

Idan Dershowitz*

Man of the Land: Unearthing the Original Noah

DOI 10.1515/zaw-2016-0022

Introduction

There has long been a consensus that the biblical Flood narrative is a conflation of two literary traditions – Priestly (P) and non-Priestly – the latter of which is often attributed to the Yahwist (J).¹ Since Budde in 1883, some have noted signs of stratification within J – here and throughout the Primeval History.² In this article, I make the case for a pre-»canonical« edition of J's Primeval History that differed fundamentally from the familiar version. According to this version, Noah is the hero who brought an end to the Great Famine that ravaged the earth since the days of Adam and Eve.³ Noah is not the survivor of the Flood in this edition. Indeed, the Flood plays no part in this version of the Primeval History.

¹ For a recent treatment of the topic, see Jan C. Gertz, »The Formation of the Primeval History,« in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr and David L. Petersen, VTSup 152 (Leiden: Brill, 2012): 124–126. My use of the J shorthand should not be taken as a statement vis-à-vis the relationship between the non-Priestly narrative in Gen 1–11 and other non-P Pentateuchal sources. See Jan C. Gertz, Konrad Schmid and Markus Witte, ed., *Abschied vom Jahwisten: Die Komposition des Hexateuch in der jüngsten Diskussion*, BZAW 315 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002) and Thomas B. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid, ed., *A Farewell to the Yahwist? The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2006).

² Karl Budde, *Die Biblische Urgeschichte (Gen. 1–12,5)* (Gießen: J. Ricker'sche Buchhandlung, 1883). Regarding the Flood narrative specifically, see, e.g., Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis*, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 55; Samuel R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis* (London: Methuen, ¹⁰1916), 74; 77 f.; John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, ICC 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1910), 133 f.

³ J refers to the first man as אָדָם, »the man«, not »Adam«, as preferred by P. Likewise, the first woman is generally הָאִשָּׁה, »the woman«, in J. For clarity, I use the familiar appellations.

*Kontakt: Idan Dershowitz, Mandel School for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, E-Mail: dershowitz@gmail.com

Father of all Harpers

The first hint that J contains a stratum unaware of the Deluge is found in Gen 4,17–22, where J lists several generations of Cain's descendants. Of interest are the short descriptions of two individuals. Jabal is said to have been »father of tent dwellers and [those who have] herds«, and his brother, Jubal, was »father of all harpers and pipers«. ⁴ These passages contradict J's ensuing story, where a cataclysm kills off all humans save Noah and his immediate family. ⁵ When J is read in its entirety, one cannot escape the conclusion that the descendants of Jabal and Jubal perished in the Flood. A non-genealogical reading of אבי, as some prefer, is of no help. ⁶ Surely we are not to understand that all knowledge of these skills – even the concept of a nomadic lifestyle – converged upon Noah, who then taught them to different groups of his descendants in the names of their inventors. These verses are clearly incongruous with J's broader narrative and appear to derive from a tradition that did not include a Flood episode. ⁷

The Flood Ends

In J, Noah offers sacrifices following the Flood, after which YHWH proclaims: »I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake« (Gen 8,21a). ⁸ It has been noted that this promise seems out of place in the context of the Flood. ⁹ A deluge

⁴ Tubal-Cain may belong in this list. Targums Onqelos and Pseudo-Jonathan read »הוא היה רבהון« and »רב לכל אומן דידיע בעיבידת נחשא ופרזלא« and »דכל דידיעי עבידת נחשא וברזלא«, respectively.

⁵ See, e.g., Herbert Edward Ryle, *Early Narratives of Genesis: A Brief Introduction to the Study of Genesis I.–XI.* (London: Macmillan and co., 1892), 79; Joseph E. Carpenter and George Harford-Battersby, *The Composition of the Hexateuch* (London: Longmans, 1902), 196.

⁶ Onqelos and Pseudo-Jonathan gloss רב (= leader/master) in verse 21. LXX opts for καταδείξας (=invented), though it may reflect a distinct Hebrew *Vorlage*.

⁷ Westermann maintains this passage is consonant with the Flood tradition, against Budde, Wellhausen and many others. Following Deimel, he argues that since J in Genesis is made up of diverse primeval narratives, we should not expect the same degree of cohesion as in the work of a single author. This dispute boils down to semantics. There is little daylight between these ostensibly contradictory statements: »the primeval narratives were independent ... the difficulty only arose when the primeval events were brought into a chronological sequence« and »the author of 4,17–24* could not have known the flood because it would be meaningless to speak of the origin of civilization before it« (Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994, 325].

⁸ Verse 21b is discussed below, note 18.

⁹ Ibn Ezra (ad loc.) explicitly ties this passage to Adam's curse, rather than the Flood. Knobel notes the apparent connection between Adam's curse of the land and this revocation of a curse on the land, though he concludes they cannot be related (August Dillmann, *Genesis: Critically*

that annihilated all living things is not aptly termed a curse upon the *ground*. This expression seems more applicable to drought or famine. Elsewhere in the Bible, wherever a land is described as cursed, the implication is that it thirsts for water. Thus, the prophet Jeremiah declares in 23,10: »The land mourns because of a *curse*; The pastures of the wilderness *are dried up*«. Similarly, Isa 24,6–7 reads: »That is why a *curse consumes the earth*, and its inhabitants pay the penalty ... *The vine languishes*, and all the merry-hearted sigh.« The reverse is also true, as in Moses' blessing to Joseph: »*Blessed of the Lord be his land*, with the bounty of *dew from heaven*, and of the deep that couches below (Deut 33,13).«¹⁰ Thus, v. 21a implies famine, not flood.

