up because there is no information on how long Sekhmet takes out Re's vengeance on others. The flood of blood is stopped through Re's trickery by getting Sekhmet drunk and regaining his control over her.

In *The Epic of Atrahasis*, the flood is decided on by Enlil after he has tried several others ways to reduce the noisy humans created by Nintu. After Enki continually helps humans survive the different plagues, Enlil finally decides on a flood and makes all the gods promise to not tell humans about it. There is no information on how long the flood lasts or how long it takes for the flood to dry up, but the gods apparently allow this to happen naturally.

Enlil suggests the flood in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, and all the other gods agree to it and promise not to tell humans. Utnapishtim builds a boat in the shape of a cube in order to However, when the flood comes, it is more powerful than the gods expect, and it frightens them with its power. The flood lasts six days and seven nights. On the seventh day, the flood calms, and Utnapishtim waits for the flood waters to recede. The boat lodges on Mt. Nimush, and Utnapishtim and his family wait another six days and seven nights. On the seventh, eighth, and ninth days, Utnapishtim sends out a bird in order to see how dry the land is. The last bird does not come back so he knows it must be safe to come out. This flood must last about two and a half weeks then: a week of flooding, and a week and a half of receding.

*Eridu Genesis* contains very little information about its flood. Enlil again decides a flood is needed, most likely because humans were too noisy, and Ziusudra builds a boat with instructions from Enki. The flood lasts a week, but it is unclear whether this is the amount of the time that the flood is rising or both rising and receding. Ziusudra eventually disembarks when it is safe.

The flood of Genesis is very specific. Yahweh decides to send a flood because mankind is wicked, but He spares Noah because of his righteousness. Yahweh gives Noah very specific instructions on how to survive the flood and how to build the ark, such as the type of wood and the measurements of the ark. Because of Yahweh's command, Noah, his family, and the animals spend a week on the ark before the flood comes. It rains for forty days and forty nights, and then the waters stay at the same level for 150 days. After this amount of time, God causes the waters to recede in order for Noah and his family to get off the boat. Noah sends out a series of birds for four weeks to see if there is enough dry land for his family and him to get off the ark. After the last bird leaves and does not return, God tells Noah that it is finally safe for him to get off the boat.

The Egyptian flood story stands out from the other floods because it is a flood of blood, rather than water. The Egyptian flood also only kills a portion of humanity, but all of the other floods kill all of humanity, except for the select few or one chosen by the gods. The Egyptian flood and the flood in *Atrahasis* are not given a specific time range while the floods that Utnapishtim, Ziusudra, and Noah all have a time span, even if it is not completely clear. The flood of *Gilgamesh* is about two and a half weeks. The flood in *Eridu Genesis* lasts a week, and the flood in Genesis lasts about 371 days (Hodge). The

length of the flood in Genesis lasts much longer than any of the other floods. The Biblical flood covers the entire earth while the other floods do not specify how much land they cover. Only in the Biblical flood are there certain rules that have to be followed when building the ark in order to survive, while the other stories the human just has to come up with some means of survival. The floods, although different in ways, show how these cultures feared this specific natural disaster and saw it as a punishment from their deities.

## THE CONSEQUENCES

In each flood narrative, the floods of the gods bring various consequences to the human characters they have impacted. In the Egyptian tale, the people who survived Sekhmet's wrath are allowed continued existence, and they also return to their former obedience to Re. Re transforms Sekhmet into Hathor, a more peaceful goddess, and he continues to rule over the Egyptian people. However, Re also accepts the fact that he is growing old and should let a younger god take his place. These results show how the Egyptians believed that obedience to the gods in the beginning will save one much trouble in the end.

In *The Epic of Atrahasis*, the gods regret their decision to kill all of humanity because there are no more humans left to make sacrifices to them, showing them to be selfish in their thinking. When Atrahasis appears, the majority of the gods are thrilled because the first thing he does is sacrifice to them. They give him eternal life in paradise after surviving the flood because of his continued faithfulness. The gods remove him from human society, because Atrahasis is different from all the other humans that Nintu creates after the flood. Enki also has the idea to create several new kinds of beings in order to limit the amount of people born and thereby limit the noise they can make. He suggests making women who are unable to bear children, demons who will steal babies from their homes, and women who consecrate themselves to be virgins belonging to the gods. The Babylonian peoples likely used this story to explain why certain people were unable to have children, children dying at a young age, and why it was necessary to remain celibate for the gods.

