

GENESIS 8

A NEW CREATION; A NEW COVENANT

Overview

In 1 Peter 3:18–21, Noah’s journey through the Flood is compared with baptism. “As Noah was rescued through water (that is, the Flood) from an evil world and subsequently entered into a new and cleansed world, so the Christians are rescued through water (that is, their baptism) from the evil world that surrounds them and are delivered into the new world of the Christian community.”¹ Of course, the nature of both rescues as a “burial”² reminds us that these events save their participants not merely from evil but also from death.

The turning point of Noah’s story is in the first verse of Genesis 8—the moment when “God remembered Noah.” Then He began again to assert the glory of His presence on the world through the movement of the divine “wind,” the stopping of the “fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven,” and the resultant return of the waters “from off the earth” (verses 1–3). As Noah exited the ark, he “builded an altar unto the Lord” (verse 20), “offered burnt offerings” (verse 20), and established a covenant with God (see Genesis 9:8–17). Then in Genesis 9, according to our reading of the story, Noah made a heavenly ascent from his sanctuary tent to the divine throne room of the renewed Cosmos, where he received a fullness of blessings.³ The subsequent actions of Noah’s sons foreshadowed the patterns of their later lives. Accordingly, Noah would prophesy the fates of both his righteous and wicked posterity (see Genesis 9:24–27).

1 Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on 1 Peter*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 266.

2 Compare Ether 6:6–10, where the Jaredite barges are described as being “buried in the deep” during their journey. See also Ether 2:24–25. With respect to baptism as burial, see Romans 6:3–6.

3 See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 300.

Creation and garden motifs associated with the temple abound within Genesis 8. Of special note are the rich thematic connections between the emergence of the dry land at Creation, New Year's Day, the Tabernacle, Solomon's temple, and the settling of the ark at the top of the first mountain that emerged from the Flood.

Spotlighting the theme of a new beginning, the number one plays a key role in the description of re-creation after the Flood. For example, note that "on the *first* day of the [tenth] month . . . the tops of the mountains [were] seen," and that "in the six hundred and *first* year [of Noah's life] in the *first* month, the *first* day of the month . . . the waters were dried up."⁴ "There can be no mistaking the emphasis on the number one," writes Claus Westermann. Moreover, both these verses, like their counterpart in the story of the original Creation, use the rarer Hebrew term *yom ehad*, corresponding to the English cardinal term "day one" rather than the common ordinal term "first day." This would hint to the ancient reader that the date had special ritual significance.⁵ Consider that it was also the "*first* day of the *first* month" when the tabernacle was dedicated, "while Solomon's temple was dedicated at the New Year festival in the autumn."⁶

Elizabeth Harper's detailed study revealed that apart from brief allusions to selected works of the subsequent days of Creation in verse 22, "the majority of the created works of the first five days are completely disregarded" in the story of the Flood. On the other hand, "the elements of the sixth day: animals (with birds attached), the *adam* (male and female in the image of God), the blessings, commands, and provisions of food are . . . recalled, rearranged, and at times reinterpreted" within subsequent episodes of Noah's life.⁷

As we will see in this chapter and the next, most of the significant elements in the Garden of Eden are present in Noah's "garden": a prominent mountain (traditionally called Ararat); fruit (grapes), the

4 Genesis 8:5, 13. For overviews of interpretation issues that arise from different calendrical systems used in various textual traditions of the Flood story, see Philippe Guillaume, "Sifting the Debris: Calendars and Chronologies of the Flood Narrative," in *Opening Heaven's Floodgates: The Genesis Flood Narrative, Its Context and Reception*, ed. Jason M. Silverman (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2013), 57–83; Helen R. Jacobus, "Flood Calendars and Birds of the Ark in the Dead Sea Scrolls (4Q252 and 4Q254A), Septuagint, and Ancient Near East Texts," in *Opening Heaven's Floodgates*, 85–112.

5 Mark S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 81. Besides Genesis 1:5; 8:5; and 8:13, Smith notes this use of *'ehad* for "[day] one" in Exodus 40:2, 17; Leviticus 23:24; Numbers 1:1, 18; 29:1; 33:38; and Ezekiel 26:1; 29:17; 31:1; 32:1; and 45:18.

6 Exodus 40:1; emphasis added. Nicolas Wyatt, "Water, Water Everywhere . . .': Musings on the Aqueous Myths of the Near East," in *The Mythic Mind: Essays on Cosmology and Religion in Ugaritic and Old Testament Literature*, ed. Nicholas Wyatt (London, England: Equinox, 2005), 215–216. Wyatt noted that the expression about the New Year festival comes from S. W. Holloway, remarking that "many scholars regard the search for the New Year festival to be something of a futile exercise" (235n129). See also 1 Kings 8:2.

