

Story of the Flood

Tanakh

Bereishit ١ (Genesis 6)

9 These are the generations of Noah. Noah was in his generations a man righteous and whole-hearted; Noah walked with God. **10** And Noah begot three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. **11** And the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. **12** And God saw the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. **13** And God said unto Noah: 'The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. **14** Make an ark of gopher wood; with rooms shall you make the ark, and shall pitch it within and without with pitch. **15** And this is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. **16** A light shall you make to the ark, and to a cubit shall you finish it upward; and the door of the ark shall you set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shall you make it. **17** And I, behold, I do bring the flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is in the earth shall perish. **18** But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, and your sons, and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. **19** And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shall you bring into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. **20** Of the fowl after their kind, and of the cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every sort shall come unto you, to keep them alive. **21** And take unto you of all food that is eaten, and gather it to you; and it shall be for food for you, and for them.' **22** Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

Bereishit ٢ (Chapter 7)

1 And the LORD said unto Noah: 'Come you and all your house into the ark; for you have I seen righteous before Me in this generation. **2** Of every clean beast you shall take to you seven and seven, each with his mate; and of the beasts that are not clean two [and two], each with his mate; **3** of the fowl also of the air, seven and seven, male and female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth. **4** For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I blot out from off the face of the earth.' **5** And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him. **6** And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth. **7** And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. **8** Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of everything that creeps upon the ground, **9** there went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, male and female, as God commanded Noah. **10** And it came to pass after the seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth. **11** In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. **12** And the rain was upon the earth forty days and

forty nights. **13** In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark; **14** they, and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth after its kind, and every fowl after its kind, every bird of every sort. **15** And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh wherein is the breath of life. **16** And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God commanded him; and the LORD shut him in. **17** And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bore up the ark, and it was lifted up above the earth. **18** And the waters prevailed, and increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters. **19** And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered. **20** Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered. **21** And all flesh perished that moved upon the earth, both fowl, and cattle, and beast, and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and every man; **22** all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, whatsoever was in the dry land, died. **23** And He blotted out every living substance which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and creeping thing, and fowl of the heaven; and they were blotted out from the earth; and Noah only was left, and they that were with him in the ark. **24** And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days.

Bereishit □ (Chapter 8)

1 And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged; **2** the fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained. **3** And the waters returned from off the earth continually; and after the end of a hundred and fifty days the waters decreased. **4** And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. **5** And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen. **6** And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made. **7** And he sent forth a raven, and it went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth. **8** And he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground. **9** But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him to the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth; and he put forth his hand, and took her, and brought her in unto him into the ark. **10** And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. **11** And the dove came in to him at eventide; and lo in her mouth an olive-leaf freshly plucked; so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. **12** And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; and she returned not again unto him anymore. **13** And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dried. **14** And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dry. **15** And God spoke unto Noah, saying: **16** 'Go forth from the ark, you, and your wife, and your sons, and your sons' wives with you. **17** Bring forth with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh, both

fowl, and cattle, and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth; that they may swarm in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth.' **18** And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him; **19** every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, whatsoever moves upon the earth, after their families; went forth out of the ark. **20** And Noah built an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. **21** And the LORD smelled the sweet savor; and the LORD said in His heart: 'I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done. **22** While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.'

Bereishit v (Chapter 9)

1 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth. **2** And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, and upon all wherewith the ground teems, and upon all the fishes of the sea: into your hand are they delivered. **3** Every moving thing that lives shall be for food for you; as the green herb have I given you all. **4** Only flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat. **5** And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it; and at the hand of man, even at the hand of every man's brother, will I require the life of man. **6** Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man. **7** And you, be you fruitful, and multiply; swarm in the earth, and multiply therein.' **8** And God spoke unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying: **9** 'As for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you, and with your seed after you; **10** and with every living creature that is with you, the fowl, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that go out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. **11** And I will establish My covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of the flood; neither shall there anymore be a flood to destroy the earth.' **12** And God said: 'This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: **13** I have set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth. **14** And it shall come to pass, when I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow is seen in the cloud, **15** that I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. **16** And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.' **17** And God said unto Noah: 'This is the token of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is upon the earth.'