YHWH continues his promise to Noah in v. 22. MT reads: »As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.« In context, this passage is taken to be a proclamation heralding the end of nature's upheaval; the end of the Flood. This understanding is problematic, and it rests largely upon the words »day and night«.¹¹ Some read these words literally, suggesting that even the cycle of days was suspended. This interpretation dates back at least to *Genesis Rabbah*, where R. Yohanan is reported to have inferred that »the stars did not serve during the ... Flood.«¹² But this cannot be, for in the same source, the Flood's duration is given in *days and nights*.¹³ Noah also sends out a dove at seven-*day* intervals. Other commentators understand this passage figuratively: Day and night did not cease, rather the heavy cloud cover blocked the heavens. Thus, R. Jonathan in *Genesis Rabbah*, as well as several modern scholars.¹⁴

Two non-Masoretic versions are worth citing here. The Samaritan differs from MT in only a few characters, but they have an outsize impact on the meaning. SP reads: עד כל ימי הארץ זרע וקציר קור וחם קיץ וחרף יומם ולילה לא ישבתו, which can be translated: As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat,

and Exegetically Expounded, vol. 1, trans. William Stevenson [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1897], 290). See also John Martin, »A Famine Element in the Flood Story,« *JBL* 45 (1926): 129–133, whose proposal will be discussed below.

10 Cf. the parallel passage in Gen 49,25.

11 See, e.g., Abravanel on Gen 8,15 (sixth question): »What relevance does »As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, etc.« have here? This verse appears not to be relevant in this context« (my translation).

12 *Gen. Rab.* 34,11.

13 Gen 7,4.12. Cf. Martin, »Famine«: 131. P also measures the Flood in days, providing even precise dates for the beginning and end of the Flood (Gen 7,11.24; 8,4).

14 See, for instance, James G. Murphy. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Boston: Draper and Halliday, 1867), 200 f.; Franz Delitzsch, *A New Commentary on Genesis*, vol. 1, trans. Sophia Taylor (New York: Scribner, 1889), 282.

summer and winter, *for all time* shall not cease.¹⁵ The presence of an adverbial *mem* following *yom* in SP precludes any reading of the terminal pair as the last in a list of restored natural phenomena. This is supported by LXX: πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς γῆς σπέρμα καὶ θερισμός, ψῦχος καὶ καῦμα, θέρος καὶ ἔαρ ἡμέραν καὶ νύκτα οὐ καταπαύσουσιν. Only the last pair is rendered in the accusative case, with all prior nouns in the nominative. LXX, like SP, construes the last pair in the sentence adverbially.¹⁶ According to these witnesses, only three pairs of phenomena are to be restored: seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter. Without the final pair, nothing remains to support a Flood reference. The six phenomena relate to the regular cycle of seasons, guaranteed to once again follow their natural course »by day and by night«, i.e. *permanently*. Previously, summers had been cold, winters dry, seedtime and harvest perverted – a famine had devastated the earth.¹⁷

Given the current diluvial context of Gen 6–9, since SP and LXX do not describe the end of a flood, these two witnesses certainly represent the *lectio difficilior*. Only evidence of scribal error in the common ancestor of SP and LXX might vindicate MT's reading. But it would be a remarkable coincidence for a copyist to accidentally double precisely the correct letter (the final *mem* of יום) for the passage to transform from a (problematic) reference to the Flood into a seeming reference to famine. More likely, the incongruity of a divine promise to not disturb the seasons led a scribe to produce (perhaps unconsciously) a text that better suited its surroundings.¹⁸

Noah's naming in Gen 5,29 supports this understanding. Lamech declares: »This one will provide us relief (ינחמנו) from our work and from the toil of our hands, out of the soil which the Lord placed under a curse.« Unlike its Priestly

¹⁵ See Gesenius § 100g. For an example of similar usage in the Bible, see Isa 34,10, where day and night are paralleled with »for all time« (לעולם), »through the generations« (מדור לדור), and »for all eternity« (לנצח נצחים).

¹⁶ See Dillmann, *Genesis*, 291. LXX here may have been translated from a Hebrew *Vorlage* identical to the Samaritan version quoted above. The only difference between the two Hebrew versions other than the adverbial *mem* is in the distribution of conjunctions. SP, like LXX, has conjunctions only before the second member of each pair. Saadiah may have been familiar with this or a similar variant, glossing the final pair as »by day and by night« (Yosef Qafih, *The Commentaries of Rabbi Saadia Gaon on the Torah*, in Hebrew [Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1963], 20).

¹⁷ Cf. the First-Temple-era Gezer calendar, which includes several month pairs, according to the prevailing interpretation – Gen 8,22* is perhaps suggestive of six such pairs – as well as cognates of three of the six terms in our verse: קיץ, קציר, זרע.