7 Elizabeth A. Harper, "In the Beginning: The Interrelationship of Genesis 1 and Genesis 6–9," *Academia.edu*, 19, <https://academia.edu/61073203/Creation>.

consumption of which will lead to important consequences; and a place of holiness (Noah's tent sanctuary) where unauthorized entry is forbidden. In Genesis 9, we will show how Noah's "holy place" becomes the scene of a "fall" and consequent judgment.

Source

Genesis Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, adapted from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God's Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 277–285.

Related verses

Genesis 8

Genesis 8:1–6. The Waters Decrease and the Ark Rests

8:1. "God remembered Noah." The phrase "God remembered Noah" does not imply that Noah had ever been forgotten. In fact, it might be better to translate the phrase as "God had *not* forgotten Noah." Genesis scholar Nahum Sarna explained, "In the Bible, 'remembering,' particularly on the part of God, is not the retention or recollection of a mental image, but a focusing upon the object of memory that results in action."⁸ Often it occurs in the context of a covenant-related action. Having "remembered" Noah, God sent a wind that dried the waters so his family could come out on dry ground, just as in having "remembered" Israel, God sent a wind so the children of Israel could cross the Red Sea on dry ground (see Exodus 14:21).⁹

8:1. "a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged." In ancient Hebrew, the movement of air and the movement of the divine spirit are described by the same word: *ruach*. Here as in the story of Creation, the *ruach* "indicates the beginning of new life."¹⁰ "As the waters are the symbol of chaos, the undoing of Creation, so the movement of the wind . . . heralds the reimposition of order."¹¹

8 Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 56. Compare Genesis 19:29, 30:22; Exodus 2:24, 6:5.

9 John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 89.

10 Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 2, *From Noah to Abraham*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem, Israel: Magnes Press, 1998), 101.

11 Sarna, *Genesis*, 56.

8:4. “the ark rested.” The Hebrew text (*va-tanach*, “and she rested”) describes the ark’s final landing in terms of rest, reminding us of the verb that underlies Noah’s name.¹² According to the calendar in *Jubilees*,¹³ this was a Friday—thus, the ark came to its rest just in time for the Sabbath.¹⁴

8:4. “mountains of Ararat.” A prominent mountain in Turkey is identified in Christian tradition as Mount Ararat.¹⁵ This identification, however, is incorrect. The Bible does not refer to a summit called Ararat but to “the mountains of Ararat,” and this proper name refers to the kingdom of Urartu.¹⁶ Ancient Jewish authors and early Bible translators understood there was no mountain called Ararat. There are many conflicting traditions, and none seem highly reliable.

Looking for the answer in a different direction, Elizabeth Harper suspected the name may be a wordplay. “Ararat” evokes the Hebrew term *arar*, which means “to curse.” Does the ark—which contains Noah (the one to relieve the world of the curse) and whose name evokes temple and atonement—now bring rest upon Mount Cursed? The observant Israelite might even note that the landing of the ark takes place seven days after the Day of Atonement.¹⁷

Going further, ancient Israelites thought the holiest spot on earth was the foundation stone in front of the ark of the covenant at the Jerusalem temple because they believed “it was the first solid material to emerge from the waters of Creation, and it was upon this stone that the Deity effected Creation.”¹⁸ The depiction of the ark/temple of Noah perched upon Mount Ararat would have evoked similar temple imagery for ancient readers of the Bible.

8:6. “at the end of forty days.” “If this is not a round number, it makes Noah start work on a Sunday, the day after the Sabbath.”¹⁹

12 Richard S. Hess, *Studies in the Personal Names of Genesis 1–11* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 28. See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *In God’s Image and Likeness 1: Creation, Fall, and the Story of Adam and Eve*, rev. ed., 2 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 246nM8–16.

13 James C. VanderKam, ed. and trans., *The Book of Jubilees: A Critical Text* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1989), 36, *Jubilees* 5:27–28.

14 Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15, Word Biblical Commentary 1* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 184.

15 See Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Dana M. Pike, and David Rolph Seely, *Jehovah and the World of the Old Testament* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2009), 27.

16 Compare Jeremiah 51:27. See also 2 Kings 19:37; Isaiah 37:38.

17 See Elizabeth A. Harper, “It’s All in the Name: Reading the Noah Cycle in the Light of Its Plot Markers,” in *Opening Heaven’s Floodgates: The Genesis Flood Narrative, its Context, and Reception*, ed. Jason M. Silverman (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013), 49–74.