Sumerian

The earliest record of the Sumerian creation myth and flood myth is found on a single fragmentary tablet excavated in Nippur, sometimes called the Eridu Genesis. It is written in the Sumerian language and datable by its script to the 17th century BCE.¹

The poem begins with the mother goddess Nintur recalling that mankind have no place in the world and are apparently wandering the earth. She decides that mankind should learn to purify the land and build cities and temples. She teaches them to purify the land, build temples, and perform rituals. The next part of the story is missing but probably contained the stories of the cities kings. When the story resumes, the goddesses Nintur and Inanna were weeping for the doomed creations. Enki however speaks to Ziusudra and tells him that a flood is coming that will destroy mankind. There is another gap in the text at this point but probably contained the instructions on building and filling the boat.²

After this second gap, there is a description of the flood. After seven days and nights, Utu shines his light and Ziusudra allows the sun's rays to enter the boat. When he leaves the boat, he offers sacrifices to Utu as a thanksgiving offering. Another gap is found in the text at this point. After this gap, the story resumes with the gods finding that Enki had assisted Ziusudra thus causing part of mankind to survive the flood. Ziusudra prostrates himself before An and Enlil who reward him with eternal life. He is then transported to the land of Dilmun.²

Babylonian

The Gilgamesh flood myth is a deluge story in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Many scholars believe that the flood myth was added to Tablet XI in the "late version" of the Gilgamesh Epic but was not originally present in the "Old Babylonian version."³

Gilgamesh's alleged historical reign was shortly before the earliest written storied – approximately 2700 BCE.⁴ The discovery of artifacts associated with two kings named in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* – Aga and Emmebaragesi of Kish – lends credibility to the historical existence of Gilgamesh.⁵

In Tablet XI of the Epic of Gilgamesh, Gilgamesh is continuing his quest to attain immortality. He finds Utanapishtim ([Ziusudra](#)) who had survived the flood and granted immortality by the gods. Gilgamesh asks how Utanapishtim was granted immortality when he was no different than Gilgamesh. Utanapishtim goes on to tell Gilgamesh the story of the flood and how he became immortal.⁶

The gods Anu, Enlil, Ninurta, Ennugi, and Ea had come to a decision to flood the entire earth as a way of destroying mankind. Ea however, warned Utanapishtim from the city of Shuruppak that a flood was coming and told him to build a boat. Utanapishtim obeyed Ea and build a large boat, sealing it with pitch. He took various animals, his family, and other humans into the boat with him. Shamash – the sun god – showered down loaves of bread and cause wheat to be rained down upon the earth and then the flood came. The flood lasted for an entire week. The boat eventually came to rest on Mount Nimush. Utanapishtim sent out a dove and then a swallow but since neither could find land, they returned to the boat. He then sent out a raven who saw the water receding and never returned to the boat. Utanapishtim released the animals from the boat. He sacrificed a sheep and offered up incense in front of the mountain-ziggurat as an offering to

the gods. Enlil is enraged that humans survived but Ea sternly rebukes him for overkill by bringing about a flood. Enlil then grants immortality to Utnapishtim and his wife and they are sent to live at the Mouth of the Rivers. This is the same place where Gilgamesh found Utnapishtim and heard about his survival during the flood and the gods grant him and his wife immortality.⁶

Persian

The Flood story in the Zoroastrian tradition is written in the Videvdad section of the Zoroastrian holy book Avesta. The affliction of the flood is actually a plague from the Evil Spirit according to this story. The beginning of the story tells how Jam took upon himself the responsibility of keeping away disease and death from the creatures upon the earth. As a result, the population increased on the earth so much that Jam had to expand the earth three times in order to carry the population. Ohrmazd called Jam to a meeting where Jam was told that a great winter was coming that would destroy the earth and all the living creatures.⁷

In the second part of this story we are told the preparations that are made in order to save a portion of the earth's population. Jam was instructed to build a war in order to secret away pairs of the choicest of the earth's population. The war consisted of three concentric circles with eighteen total passages. Water flowed and the grass was eternally green. A year passes as a day in the war and every forty years a male and a female will be born to each couple. There the population will wait in perfection and happiness for the end of the evil time and the restoration of the world.⁸

Qur'an

Surah 11

25: We sent Noah to his People (with a mission): "I have come to you with a Clear Warning:

26: "That ye serve none but God: Verily I do fear for you the Penalty of a Grievous Day."

27: But the Chiefs of the Unbelievers among his People said: "We see (in) thee nothing but a man like ourselves: Nor do we see that any follow thee but the meanest among us, in judgment immature: Nor do we see in you (all) any merit above us: In fact we think ye are liars!"

28: He said: "O my People! See ye if (it be that) I have a Clear Sign from my Lord, and that He hath sent Mercy unto me from His own Presence, but that the Mercy hath been obscured from your sight? Shall we compel you to accept it when ye are averse to it?"