¹⁸ The phrase »nor will I again strike (להכות) every living thing as I have done« in Gen 8,21b appears to be supplementary. It begins with a *Wiederaufnahme* (לֹא אֶסֶף), and the present text is syntactically awkward.

surroundings, this passage is attributed to J.¹⁹ Lamech expresses his hope that his son bring relief from »the land that YHWH has cursed«. But the affliction to which Lamech refers cannot be the future Flood; Lamech speaks of an *existing* curse.²⁰ This has led some to propose the existence of an early Flood-less J stratum, although they do not identify a famine narrative in this version.²¹

One scholar, John Martin, did see the common famine element in these passages, but he found no prior famine in J with which to connect the thread. In his view, the famine tradition found here »look[s] neither backward nor forward to anything in these narratives but stands alone«. ²² But might there nevertheless be continuity in J? Does the Yahwist elsewhere mention an antediluvian famine?

Curse of Famine

Following Adam's eating of the forbidden fruit, YHWH proclaims (Gen 3,17–19): »Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall consume the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground« etc. This has generally been understood as speaking of a

¹⁹ Lamech invokes the tetragrammaton, and the passage recalls Gen 3,17: עֲצֹבוֹן is unique to these, and nowhere else does אָרֶרֶץ modify אֲדָמָה. I will discuss the relationship between these passages in greater depth below.

²⁰ The derivative version of the Flood in 1En 106,18 provides a more apposite name derivation: »for he shall be *left* to you« (Robert Henry Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, [Oxford: Clarendon, 1913], 279). While LXX also derives Noah's name from נֹחַ, it does not otherwise alter the name derivation. Unlike 1Enoch's version, which is an attempt at reconciling the name derivation with the surrounding narrative, LXX appears to reflect a Hebrew *Vorlage* whose interest was in the thorough correspondence of name (נֹחַ) and supplied derivation (נִיחָוֹ) vs. נִיחָמוֹ; see Yair Zakovitch, »A Study of Precise and Partial Derivations in Biblical Etymology,« *JSOT* 15 [1980]: 38–40).

²¹ See note 2. Those scholars who note the tension between Lamech's words and the Flood tend to tie this appeal to Noah's later planting of a vineyard, rather than a primeval famine (e.g. Gunkel, *Genesis*, 55). Umberto Cassuto (*A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part 1: From Adam to Noah*, trans. Israel Abrahams [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961], 303) compellingly argues that this passage and Gen 6,6, which share several terms, are related. In his view, Lamech's wishes come true in a perversely literal manner, when Noah's birth is followed by נִחְמוֹה – not human comfort, but divine regret. But if both passages belong to J's Flood narrative, one is forced to say that the curse upon the land that Lamech *wishes* Noah bring to an end, and the curse upon the land that Noah *does* bring to an end, are unrelated. The more natural conclusion is that neither passage refers to the Flood, and the author-redactor of the expanded J narrative artfully tied his description of YHWH's actions to Lamech's pre-existing words.

²² Martin, »Famine«: 129–133.

permanent change in man's relationship with nature: In Eden, man did not work the land; from this point on, he would have to toil for sustenance. In the words of John Martin: »[Adam's curse] marks the difference between man's lost age of ease and his whole future age during which he must earn his bread in the sweat of his brow. That curse is irrevocable.«²³ More recently, Gertz wrote: »By using the Eden as a place of effortless and safe existence ... these stories describe what we might call the ›ambivalence‹ of human existence: the essential bond of the man with the earth ... from where he derives his sustenance by arduous work.«²⁴

The conventional interpretation of man's curse is problematic given that man *did* labor in Eden. In fact, YHWH created Adam specifically for this purpose, placing him in Eden that he may »*work the land* and maintain it« (Gen 2,15).²⁵ Similarly, Gen 2,5 states: »no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, because the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth *and there was no man to till the soil*.« If so, Adam's curse cannot speak of a shift to a post-paradisiacal age – it can refer only to a degradation from *ordinary* conditions.²⁶ The earth would no longer yield fruit as usual, and little would come even of arduous labor. Another term for such conditions is *famine*.²⁷ Since this curse was no longer applicable at the time of J's composition, it could not have been considered permanent. But because the curse's subsequent revocation was lost when it was appropriated for the new Flood narrative, readers were led to conclude that the curse was a perpetual one, and therefore responsible for the mundane conditions of their present day.²⁸ This development opened the door to the

23 Ibid.: 129.

24 Jan C. Gertz, »The Formation of the Primeval History,« in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2012): 111 f.

25 This is analogous to the motivation for creating humankind in the Atrahasis Epic: »And let man bear the load of the gods!« (Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 15.)

26 Some commentators suggest that only minimal work existed in Eden (e.g. Gunkel, *Genesis*, 22), though little in the text supports this.

27 Simeon son of Jehozadak is quoted in Tanhuma, *Bereshit* § 11: »[From the curse of Adam] to Noah's birth, men ... would sow wheat and reap thorns and thistles, but when Noah was born, the world *reverted to normal*.« (Samuel A. Berman, ed., *Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu: An English Translation of Genesis and Exodus from the Printed Version of Tanhuma-Yelammedenu* [Hoboken: Ktav Publishing House, 1995], 34; my emphasis). Immanuel Lewy speculates that originally it was thorns and thistles that would consume the plants of the field (ואכלו את עשב השדה), not Adam, as in MT (ואכלת את עשב השדה); Immanuel Lewy, »The Two Strata in the Eden Story,« *HUCA* 27 [1956]: 93.) Cf. Amos 7,1 f., where YHWH brings a blight of locusts to »consume the plants of the earth« (לאכול את עשב הארץ).