In *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Utnapishtim first releases all the animals from the boat when he knows it is safe to come out. Then he sacrifices a sheep to the gods, and because of this, Beleteli says she will remember this, showing that she will have favor on him in the future. Neither Utnapishtim nor his wife ask for any reward beyond their survival. However, the initially enraged Enlil brings Utnapishtim and his wife out of the boat and gives them eternal life. He says they will have to live where the mouths of the rivers meet because of their immortality. Although this eternal life is considered a blessing in most stories, Utnapishtim later reveals to Gilgamesh it is not great because of the isolation they feel. but they are made immortal, a gift bestowed by Enlil. However, immortality may not be as desirable an outcome as one might think it, since Utnapishtim later tells Gilgamesh that he does not enjoy his immortality, since he and his wife must live at the mouth of the rivers, away from the rest of the future human race.

In *Eridu Genesis*, Ziusudra and all the animals exit the boat after the flood, and Ziusudra makes a sacrifice. Utu, the sun god, is pleased with the sacrifice, but Enlil remains enraged that a human has lived. Enki gives Ziusudra immortality, even though he does not ask for it. Ziusudra has to live where the sun god rises, land of Dilmun. Dilmun was a legendary place, far away on the edges of the earth. It was later identified with present-day Bahrain (Kramer 45). But at the time of this text, it was associated with the god of the sun, Utu, and was the place where he made his abode, and from which he rose every morning. *Eridu Genesis* shows immortality to be a blessing.

The Biblical account of Noah shows Noah, his family, and all of the animals surviving the flood when Yahweh tells them that it is safe for them to disembark. He offers a sacrifice to Yahweh, showing thanks for survival. Although Yahweh does not

bestow eternal life on Noah and his family, He does bless them and make covenants with them. Yahweh tells them to be fruitful and multiply so that the human population can grow again. Noah then becomes the ancestral father of all humanity from this point forward. Yahweh makes several covenants with Noah and his family including that the ground will no longer be cursed because of man and that never again will He kill every living thing. Yahweh also tells Noah that animals will fear him and that from now on he can kill and eat the clean animals. Finally, Yahweh promises to never flood the whole earth again and uses a rainbow as the sign of this covenant. This story shows the intimate relationship between Yahweh and Noah.

The consequences of the flood vary from story to story. In the Egyptian story, the flood results in a return to obedience while the humans of the other narratives remain obedient before and after the flood. The Egyptians do not offer a sacrifice to Re like Atrahasis, Utnapishtim, Ziusudra, and Noah do. The Egyptian people as well as Noah also do not receive eternal life from the gods like Atrahasis, Utnapishtim, and Ziusudra do. Noah and the Egyptians also do not have to move to a new land as the three heroes of the Mesopotamian stories do. However, Yahweh makes covenants with Noah, and Beleteli tells Utnapishtim that she will remember his sacrifice. However, all the other gods do not make such personal promises to the humans. The Egyptians and Noah repopulate the earth, but in the Mesopotamian stories, the gods just recreate humanity but with some changes, such as in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. These various narratives show, through the consequences of the floods, the characteristics of each culture's deities and how certain characteristics were rewarded.

## CONCLUSION

These five Laurasion flood stories share many similar traits and many distinctions. The idea of a flood was clearly important in all of these cultures and show the religious significance of this event. Some of these cultures used their flood narrative to explain certain things in the world around them, such as infant mortality through *The Epic of Atrahasis*. Others told their flood story as a testimony of their God, such as the Israelites. These five stories also do not complete the flood stories. Almost every culture has one, showing that there likely was a worldwide flooding event. Some of these cultures could have also influenced the flood narratives of others, specifically those in close proximity, such as the three Mesopotamian stories. The various deities of the stories reveal traits and qualities that the people respected or that the people wished to emulate. The human characters serve as lessons for the people reading the stories so that they will be obedient to the gods in order to avoid disaster and receive blessing. The Egyptian flood story served to remind the people why they should obey the gods. The *Epic of Atrahasis* explains why humans die, specifically as children. The *Epic of Gilgamesh* shows that rewards come to those who obey the gods and show that immortality was both valued and feared in this culture. *Eridu Genesis* shows how the gods favor those in power and those who serve them. The Biblical flood account in Genesis shows the characteristics of Yahweh and how he blesses those who are righteous and obedient to Him by giving them a personal relationship with Him and making covenant with them; it also shows how Yahweh is just and must punish evil. Flood narratives play an important role in the intersection of literature and history and show how cultures use these

narratives, both oral and written, to explain the world around them as well as serve as their religious texts.