29: "And O my People! I ask you for no wealth in return: My reward is from none but God: But I will not drive away (in contempt) those who believe: For verily they are to meet their Lord, and ye I see are the ignorant ones!"

30: "And O my People! Who would help me against God if I drove them away? Will ye not then take heed?"

31: "I tell you not that with me are the Treasures of God, nor do I know what is hidden, nor claim I to be an angel. Nor yet do I say, of those whom your eyes do despise that God will not grant them (all) that is good: God knoweth best what is in their souls: I should, if I did, indeed be a wrong-doer."

32: They said: “O Noah! Thou hast disputed with us and (much) hast thou prolonged the dispute with us: Now bring upon us what thou threatenest us with, if thou speakest the truth!?”

33: He said: “Truly, God will bring it on you if he will, - and then, ye will not be able to frustrate it!

34: “Of no profit will be my counsel to you, much as I desire to give you (good) counsel, it is be that God willeth to leave you astray: He is your Lord! And to Him will ye return!”

35: Or do they say, “He has forged it”? Say: “If I had forged it, on me were my sin! And I am free of the sins of which ye are guilt!

36: It was revealed to Noah: “None of thy People will believe except those who have believed already! So grieve no longer over their (evil) deeds.

37: “But construct an Ark under our eyes and our Inspiration, and address Me no (further) on behalf of those who are in sin: For they are about to be overwhelmed (in the Flood).”

38: Forthwith he (starts) constructing the Ark: Every time that the Chiefs of his People passed by him, they threw ridicule on him. He said: “If ye ridicule us now, we (in our turn) can look down on you with ridicule likewise!

39: “But soon will ye know Who it is on whom will descend a Penalty that will cover them with shame, - on whom will be unloosed a Penalty lasting:”

40: At length, behold! Here came Our Command, and the fountains of the earth gushed forth!

We said: “Embark therein, of each king two, male and female, and your family – except those against whom the Word has already gone forth, - and the Believers.” But one a few believe with him.

41: So he said: “Embark ye on the Ark in the name of God, whether it move or be at rest! For my Lord is, be sure, oft-forgiving, most merciful!”

42: So the Ark floated with them on the waves (towering) like mountains, and Noah called out to his son, who had separated himself (from the rest): “O my son! Embark with us, and be not with the Unbelievers!”

43: The son replied: “I will betake myself to some mountain: It will save me from the water.”

Noah said: “This day nothing can save, from the Command of God, any but those on whom He hath mercy!” – And the waves came between them, and the son was among those overwhelmed in the Flood.

44: Then the word went forth: “O earth! Swallow up thy water, and O sky! Withhold (thy rain)!” And the water abated, and the matter was ended. The Ark rested on Mount Judi, and the word went forth: “Away with those who do wrong!”

45: And Noah called upon his Lord, and said: “O my Lord! Surely my son is of my family! And Thy promise is true, and Thou art the Justest of Judges!”

46: He said: “O Noah! He is not of thy family: For his conduct is unrighteous, so ask not of Me that of which thou hast no knowledge! I give thee counsel, lest thou act like the ignorant!”

47: Noah said: “O my Lord! I do seek refuge with Thee, lest I ask Thee for that of which I have no knowledge. And unless Thou forgive me and have Mercy on me, I should indeed be lost!”

48: The word came: “O Noah! Come down (from the Ark) with Peace from Us, and Blessing on

thee and on some of the Peoples (who will spring) from those with thee: But (there will be other) Peoples to whom We shall grant their pleasures (for a time), but in the end will a grievous Penalty reach them from Us.”

49: Such are some of the stories of the Unseen, which We have revealed unto thee: Before this, neither thou nor thy People knew them. So persevere patiently: For the End is for those who are righteous.⁹

Anthropology

According to the study of mythology, the myths of destruction seen throughout the world are representative of a refinement of creation as opposed to a simple annihilation of the world. Each of these myths show the world we live in as being part of a “celestial model to which history returns in a kind of cosmic cycle of creation and destruction” according to Mircea Eliade.¹

Destruction myths – commonly written as flood stories – emphasize and celebrate the important aspects of each culture. We see this in the remaking of the world after the destruction. The most important aspects of a culture are emphasized. The cultural aspect of the Noah flood is the continuation of a relationship between Hashem and people. This is further emphasized by the covenant that is made between Hashem and Noah (and his descendents).¹⁰

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