28 Skinner – aware that a curse of the land is synonymous with famine – interprets this passage relativistically: »As exceptional fertility was ascribed to a divine blessing, and exceptional bar-

concept of the Fall. But as we have seen, the curse's original function was to set the stage for the Great Famine episode. The biblical version was later emended to accommodate the Flood narrative and account for the removal of the original Famine story. The revoking of the curse of Famine was eliminated along with several other elements, as discussed below, thus recontextualizing the curses of Adam and Eve.²⁹

Having seen that Adam's curse relates to famine, let us compare the J passage to the Babylonian Atrahasis epic. Frustrated with the racket caused by human-kind, Enlil orders the gods to inflict famine upon the earth:³⁰

Let Adad on high make his rain scarce,
 Let him block below, and not raise flood-water from the springs!
 ...
 Let *ašakku* be inflicted on the people,
 Let the womb be too tight to let a baby out!

Remarkably, this passage juxtaposes famine with the malediction: »Let the womb be too tight to let a baby out!« J's curse of man in Gen 3,17–18 is accompanied by a complementary curse to woman: »I will make most severe your pangs in childbearing; in toil shall you bear children.« The similarity of the dual curses – primeval famine and cursed childbirth – in J and the Babylonian epic is salient, but the parallel only comes to light once Adam's curse is properly understood as the commencement of famine.³¹

We have seen that three passages relating to Noah are more descriptive of famine than flood. Clearly, J's problematically unrevoked curse of the land in Gen 3,17–18 and the non-sequitur revocation of a curse upon the land in Gen 8,21–22 belong to the same narrative.³² On account of Adam, a curse of famine had been put upon the land, making life on earth miserable. Lamech gave his son a

renness to a curse, so the relative unproductiveness of the whole earth in comparison with man's expectations and ideals is here regarded as the permanent effect of a curse.« (Skinner, *Genesis*, 83 f.)

29 The serpent's curse is almost certainly etiological and was presumably added after the other curses had been recast as etiologies. Indeed, some suggest the serpent tradition belongs to a later hand (e.g. Lewy, »Two Strata«: 95).

30 Tablet II, column 4. Dalley, *Myths*, 24 f.

31 Just as the land was not entirely barren, so too were women cursed with restricted, but not extinguished, powers of reproduction. Man will eat the fruit of the earth »in toil« (בעצבון), as woman will bear her own fruit »in toil« (בעצב). An additional analog is mentioned in note 25.

32 Note the similarity between *האדם* *האדם* *האדם* here and בעבורך in Gen 3,17, where Adam (or more precisely, »the man«) is the referent (see Ibn Ezra on Gen 8,21). In both cases, בעבור means »because of«, not »for«.

name symbolizing the hope that Noah would bring the Great Famine to an end. And, in the continuation of this original narrative, Noah did just that. YHWH not only ended the Famine on Noah's account but promised that humankind would never again suffer a similar affliction.

Man of the Land

Further support for the contention that J contains an alternate Noah tradition is found in the passage following YHWH's revocation of the curse. Several biblical characters are provided with epithets, such as Abram »the Hebrew«, Moses »man of God« and Daniel »man greatly beloved«. ³³ Noah's title appears in Gen 9,20: »Then Noah, man of the land, planted a vineyard«. ³⁴ A reader of the Flood episode might expect Noah to be called »man of the ark« or »man of the Flood«, but »man of the *land*« is difficult to understand. ³⁵ Due largely to the epithet's incongruity, several scholars have rejected the simple reading of the text. ³⁶ But in light of our conclusions, »man of the land« is a perfect match. ³⁷ The protagonist of J's original narrative is the man who appeased YHWH and brought an end to the curse on the land. ³⁸ In the received text, however, Noah is a silent pawn in YHWH's

³³ Gen 14,13; Deut 33,1; Jos 14,6; Dan 10,11.19.

³⁴ Or, more literally: »Then Noah, man of the land, began to plant a vineyard«, as suggested by Nahmanides, ad loc. See also note 36.

³⁵ Wenham, for example, writes: »The man of the land« is an unusual phrase. If »tiller of the land« were meant, עֲבַד הָאֲדָמָה would be the normal expression (cf. 4,2; Isa 30,24).« (Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC 1 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987], 198).

³⁶ See, e.g., Charles J. Ball, *The Book of Genesis*, Polychrome 1 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1896), 55 f. His argument is predicated on the notion that יָחַל cannot refer to the action of וַיִּטֵּעַ. But Ezra 3,8 contains an analogous example of *vayahel* ... [*vayiqtol*] in the sense proposed here (Ball concedes this is a »possible parallel« [his emphasis]).

³⁷ Despite the contextual difficulties, numerous translators and commentators have read אִישׁ אֲדָמָה as Noah's epithet. Tanhuma Buber, *Noah* § 20: »The man of the land« in that because of him the earth survived.« (Salomon Buber, *Midrash Tanhuma*, trans. John T. Townsend [Hoboken: Ktav, 1989], 50.) NJPS and NRSV offer »the tiller of the soil« and »a man of the soil«, respectively. Cassuto even suggests that the title is connected with Lamech's words in Gen 5,29. Cassuto does not, however, tie either passage to a famine tradition, nor does he find evidence for a Flood-less tradition (Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, Part 2: *From Noah to Abraham*, trans. Israel Abrahams [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1964], 159 f.).