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## Appendix: The Full Texts

### *The Epic of Atrahasis*

Translated by B.R. Foster

#### Atrahasis' Dream Explained

[i.b35] Enlil committed an evil deed against the people.

[i.c11] Atrahasis made ready to speak,  
and said to his lord:  
“Make me know the meaning of the dream.  
let me know, that I may look out for its consequence.”

[i.c15] Enki made ready to speak,  
and said to his servant:  
“You might say, ‘Am I to be looking out while in the bedroom?’  
Do you pay attention to message that I speak for your:

[i.c20] ‘Wall, listen to me!  
Reed wall, pay attention to all my words!

[i.c23] Flee the house, build a boat,  
forsake possessions, and save life.

[i.c25] The boat which you build  
... be equal ...  
...  
...

[i.c29] Roof her over like the Apsu,  
[i.c30] so that the sun shall not see inside her.  
Let her be roofed over fore and aft.  
The gear should be very strong,  
the pitch should be firm, and so give the boat strength.  
I will shower down upon you later

[i.c35] a windfall of birds, a spate of fishes.”  
He opened the water clock and filled it,

[i.c37] he told it of the coming of the seven-day deluge.

#### Atrahasis and the Elders

Atrahasis received the command.  
He assembled the Elders at his gate.

[i.c40] Atrahasis made ready to speak,

[i.c41] and said to the Elders:  
“My god does not agree with your god,  
Enki and Enlil are constantly angry with each other.  
They have expelled me from the land.

[i.c45] Since I have always revered Enki,  
he told me this.

[i.c47] I can not live in your city  
Nor can I set my feet on the earth of Enlil.  
I will dwell with my god in the depths.

[i.c50] This he told me: ...”

## Construction of the Ark

[ii.10] The Elders ...

[ii.11] The carpenter carried his axe, the reedworker carried his stone, the rich man  
carried the pitch, the poor man brought the materials needed.

*[Lacuna of about fifteen lines; the word Atrahasis can be discerned.]*

## Boarding of the Ark

Bringing ...

[ii.30] whatever he had ...  
Whatever he had ...  
Pure animals he slaughtered, cattle ...  
Fat animals he killed. Sheep ...  
he choose and and brought on board.

[ii.35] An abundance of birds flying in the heavens,  
the cattle and the ... of the cattle god,

[ii.37] the creatures of the steppe,  
... he brought on board...

[ii.40] he invited his people

... to a feast

[ii.42] ... his family was brought on board.  
While one was eating an another was drinking,

[ii.45] he went in and out; he could not sit, could not kneel,  
for his heart was broken, he wat retching gall.

## Departure

The outlook of the weather changed.  
Adad began to roar in the clouds.

[ii.50] The god they heard, his clamor.

[ii.51] He brought pitch to seal his door.  
By the time he had bolted his door,  
Adad was roaring in the clouds.  
The winds were furious as he set forth,

[ii.55] He cut the mooring rope and released the boat.

*[Lacuna]*

## The Great Flood

[iii.5] ... the storm  
... were yoked  
Anzu rent the sky with his talons,  
He ... the land

[iii.10] and broke its clamor like a pot.

[iii.11] ... the flood came forth. Its power came upon the peoples like a battle,

[iii.13] one person did not see another, they could not recognize each other in the  
catastrophe.

[iii.15] The deluge belowed like a bull,  
The wind resounded like a screaming eagle.  
The darkness was dense, the sun was gone,  
... like flies.

[iii.20] the clamor of the deluge.

*[Lacuna. The gods find themselves hungry because there are no farmers left and sacrifices are no longer brought. When they discover that Atrahasis has survived, they make a plan to make sure that the noise will remain within limits: they invent childbirth, infant mortality, and celibacy.]*

[iii.45] Enki made ready to speak,  
and said to Nintu the birth goddess:  
“You, birth goddess, creatress of destinies,  
establish death for all peoples!

[iii.d1] “Now then, let there be a third woman among the people,  
among the people are the woman who has borne  
and the woman who has not borne.  
Let there be also among the people the pasittu: *[a demon]*  
[iii.d5] let her snatch the baby from the lap who bore it.  
And establish high priestesses and priestesses,  
let them be taboo [celibate], and so cut down childbirth.