18 John M. Lundquist, *The Temple: Meeting Place of Heaven and Earth* (London, England: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 7.

19 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 186.

8:6. “Noah opened the window of the ark.” God expected Noah to act for himself in finding out whether the earth was ready for him and his family to leave the boat.

Source

Genesis Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, adapted from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 284, 288.

Related verses

Genesis 8:1–6

Genesis 8:7. The Raven Is Sent Forth

8:7. “he sent forth a raven.” With regard to Noah’s release of the birds, Westermann remarked that it is “the most amazing of all motifs” in the worldwide stories of the Flood: “It is almost incredible how widespread this motif is and how similar the most widely separated texts are.”²⁰ Anciently, mariners used birds to determine how close they were to land and to take their direction accordingly.²¹

8:7. “raven.” Nahum Sarna observed, “The raven is a wild bird that is not discriminating in its diet. It feeds on carrion as well as vegetation and could thus obtain its food from among the floating carcasses. That is why it made repeated forays [verse 7: ‘went forth to and fro’] from the Ark.”²²

Source

Genesis Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, adapted from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 288.

Related verses

Genesis 8:7

²⁰ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Continental Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 403. Sometimes three birds are sent out (for example, a dove, a swallow, and a raven in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*; see pages 93–94).

²¹ Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 446.

²² Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 57. Also of interest here, according to Leviticus 11:15 and Deuteronomy 14:14, ravens are an unclean animal.

Genesis 8:8–12. The Dove Is Sent Forth

8:8. “he sent forth a dove.” “The dove . . . is a symbol of beauty and gentleness, integrity and friendship. Time and again the maiden in the Song of Songs is called ‘my dove’ or ‘my dove, my perfect one’ (Song of Solomon 2:14; 5:2; 6:9); and her eyes and the eyes of the youth are compared to doves (Song of Solomon 1:15; 4:1; 5:12).”²³ A “phonetic affinity”²⁴ can be found between the name Noah (*noach*) and the word for *dove* (*hayyonah*). On her first trip from the ark, the dove found “no rest [*manoah*] for the sole of her foot” (Moses 8:9). When the dove brought the olive leaf back after her second journey, however, the leaf “rested” in her beak.²⁵ In contrast to the black, unclean raven, the dove “is white, a clean animal often used in sacrifice (e.g., Leviticus 1:14, 12:6). Like other sacrificial animals, it is sometimes seen as a symbol of Israel (Hosea 7:11, 11:11) and therefore within this story it is an ideal representative of Noah himself.”²⁶

8:9. “no rest for the sole of her foot.” Claus Westermann takes this phrase to mean that “not even the tiniest resting place”²⁷ was available for the bird—another instance of the theme of rest in Noah’s story.

8:9. “the waters were on the face of the whole earth.” Hugh Nibley explains, “From where [Noah] was, ‘the whole earth’ was covered with water as far as he could see; after things had quieted down for 150 days and the Ark ground to a halt, it was still three months before he could see any mountain tops. But what were conditions in other parts of the world? If Noah knew that, he would not have sent forth messenger birds to explore. The flood as he described it is what he saw of it.”²⁸

8:9. “he put forth his hand.” “This is the second reference in Genesis to putting forth one’s hand to take hold of something. Noah’s hand is stretched forth to offer refuge to one of God’s creatures. Earlier God had seen the possibility that [Adam and Eve] would ‘put forth [their] hand and take also of the tree of life’ (Moses 4:28 [see also Genesis 3:22]).”²⁹

8:11. “in the evening.” “That is, when birds customarily return to their nests. The note implies that the dove had been out all day, signifying the availability of resting places.”³⁰

23 Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 2, *From Noah to Abraham*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Israel: Magnes Press, 1997), 108.

24 Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 186.

25 See Michael Maher, trans., *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Genesis*, The Aramaic Bible 1B (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 43; see also 43n11.

26 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 186.

27 Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Continental Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 448.

28 Hugh W. Nibley, “Before Adam,” in *Old Testament and Related Studies*, ed. John W. Welch, Gary P. Gillum and Don E. Norton, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 1 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 65–66.

29 Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 305.