³⁸ *Zohar Hadash*: »He was therefore called »man of the land«, for he gave his heart and soul to [the land], seeking to bring its curse to an end« (*Zohar Hadash* 22b–22c, *Midrash Hane'elam* on Noah; my translation). The proposed reading might shed additional light on YHWH's initial rejection of Cain, a tiller of the accursed land (Gen 4,2), though it is difficult to place the Cain and Abel pericope within the framework of J's evolution.

game; his sacrifice is a *reaction* to the affliction's conclusion, not a catalyst thereof.³⁹

It is then fitting that our alternate Noah, the man of the land, should plant a vineyard.⁴⁰ This detail serves not only to set the stage for the next scene, but also to credit Noah with the first post-famine land cultivation, planting grapevines, a classic symbol of fertility.⁴¹

Noah of the Prophets

The name Noah appears in just three passages outside Genesis.⁴² The reference to Noah in Chronicles is genealogical, offering no biographical information. The passages in Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah are more profitable.

In Ezekiel's discussion of punishment by proxy, he declares that God will take into consideration only actions of the guilty party; the virtues of friends and relatives carry no weight:

O mortal, if a land were to sin against Me and commit a trespass, and I stretched out My hand against it and broke its staff of bread, and sent famine against it and cut off man and beast from it, even if these three men – Noah, Daniel, and Job – should be in it, they would by their righteousness save only themselves – declares the Lord God (Ez 14,13 f.).

There is a general consensus this Daniel is not the protagonist of the eponymous biblical book, but the Canaanite hero Dan-El known from the epic of Aqhat.⁴³ In the Ugaritic epic, Aqhat, is killed by Anat, who covets his bow. Although the text

³⁹ So, e.g., Knobel, in Dillmann, *Genesis*, 290. Skinner notes the tension between this contextual interpretation and the language here, observing that »it hardly expresses the idea of the passage« (*Genesis*, 157 f.).

⁴⁰ In midrashic interpretation, Noah's vineyard is sometimes tied to Eden. *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* 23 (my translation): »Noah found a grapevine that had been banished from the Garden of Eden, and its bunches were intact. He took and ate of its fruit and desired them in his heart. He planted a vineyard out of it, and on that very day the fruit flourished.« (I thank Yair Zakovitch for calling my attention to this tradition).

⁴¹ E.g. Isa 24,6 f., discussed above.

⁴² Isa 54,9; Ez 14,14.20; I Chron 1,4.

⁴³ The defective orthography of דַּנְיֵל has been brought in support of this argument. See René Dussaud, »Brèves remarques sur les tablettes de Ras Shamra,« *Syria* 12 (1931): 67–77, and John Day, »The Daniel of Ugarit and Ezekiel and the Hero of the Book of Daniel,« *VT* 30 (1980): 174–184. Pace Harold Dressler, »The Identification of the Ugaritic Dnīl with the Daniel of Ezekiel,« *VT* 29 (1979): 152–161.

is fragmentary, it appears that Aqhat is later revived on account of his father, Dan-El, or at least attains some manner of salvation.

The reference to Job likely corresponds to the biblical character, or a related incarnation thereof, who in the canonical version is said to have regularly offered sacrifices to atone for his sons' sins.⁴⁴

Ezekiel's declaration is commonly understood as suggesting that these three primeval heroes had saved others due to their piety, but that such days were over.⁴⁵ In this new age, were God to decide that the sinful people of the world must be wiped out, these heroes among them, their devotion would save no one but themselves.

Noah's presence in this triad is surprising. Noah himself is saved by YHWH, having found favor in his eyes (Gen 6,8) – but he is no *savior*. Indeed, Noah never so much as utters a word in the Flood narrative, and with the exception of Noah's family, all of humankind is exterminated. Furthermore, the implication is that Noah's family is spared for purely pragmatic reasons – to facilitate the foundation of a new chain of humankind. Contrast this with Gen 19,16, where Lot's wife and daughters are explicitly saved on Lot's behalf.

Unlike the protagonist of the Flood story, our alternate Noah character is a good fit in Ezekiel's triad of primeval saviors. In Proto-J, Noah was the hero destined from birth to bring an end to the protracted primeval famine; it is he who saves humanity from YHWH's curse upon the land. Furthermore, Noah is the first member of the triad, and the immediate context is *famine*: »I stretched out My hand against it and *broke its staff of bread*, and *sent famine* against it«, etc. It therefore seems likely that Ezekiel's Noah is the character from the first edition of J's Primeval History – not the survivor of the Flood.⁴⁶

As in Ezekiel, the Noah reference in Deutero-Isaiah (54,8 f.) is presumed to be the familiar Flood survivor:

⁴⁴ Job 1,5.

⁴⁵ Marvin A. Sweeney: »Noah, Daniel, and Job were exemplary righteous persons who had the capacity to save others. Noah saved his family during the flood (Gen. chs. 6–9), and Job saved his three friends who spoke wrongly about God (Job 42,7–9) ... The righteous Dan-El saves his son Aqhat from death.« (Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, ed., *The Jewish Study Bible* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2003], 1066 f.). See also Walther Eichrodt, *Der Prophet Hesekiel, Kap. 1–18* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959) 109; George A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, ICC 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936), 153. Cyrus Gordon suggests that there existed a tradition in which Job's righteousness not only reprieved his sons when he offered sacrifices on their behalf, but later brought them back from the dead (Cyrus Herzl Gordon and Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* [New York: Norton, 1997], 289).

⁴⁶ Ezekiel was familiar with another primeval J story absent in P – the Garden of Eden (Ez 28,13; 31,9,16,18; 36,35).