## *Epic of Gilgamesh, tablet XI*

Translated by Maureen Gallery Kovacs

[11.1] Gilgamesh spoke to Ut-napishtim, the Faraway:  
 “I have been looking at you,  
 but your appearance is not strange - you are like me!  
 You yourself are not different — you are like me!  
 My mind was resolved to fight with you,  
 but instead my arm lies useless over you.  
 Tell me,  
 how is it that you stand in the Assembly of the Gods, and have found life?”

[11.8] Ut-napishtim spoke to Gilgamesh, saying:  
 “I will reveal to you, Gilgamesh, a thing that is hidden,  
 a secret of the gods I will tell you!  
 Shuruppak, a city that you surely know,  
 situated on the banks of the Euphrates,  
 that city was very old, and there were gods inside it.

[11.14] The hearts of the Great Gods moved them to inflict the Flood.  
 Their Father Anu uttered the oath,  
 Valiant Enlil was their Adviser,  
 Ninurta was their Chamberlain,  
 Ennugi was their Minister of Canals.

[11.19] Ea, the Prince, was under oath with them  
 so he repeated their talk to the reed house:

[11.21] ‘Reed house, reed house! Wall, wall!  
 O man of Shuruppak, son of Ubar-Tutu

[11.23] Tear down the house and build a boat!  
 Abandon wealth and seek living beings!  
 Spurn possessions and keep alive living beings!

[11.27] Make [the seed of] all living beings go up into the boat.  
 The boat which you are to build,  
 its dimensions must measure equal to each other:  
 its length must correspond to its width.

[11.31] Roof it over like the Apsu.

[11.32] I understood and spoke to my lord, Ea:  
 ‘My lord, thus is the command which you have uttered  
 I will heed and will do it.

[11.35] But what shall I answer the city, the populace, and the Elders?’

[11.36] Ea spoke, commanding me, his servant:  
 ‘You, well then, this is what you must say to them:  
 “It appears that Enlil is rejecting me

[11.40] so I cannot reside in your city,  
 nor set foot on Enlil’s earth.  
 I will go down to the Apsu to live with my lord, Ea,  
 and upon you he will rain down abundance,

[11.44] a profusion of fowl, myriad fishes

He will bring to you a harvest of wealth,  
 in the morning he will let loaves of bread shower down,  
 and in the evening a rain of wheat!”‘

[11.48] Just as dawn began to glow  
 the people assembled around me.

[11.50] The carpenter carried his hatchet, the reedworker carried his flattening  
 stone,

*[Two lines destroyed.]*

[11.54] The child carried the pitch, the weak brought whatever else was needed.  
 On the fifth day I had laid out her exterior.  
 It was a field in area,  
 its walls were each 10 times 12 cubits in height,  
 the sides of its top were of equal length, 10 times 12 cubits each.

[11.58] Then I designed its interior structure as follows:  
 I provided it with six decks,  
 thus dividing it into seven levels.  
 The inside of it I divided into nine compartments.  
 I drove plugs to keep out water in its middle part.  
 I saw to the punting poles and laid in what was necessary.

[11.65] Three times 3,600 units of raw bitumen I poured into the bitumen kiln,

[11.66] three times 3,600 units of pitch [...] into it,  
 there were three times 3,600 porters of casks who carried vegetable oil.  
 Apart from the 3,600 units of oil for the dedication,  
 the boatsman stored away two times 3,600 units of oil.

[11.70] I butchered oxen for the carpenters,

and day upon day I slaughtered sheep.  
 I gave the workmen beer, ale, oil, and wine,  
 as if it were river water,  
 and they made a party like the New Year's Festival!

[11.75] I set my hand to the finishing of the ship.  
 The boat was finished by sunset.  
 The launching was very difficult:  
 They had to keep carrying a runway of poles front to back,  
 until two-thirds of it had gone under water.

[11.80] Whatever I had I loaded on it:  
 whatever silver I had I loaded on it,  
 whatever gold I had I loaded on it.  
 All the living beings that I had I loaded on it,

[11.85] I had all my kith and kin go up into the boat,

[11.86] all the beasts and animals of the field and the craftsmen I had go up.

[11.87] Shamash had set a stated time:  
 'In the morning I will let loaves of bread shower down,  
 and in the evening a rain of wheat!  
 Go inside the boat, seal the entry!'