30 Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah

8:11. “an olive leaf.” Genesis scholar Umberto Cassuto explained that the dove brought Noah “good tidings, in the form possible to a creature that cannot speak.”³¹ Nahum Sarna discussed the symbolism of the olive tree:

The olive tree, one of the earliest to be cultivated in the Near East, is an evergreen. It is extraordinarily sturdy and may thrive up to a thousand years. Thus it became symbolic of God’s blessings of regeneration, abundance, and strength, which is most likely the function it serves here. In the present context the olive branch is invested with the idea of peace and reconciliation, and for this reason it was incorporated into the official emblem of the State of Israel.³²

The scenes following the Flood conjure up memories of the story of Adam and Eve. Though analogs to the tree of life and the tree of knowledge are not explicitly mentioned in the description ark’s landing, an olive tree (a possible analog) is implied in the story when the dove returns with an olive branch. Multiple texts associate the olive tree with the Garden of Eden. For example, ancient traditions recount that on his sickbed, Adam requested that Eve and Seth return to the garden to retrieve oil—presumably olive oil—from the “tree of his mercy.”³³ In reference to the dove that brought Noah the olive branch, one rabbinical opinion states that the “gates of the garden of Eden opened for the dove, and from there she brought it.”³⁴

8:11. “plucked off.” “The rare noun *taraf* connotes that [the branch] was freshly removed from the tree and was not flotsam, a sure sign that plant life had begun to renew itself.”³⁵

Source

Genesis Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, adapted from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 288–290.

Related verses

Genesis 8:8–12

Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 58.

31 Cassuto, *From Noah to Abraham*, 111.

32 Sarna, *Genesis*, 58.

33 Gary A. Anderson and Michael Stone, eds., *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1999), 40, Latin 36:2.

34 Jacob Neusner, *Parashiyot One through Thirty-Three on Genesis 1:1 to 8:14*, vol. 1 of *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis, A New American Translation* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985), 351. Others said the branch came from the Mount of Olives (see, for example, Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, 43).

35 Sarna, *Genesis*, 58.

Genesis 8:13–14. The Ground Is Dry

8:13. “*in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month.*” “On New Year’s day, exactly one year after God first communicated with Noah, the ground was dry.”³⁶ “Precisely at the commencement of the year, on the anniversary of Creation, the world resumed again the form that God had given it when first it came into being.”³⁷ Just as Moses 3:1–3 lays a foundation for the institution of the Sabbath, so Genesis 8–9 provides a primeval precedent for the New Year celebration among the Israelites.³⁸

8:13. “*Noah removed the covering of the ark.*” The possibility that “the ‘covering of the Ark’ establishes a link to the ‘covering of the Tabernacle’” is significant.³⁹

8:14. “*in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month.*” The earth attained its dry state again “on the twenty-seventh day of the second month of the six hundred and first year [of Noah’s life], that is, if we count both the first and the last day, a year and eleven days after the commencement of the Deluge: a complete solar year of 365 days in all.”⁴⁰ Bible scholar Claus Westermann added, “The two statements then would represent two different systems of calculation, the lunar year and the solar year.”⁴¹ Genesis scholar Umberto Cassuto explained, “The *Septuagint*, which was composed in Egypt for the use of the Jews living there, who were accustomed to the Egyptian year of 365 days, also had in mind a complete year, and with this in view wrote twenty-seven instead of seventeen in Genesis 7:11 and in 8:4.”⁴²

Source

Genesis Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, adapted from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 290–291.

Related verses

Genesis 8:13–14

36 Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 58.

37 Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 2, *From Noah to Abraham*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem, Israel: Magnes Press, 1997), 113.

38 Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Continental Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 470.

39 L. Michael Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2012), 157. See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 310.

40 Cassuto, *From Noah to Abraham*, 113.

41 Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 450.

42 Cassuto, *Noah to Abraham*, 113–114.

Genesis 8:15–19. Noah Leaves the Ark

8:16. “Go forth.” See commentary to Moses 6:30. The corresponding command for Noah and his family to board the ark is found in Genesis 7:1. Now they are commanded to leave it. In both instances, Noah waited for God’s direction. “There is a striking thematic parallel between the picture of God’s calling Noah out of the Ark ([Genesis 8:]15–20) and the call of Abraham (Genesis 12:1–7).”⁴³ The author “is careful to show that . . . Noah left the Ark only at God’s command.”⁴⁴

8:16. “thou and thy wife.” See also Genesis 8:18. “The variation in the order of persons from Genesis 6:18 and 7:7, where husbands and wives are not listed together, led midrashic sources to infer that sexual relationships were forbidden in the Ark and were permitted to be resumed only after disembarkation.”⁴⁵ See the overview to Moses 8.

8:17. “that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth.” Compare Moses 2:22.

8:19. “Every beast.” Compare Moses 2:24.

Source

Genesis Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, adapted from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 291.

Related verses

Genesis 8:15–19

Genesis 8:20. Noah Offers Sacrifice

8:20. “Noah builded an altar unto the Lord.” Noah’s first action on the renewed earth was building an altar for burnt offerings. In contrast to every major action Noah had performed previously,⁴⁶ he made

⁴³ John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 91; John H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 308–309.