»In overflowing wrath I momentarily hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you«, says YHWH, the redeemer. »For this is like Noah's waters (כי מי נח) to me: As I swore that Noah's waters (מי נח) would never again pass over the earth, so too I swear that I will not be angry with you or rebuke you.«

The term »Noah's waters« is unexpected here, given that Noah was not responsible for the Flood in any way.⁴⁷ Moreover, it seems odd that the Flood – the paragon of divine *wrath* – should serve as a synecdoche for postdiluvian *restoration*. Due to these difficulties, several scholars reject the first instance of the expression in MT (כי מי נח), preferring the graphically similar phrase »as Noah's days« (כימי נח), found in several ancient versions.⁴⁸ Thus, according to these scholars, the reference is not to YHWH's fury – the Flood – but to his compassion – the subsequent entente.

Despite the considerable attention the first instance of the phrase has enjoyed, its second appearance is the more problematic. However odd calling the primeval Flood »Noah's waters« may be, it does not compare to the difficulty of calling a *future* deluge by this name. As it happens, the ancient versions do not all agree here, with LXX lacking precisely the words in question.⁴⁹ LXX does not appear to be harmonistic – it does not, for instance, substitute המבול for a more natural נח. If anything, it is the more difficult reading. But what meaning would YHWH's promise have were the reference to Noah's Flood removed? The resulting Hebrew passage is: »אשר נשבעתי מעבר עוד על הארץ בן נשבעתי מקצף עליך ומגער בכך«. Prima facie, it does not make sense – why would YHWH promise never to »pass over the land«? As it turns out, LXX itself provides the answer: עבר does not mean »pass;« the corresponding word is $\theta\upsilon\mu\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$ – *anger*. This translation reflects a thoroughly plausible reading of the Hebrew. עבר frequently carries similar connotations in the Bible, as in the noun עברה and the verb התעבר.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ In the Zohar, this verse is brought in support of a midrashic view that he *was* to blame: »They were certainly ›Noah's waters‹, as they were due to him, since he did not seek mercy for the world« (Zohar III 15a; my translation).

⁴⁸ IQIsaa, Vulgate, Targum Jonathan, Peshitta, inter alia. See John Skinner, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1898), 138; Thomas Kelly Cheyne, *The Book of Isaiah*, Polychrome 10 (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1898), 94; Franz Delitzsch, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, vol. 2, trans. James Martin (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1873), 346; John McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, AB 20 (New York: Doubleday, 1968), 138.

⁴⁹ BHS. For more on LXX's version, including alternative reconstructions of its *Vorlage*, see HUBP.

⁵⁰ Elsewhere in the Bible, the verb is attested only in *hitpael*. The unpointed מעבר can support either the corresponding (D-stem) *piel* form or the morphologically distinct *qal* stem – as attested (in another sense) in MT.

Furthermore, the phrase »I swore ... that I would no more be angry at the earth«⁵¹ could not be more appropriate as a reference to famine; a curse upon the earth. A further benefit of LXX's reading is that the sequence of infinitives »...מקצר ... מעבר ומגער« are all YHWH's actions, unlike the other versions, in which the identically constructed verbs refer to the actions of different subjects. Most compellingly, the parallel between the two halves of YHWH's declaration is now complete: just as he once promised not to be *angry* at the land, so too he will restrain his *anger* at humankind.⁵² Let us recall the prophet's words: »In overflowing wrath I momentarily hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you ... As I swore that I would no more be angry at the earth, so too I swear that I will not be angry with you or rebuke you«. The image is of divine neglect and its reversal. A famine followed by blessed rain, »Noah's waters,« is a perfect archetype for temporary desertion, but a cataclysmic flood – decidedly active in nature – does not fit.⁵³ YHWH's behavior, as well as its result, can be contrasted with the picture Moses paints in Deut 11,11–12: »The land that you are crossing over to occupy is a land of hills and valleys, watered by rain from the sky, a land that the LORD your God looks after. The eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.«

Like the Noah of Ezekiel, it appears Deutero-Isaiah's Noah is the hero of the primeval Famine.

Proto-J and J

Once J's Primeval History is restored to include the Famine and lack the Flood, it becomes clear that the Yahwistic passages that conflict with the Flood derive from an earlier cohesive – if imperfectly preserved – narrative. Likely, Proto-J's supplementer removed an action that, along with Noah's offering, contributed to YHWH's change of heart. One might expect Noah to have conveyed the suffering of his starving brethren, but any such statement could not coexist with the new Flood narrative. It is also likely that the Famine's end was originally punctuated

⁵¹ Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, ed., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 866.

⁵² If LXX preserves the more original reading, this may suggest that *מי נח* was duplicated in other versions due to vertical dittography.