[11.89] That stated time had arrived.  
 In the morning he let loaves of bread shower down,  
 and in the evening a rain of wheat.  
 I watched the appearance of the weather:  
 the weather was frightful to behold!

[11.93] I went into the boat and sealed the entry.  
 For the caulking of the boat, to Puzur-Amurri, the boatman,  
 I gave the palace together with its contents.

[11.96] Just as dawn began to glow  
 there arose from the horizon a black cloud.  
 Adad rumbled inside of it,  
 before him went Shullat and Hanish,  
 heralds going over mountain and land.

[11.101] Erragal pulled out the mooring poles,  
 forth went Ninurta and made the dikes overflow.

[11.103] The gods lifted up the torches,  
 setting the land ablaze with their flare.

[11.105] Stunned shock over Adad's deeds overtook the heavens,  
and turned to blackness all that had been light.

[11.107] He shattered the land like a raging bull, broke it into pieces like a pot.

[11.108] All day long the South Wind blew,

[11.109] blowing fast - and then the Flood came, overwhelming the people like an  
attack.

[11.111] No one could see his fellow, they could not recognize each other in the  
torrent.

[11.113] Even the gods were frightened by the Flood,  
and retreated, ascending to the heaven of Anu.  
The gods were cowering like dogs, crouching by the outer wall.

[11.116] Ishtar shrieked like a woman in childbirth,  
the sweet-voiced Mistress of the Gods wailed:  
'The olden days have alas turned to clay,  
because I said evil things in the Assembly of the Gods!  
How could I say evil things in the Assembly of the Gods,  
ordering a catastrophe to destroy my people?  
No sooner have I given birth to my dear people  
than they fill the sea like so many fish!'

[11.124] The gods — those of the Anunnaki — were weeping with her,  
the gods humbly sat weeping, sobbing with grief,  
their lips burning, parched with thirst.

[11.127] Six days and seven nights  
came the wind and flood,  
the storm flattening the land.

[11.129] When the seventh day arrived,  
the storm was pounding.  
She who had been struggling with itself like a woman writhing in labor,  
the sea, calmed; the whirlwind fell still; the flood stopped.

[11.133] I looked around all day long - quiet had set in

[11.134] and all the human beings had turned to clay!  
The terrain was as flat as a roof.

[11.136] I opened a vent and daylight fell upon my cheek.

I fell to my knees and sat weeping,  
 tears streaming down my cheeks.  
 I looked around for coastlines in the expanse of the sea,  
 and at twelve leagues there emerged a region of land.

[11.141] On Mount Nimush the boat lodged firm,  
 Mount Nimush held the boat, allowing no sway.  
 One day and a second Mount Nimush held the boat, allowing no sway.  
 A third day, a fourth, Mount Nimush held the boat, allowing no sway.  
 A fifth day, a sixth, Mount Nimush held the boat, allowing no sway.

[11.146] When a seventh day arrived

[11.147] I sent forth a dove and released it. The dove went off, but came back to me;  
 no perch was visible so it circled back to me.

[11.150] I sent forth a swallow and released it.  
 The swallow went off, but came back to me;  
 no perch was visible so it circled back to me.

[11.153] I sent forth a raven and released it.  
 The raven went off, and saw the waters slither back.  
 It eats, it scratches, it bobs, but does not circle back to me.

[11.156] I sacrificed: I offered a libation to the four corners of the world,  
 I burned incense in front of the rising mountain.  
 Seven and seven cult vessels I put in place,  
 and ;into the bowls I poured [the oil of] reeds, cedar, and myrtle.

[11.160] The gods smelled the savor,  
 the gods smelled the sweet savor,  
 and collected like flies over a sacrifice.  
 Just then the Mistress of the Gods arrived.  
 She lifted up the large fly-shaped beads which Anu had made for their engagement:

‘You gods, as surely as I shall not forget this lapis lazuli around my neck,

[11.165] may I be mindful of these days, and never forget them!  
 The gods may come to the incense offering,  
 but Enlil may not come to the incense offering,  
 because without considering he brought about the Flood  
 and consigned my people to annihilation.’

[11.171] Just then Enlil arrived.

He saw the boat and became furious,  
 he was filled with rage at the Igigi gods:  
 ‘Where did a living being escape?’

[11.175] No man was to survive the annihilation!’

[11.176] Ninurta spoke to Valiant Enlil, saying:  
 ‘Who else but Ea could devise such a thing?  
 It is Ea who knows every machination!’