⁵³ Pace Peters, who argues that MT indeed alludes to divine neglect, inferred from YHWH's »remembering« (יזכר) Noah and the animals in Gen 8,1 (Dorothy M. Peters, *Noah Traditions in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Conversations and Controversies of Antiquity* [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2008], 25).

by a period of abundant rain, allowing Noah to cultivate his vineyard.⁵⁴ Here too the Yahwist would have been compelled to remove the passage when forming the new Flood narrative out of the Famine story. Surely, it would be peculiar for the Flood to conclude with a rainstorm.⁵⁵

As noted, the Cain and Abel episode may derive from the supplementary stratum, given that Cain is »a tiller of the land«, and no comment is made about the Famine. That said, the reference in Gen 4,11–12 to a land-related curse makes it difficult to determine the pericope's original provenance.⁵⁶ The curse of the serpent, which appears to be purely etiological and to describe a permanent change in nature, is most likely secondary.⁵⁷

But why would a Yahwistic supplementer so violently modify his text, rather than simply juxtapose his new Flood narrative to the earlier Famine story? Indeed, why add a Flood story at all? The Babylonian Flood narrative – independently, and as a chapter of the Gilgamesh Epic – was exceptionally popular in the ancient Near East. Fragments were found in the Ugaritic corpus in Ras Shamra, as well as Megiddo in Canaan proper.⁵⁸ Several characters from the Epic of Gilgamesh are mentioned in the Book of the Giants, fragments of which were found in Qumran, further attesting to the pervasiveness of this family of texts in Palestine.⁵⁹ Lastly, the fact that P includes an adaptation of the Babylonian Deluge attests to the story's popularity in Hebrew circles, contextualizing its addition to the non-Priestly

54 Cf. the famine's conclusion in the Epic of Atrahasis: »The flour offering reached [Adad]; he was shamed by the presents and wiped away his ›hand‹. He made mist form in the morning and in the night he stole out and made dew drop, delivered (?) the field (of its produce) ninefold, like a thief. [The drought] left them.« (Dalley, *Myths*, 21).

55 One might speculate that the substantial role of rainfall in both stories may have influenced the supplementer's decision to amalgamate the two. It is tempting to suggest that the forty days of rain in J's Flood reflect a repurposing of an original period of propitious rainfall. P's version has 150 days in which the firmament and earth were ruptured, allowing the subterranean and supercelestial waters (not rain) to burst through – an unambiguous cataclysm. Forty days' rain, however, would not have raised eyebrows in the context of the Great Famine's end. In J, man and rainfall are tied from the beginning of time (Gen 2,5).

56 See note 38.

57 It also lacks the עֶצְבוֹן element present in the other two curses and the naming of Noah. See note 29.

58 The Ras Shamra fragment mentions Atrahasis by name and includes passages identical to Babylonian versions of the Flood. See Max E. L. Mallowan, »Noah's Flood Reconsidered,« *Iraq* 26 (1964): 62; Jeffrey Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1982), 215.

59 Gilgamesh, Humbaba, and perhaps Utnapishtim, survivor of the Flood, are named in this work. See Tigay, *Evolution of Gilgamesh*, 252; John Reeves, »Utnapishtim in the Book of Giants?« *JBL* 112 (1993): 110–115.

version. Indeed, it is possible that with the propagation of the Babylonian Flood narrative, the notion of a primeval deluge came to be perceived as historical fact, so that no Primeval History text would be complete without it.⁶⁰

As to why Proto-J's supplementer violently reworked his *Vorlage*, rather than simply introduce new material into the existing framework, he may have had limited alternatives. J's original Famine story concluded with a promise that seasons would henceforth maintain their regular patterns. A cataclysmic deluge could certainly *not* follow. Even were the promise removed, having the Famine end with an apocalyptic flood would suggest a cynical, malicious god. But unlike known Babylonian versions, the Hebrew god punished his creations for their iniquities, not in self-interest or caprice.⁶¹ Nor could the Flood's termination usher in a drought, which would be anticlimactic and require an even more radical overhaul of the narrative. It therefore seems reasonable that the latter J author opted to pave the way for his new addition by eliminating all explicit mention of the Famine.

The Flood Survivor in P

We have seen that a later J writer-editor transformed Noah from the hero of the Famine to the protagonist of the Flood. The name Noah is clearly a feature of the first stratum, as Lamech's expression of hope that his son brings an end to the Famine is bound to the name. It is therefore surprising that the primary survivor of P's Flood narrative is called by the same name. If the association of the Flood with Noah was an innovation of the latter edition of J, why would the Priestly writer – whose knowledge of the Babylonian story was certainly not limited to J itself – have used this new name? While it may be that the J narrative had gained so much currency by the time of P's composition that the name Noah overtook the earlier name(s), it is also possible that it is an artifact of redaction. The Priestly source may have originally called its Flood survivor by a different name, which was lost when J and P were combined. True, the redactor could have informed the reader that Noah and Utnapishtim, say, were one and the same. Doing so, however, would have produced a considerably more confusing text, especially given the highly involved redaction in this section. The resulting narrative would

60 It is unsurprising that the earliest Canaanite and Israelite folk histories would omit a catastrophic flood, since, as Day writes: »We may say that Palestine is not an area particularly prone to floods but rather to excessive dryness, so the story must have originated elsewhere.« (John Day, *From Creation to Babel: Studies in Genesis 1–11* [London: Bloomsbury, 2014], 99. My emphasis).

61 Gen 6,5–8 (J) and 11–13 (P).

have seen the protagonist's name switch repeatedly within single paragraphs and perhaps even single sentences.

Precedent for name reconciliation can be found in biblical and extra-biblical sources. For instance, though only P recounts a change in name from Abram and Sarai (Gen 17), they are never called by their new names before then in the non-Priestly text, nor do their old names appear afterwards. Outside the Bible, none other than the Babylonian Flood survivor found his name altered by a harmonizing editor. When a scribe supplemented the originally Flood-less Gilgamesh Epic with a version of the Atrahasis Deluge, he made an effort to change every instance of Atrahasis to Utnapishtim so that supplement and source would agree.⁶²

If Ezekiel's Noah is in fact the Famine hero, the likelihood that P originally called his protagonist »Noah« diminishes further. Given the well-established affinity between Ezekiel and the Priestly source, if P and J had had competing accounts of the life and times of Noah, it would be surprising for Ezekiel's reference to correspond to the *non*-Priestly version. However, if Noah was a purely non-Priestly figure, it is natural for the book to contain a reference to him, just as it references the non-Priestly Daniel and Job.⁶³

Conclusion

The proposed reconstruction has some relevance to recent conversations regarding the development of the Primeval History. It would mean that J was reworked *before* being combined with P. J could not then be a supplement to P, as suggested recently by Petersen, Blenkinsopp, Ska, and others,⁶⁴ but must rather be a free-standing unit that was combined with P only after its own supplementation. It would make little sense for the Proto-J Famine story to have been combined with, or supplemented to, P's Flood narrative. Only after the non-Priestly Noah story had been transformed into a Flood narrative could it be combined with P's version of the same.

We have seen that several J passages in Genesis that ostensibly speak of the Flood are better understood as referring to a primeval famine. Also, Adam's curse,

⁶² He missed one. See Tigay, *Evolution of Gilgamesh*, 216 f.

⁶³ Notably, the book of Ezekiel also exhibits a familiarity with a Garden of Eden episode.

⁶⁴ David L. Peterson, »The Formation of the Pentateuch,« in *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. David L. Peterson et al. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995): 31–45.; Joseph Blenkinsopp, »A Post-Exilic Lay Source in Genesis 1–11,« in Gertz et al., *Abschied*: 49–61; Jean-Louis Ska, *The Exegesis of the Pentateuch: Exegetical Studies and Basic Questions*, FAT 66 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 1–22.

often interpreted as the end of paradisiacal existence, actually marks the beginning of the same famine. This famine ravaged the earth and imperiled its inhabitants for generations until a man named Noah precipitated blessed rain and ended the curse. This original narrative was edited and supplemented so that, in J, Noah was transformed into the survivor of the legendary primeval Flood. In the Priestly incarnation of the Babylonian Deluge narrative, the corresponding character likely had a different name, but when the sources were combined, the redactor found it necessary to eliminate one of those two names, and Noah prevailed. With the compiled Torah's rise in popularity in Second Temple Palestine, Noah's fate was sealed, and his association with the Famine was eventually lost. The Noah cited by the prophets Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah could now only be the survivor of the Flood. Noah's transmogrification did not create insurmountable tension in the former case, and the passage simply became somewhat more obscure than it had previously been. The thrust of the prophet's proclamation remained clear: only individual merit and fault now factored in divine retribution. Deutero-Isaiah was more problematic. The original words were clearly suggestive of famine, which was now incompatible with the popular conception of Noah. This led to two changes in the text. In one textual branch, a phrase describing famine («אשר אָשׁוּר» = «I swore ... that I would no more be angry at the earth») was reworked into the awkward «אשר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי מֵעֵבֶר מִי נַח עוֹד עַל הָאָרֶץ» (= «I swore ... that Noah's waters would no more pass over the earth»). And while the unaltered phrase «Noah's waters» migrated south in nearly every extant manuscript, the original נַח מִי כִי was adapted by a different scribe – perhaps deliberately, perhaps unconsciously – so that it innocuously read נַח כִּימֵי נַח – «as Noah's days».

The modification of Isaiah 54,9 was the final nail in the Famine hero's coffin; the perpetually self-homogenizing Bible finally purged itself of the original Noah.

Acknowledgement: I thank Marc Brettler, Raanan Eichler, Shimon Gesundheit, Erga Herzog, and Emanuel Tov for their incisive comments and suggestions. I am grateful to the Karl Schlecht Stiftung for supporting the research visit during which I developed this work.

Abstract: The original biblical Noah was not affiliated with the Flood. An early edition of J told of a devastating famine that afflicted the entire earth from the days of Adam and Eve until it was brought to an end on account of Noah. The Proto-J narrative was supplemented with a version of the popular Babylonian Flood story, ironically transforming a story of drought into a tale of torrential rain. It is this Noah who is referenced in Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah – not the familiar Flood hero.

Résumé: A l'origine, la figure de Noé n'était pas associée au déluge. Une ancienne édition de J contenait le récit d'une famine dévastatrice qui touche la terre entière, depuis Adam et Eve jusqu'au récit de Noé. La narration du Proto-J fut complétée par une version de récit babylonien du déluge, transformant ironiquement l'histoire d'une sécheresse en celle d'une pluie torrentielle. Les livres d'Ezéchiel et du Deutéro-isaïe font référence à ce Noé et non pas au héros du déluge.

Zusammenfassung: Die biblische Noahgestalt wurde ursprünglich nicht allein mit der Flut in Verbindung gebracht. Eine frühe Fassung von J erzählt von einer weltweiten Hungersnot seit den Tagen Adams und Evas, die erst um Noahs willen beendet wurde. Diese protojahwistische Erzählung wurde um die babylonische Fluterzählung ergänzt, so dass ironischerweise aus einer Dürreerzählung die Erzählung eines sintflutartigen Regens wurde. Auf den ursprünglichen Noah bezieht sich auch Ez und Dtjes und nicht auf den Fluthelden.