[11.180] Ea spoke to Valiant Enlil, saying:  
 ‘It is yours, O Valiant One, who is the Sage of the Gods.  
 How, how could you bring about a Flood without consideration  
 Charge the violation to the violator,  
 charge the offense to the offender,  
 but be compassionate lest (mankind) be cut off,  
 be patient lest they be killed.

[11.187] Instead of your bringing on the Flood,  
 would that a lion had appeared to diminish the people!  
 Instead of your bringing on the Flood,  
 would that a wolf had appeared to diminish the people!  
 Instead of your bringing on the Flood,  
 would that famine had occurred to slay the land!  
 Instead of your bringing on the Flood,  
 would that Pestilent Erra had appeared to ravage the land!

[11.196] It was not I who revealed the secret of the Great Gods,  
 I only made a dream appear to Atrahasis, and thus he heard our secret.  
 Now then! The deliberation should be about him!’

[11.198] Enlil went up inside the boat  
 and, grasping my hand, made me go up.  
 He had my wife go up and kneel by my side.

[11.201] He touched our forehead and, standing between us, he blessed us:

[11.202] ‘Previously Ut-napishtim was a human being.

[11.203] But now let Ut-napishtim and his wife become like us, the gods!  
 Let Ut-napishtim reside far away, at the Mouth of the Rivers.’

[11.205] They took us far away and settled us at the Mouth of the Rivers.

Now then, who will convene the gods on your behalf,note  
 that you may find the life that you are seeking!

Wait! You must not lie down for six days and seven nights.”

[11.209] Soon as Gilgamesh sat down (with his head) between his legs  
sleep, like a fog, blew upon him.

Ut-napishtim said to his wife:

“Look there! The man, the youth who wanted (eternal) life!

Sleep, like a fog, blew over him.”

## *The Eridu Genesis*

Translated by Thorkild Jacobsen

### Enki Intervenes

[81'] That day, Nintur wept over her creatures  
and holy Inanna was full of grief over her people;  
but Enki took counsel with his own heart.  
An, Enlil, Enki, and Ninhursaga  
had the gods of heaven and earth swear by the names of An and Enlil.

### Ziusudra's Vision

[86'] At that time Ziusudra was king and lustration priest.  
He fashioned, being a seer, the god of giddiness  
and stood in awe beside it, wording his wishes humbly.  
As he stood there regularly day after day,

[90'] something that was not a dream was appearing: conversation,  
a swearing of oaths by heaven and earth, a touching of throats,  
and the gods bringing their thwarts up to Kiur.

### Enki's advice

And as Ziusudra stood there beside it, he went on hearing:  
"Step up to the wall to my left and listen!  
Let me speak a word to you at the wall and may you grasp what I say,  
may you heed my advice! By our hand a flood will sweep over  
the cities of the half-bushel baskets, and the country;  
the decision, that mankind is to be destroyed, has been made.  
A verdict, a command of the assembly, can not be revoked,

[100'] no order of An and Enlil is known to have been countermanded,  
their kingship, their term, has been uprooted; they must bethink themselves ...  
Now ...  
What I have to say to you ..."

*[Lacuna; Enki orders Ziusudra to build the ark and load it with pairs of animals.]*

### The Flood

[132'] All the evil winds, all stormy winds gathered into  
one and with them, the Flood was sweeping over the cities of the half-bushel baskets,  
for seven days and seven nights.  
After the flood had swept over the country,

after the evil wind had tossed the big boat about on the great waters,  
the sun came out spreading light over heaven and earth.

### Ziusudra's sacrifice

Ziusudra then drilled an opening in the big boat  
and the gallant Utu sent his light into the interior of the big boat.

[140'] Ziusudra, being the king,  
stepped up before Utu kissing the ground before him.  
The king was butchering oxen, was being lavish with the sheep,  
barley cakes, crescents together with ...  
... he was crumbling for him  
...  
juniper, the pure plant of the mountains he filled on the fire  
and with a ... clasped to  
the breast he ...

*[Lacuna; Enlil is angry at finding survivors, but Enki explains himself]*

### End of Enki's speech

[175'] "You here have sworn by the life's breath of heaven, the life's breath of earth that  
he verily is allied with you yourself;  
you there, An and Enlil, have sworn by the life's breath of heaven, the life's breath of  
earth, that he is allies with all of you.  
He will disembark the small animals that come up from the earth!"

### Reward of Ziusudra

Ziusudra, being king, stepped up before An and Enlil, kissing the ground,  
and An and Enlil after honoring him

[180'] were granting life like a god's,  
were making lasting breath of life, like a god's, descend into him.  
That day they made Ziusudra, preserver, as king,  
of the small animals and the seed of mankind,  
live toward the east over the mountains of Dilmun.

## ***Genesis 6:5 – 9:17***

### **New Revised Standard Version**

<sup>5</sup> The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. <sup>6</sup> The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. <sup>7</sup> So the Lord said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.” <sup>8</sup> But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

<sup>9</sup> This is the account of Noah and his family.

Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God. <sup>10</sup> Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

<sup>11</sup> Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. <sup>12</sup> God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. <sup>13</sup> So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. <sup>14</sup> So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. <sup>15</sup> This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. <sup>16</sup> Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. <sup>17</sup> I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. <sup>18</sup> But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you. <sup>19</sup> You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. <sup>20</sup> Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. <sup>21</sup> You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them.”

<sup>22</sup> Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

## **Chapter 7**

<sup>1</sup> Then the Lord said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation. <sup>2</sup> Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and its mate; and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and its mate; <sup>3</sup> and seven pairs of the birds of the air also, male and female, to keep their kind alive on the face of all the earth. <sup>4</sup> For in seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground.” <sup>5</sup> And Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him.

<sup>6</sup> Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came on the earth. <sup>7</sup> And Noah with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood. <sup>8</sup> Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, <sup>9</sup> two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah. <sup>10</sup> And after seven days the waters of the flood came on the earth.

<sup>11</sup> In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. <sup>12</sup> The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. <sup>13</sup> On the very same day Noah with his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons entered the ark, <sup>14</sup> they and every wild animal of every kind, and all domestic animals of every kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every bird of every kind—every bird, every winged creature. <sup>15</sup> They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. <sup>16</sup> And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the Lord shut him in.

<sup>17</sup> The flood continued forty days on the earth; and the waters increased, and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. <sup>18</sup> The waters swelled and increased greatly on the earth; and the ark floated on the face of the waters. <sup>19</sup> The waters swelled so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered; <sup>20</sup> the waters swelled above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep. <sup>21</sup> 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; <sup>22</sup> everything on dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> And the waters swelled on the earth for one hundred fifty days.

## Chapter 8

<sup>1</sup> But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided; <sup>2</sup> the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, <sup>3</sup> and the waters gradually receded from the earth. At the end of one hundred fifty days the waters had abated; <sup>4</sup> and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. <sup>5</sup> 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 appeared.

<sup>6</sup> At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made <sup>7</sup> and sent out the raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. <sup>8</sup> Then he sent out the dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; <sup>9</sup> but the dove found no place to set its foot, and it returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took it and

brought it into the ark with him. <sup>10</sup> He waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove from the ark; <sup>11</sup> and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. <sup>12</sup> Then he waited another seven days, and sent out the dove; and it did not return to him any more.

<sup>13</sup> In the six hundred first year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and saw that the face of the ground was drying. <sup>14</sup> In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. <sup>15</sup> Then God said to Noah, <sup>16</sup> “Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you. <sup>17</sup> Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.” <sup>18</sup> So Noah went out with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives. <sup>19</sup> And every animal, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out of the ark by families.

<sup>20</sup> Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. <sup>21</sup> And when the Lord smelled the pleasing odor, the Lord said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done.

<sup>22</sup> As long as the earth endures,  
     seedtime and harvest, cold and heat,  
 summer and winter, day and night,  
     shall not cease.”

## Chapter 9

<sup>1</sup> God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. <sup>2</sup> 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; into your hand they are delivered. <sup>3</sup> Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. <sup>4</sup> Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. <sup>5</sup> For your own lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning: from every animal I will require it and from human beings, each one for the blood of another, I will require a reckoning for human life.

<sup>6</sup> Whoever sheds the blood of a human,  
     by a human shall that person’s blood be shed;  
 for in his own image  
     God made humankind.

<sup>7</sup> And you, be fruitful and multiply, abound on the earth and multiply in it.”

<sup>8</sup> Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, <sup>9</sup> “As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, <sup>10</sup> and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark.[a] <sup>11</sup> I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” <sup>12</sup> God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: <sup>13</sup> I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. <sup>14</sup> When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, <sup>15</sup> I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. <sup>16</sup> When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” <sup>17</sup> God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”