⁴⁴ Sailhamer, *Meaning of the Pentateuch*, 308.

⁴⁵ Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 58. See Jacob Neusner, *Parashiyot One through Thirty-Three on Genesis 1:1 to 8:14*, vol. 1 of *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis, A New American Translation* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985), 4.

⁴⁶ That is, if we classify the sending forth of the birds as a minor action.

the sacrifice without divine instruction. In scripture, this type of sacrifice is called a freewill offering.⁴⁷ It is foremost a means of rendering thanksgiving.

When a person has been saved from a terrible danger, or has escaped from a general catastrophe, his first reaction is to give thanks to him who saved him or helped him to escape. And there could be no greater thanksgiving than these sacrifices. Of the few domestic animals and birds that constituted his sole, meagre possessions for the new period of his life in a world that is completely waste, Noah gave up several animals and birds in honor of his Divine Savior.⁴⁸

In addition to describing Noah's natural expression of thanks, the account portrays Noah as a new Adam, "reversing the estrangement" between God and man by means of this atoning sacrifice.⁴⁹

Claus Westermann noted, "The sacrifice of Noah is one of those elements which occurs very often in the flood narratives, e.g., in the Babylonian, Greek, Phoenician, Indian stories. Ziusudra, Utnapishtim, Deucalion, Demarius, Manu, all offer sacrifice after they have been saved."⁵⁰

Source

Genesis Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, adapted from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God's Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 291–292.

Related verses

Genesis 8:20

Genesis 8:21–22. The Lord Accepts Noah's Sacrifice

8:21. "the Lord smelled a sweet savour." The Joseph Smith Translation makes Noah the subject of verses 21 and 22 rather than the Lord:

⁴⁷ Leviticus 22:17–25; Numbers 15:1–11. See Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 308.

⁴⁸ Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 2, *From Noah to Abraham*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem, Israel: Magnes Press, 1997), 117.

⁴⁹ L. Michael Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2012), 197; compare Florentino Garcia Martinez, ed., "Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen ar)," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson, 2nd ed. (Leiden, Netherlands; Brill; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 231; James C. VanderKam, ed. and trans., *The Book of Jubilees: A Critical Text* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1989), 36, *Jubilees* 6:2.

⁵⁰ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Continental Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 452.

“*And the Lord spake unto Noah, and he blessed him. And Noah smelled a sweet savor, and he said in his heart; I will call on the name of the Lord, that he will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake, for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; and that he will not again smite any more every thing living, as he hath done, while the earth remaineth, and that seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night may not cease with man.*”⁵¹

8:21. “sweet savour.” In the King James Version of Genesis, the “sweet savour” was not principally due to the pleasant odor of the sacrifice (see Leviticus 26:31; Amos 5:21–22). The play on words in this verse make it clear that it was Noah’s righteousness that made the offering sweet, or more literally, restful (*nihoah*). God has finished the work of re-creation and will rest from His labors (compare Moses 3:2). In Genesis 9, Noah will build God’s sanctuary and as His righteous and duly appointed king, will rule on earth in accordance with divine law.

8:21. “I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake.” A lifting of the curse had been prophesied uncomprehendingly by Lamech in Moses 8:9. Cassuto observed, “The curse on the ground—that is to say, the decree that the ground would not again produce of its own accord, without human labor, what was needed for man’s sustenance, and that he would eat his bread only with toil and the sweat of his face—remained valid, except that the Lord promised not to add thereto, that is, not to aggravate further man’s position on earth.”⁵²

8:21. “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” Commenting on the Genesis version of this verse, Nahum Sarna wrote, “As compared with Genesis 6:5, the language is considerably modified and is no longer all-inclusive. The statement is not a judgment but an observation that a proclivity for evil is woven into the fabric of human nature. The key phrase is ‘from his youth,’ not from birth or conception, implying that the tendency to evil may be curbed and redirected through the discipline of laws. Hence, the next section deals with the imposition of laws upon postdiluvian humanity.”⁵³

8:21. “neither will I again smite any more every thing living.” Compare Isaiah 54:9: “I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth.”

51 Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 115–116, 629.

52 Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 2, *From Noah to Abraham*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem, Israel: Magnes Press, 1997), 120.

53 Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 59.

8:22. “seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” This phrase articulates the reestablishment of the alternating rhythm of the times and seasons required to sustain agricultural life and the cultic calendar that goes along with it. The words “describe three environmental phenomena: agricultural, climatic, and temporal.”⁵⁴ The mention of opposites in each case is a way of expressing totality.

One of Joseph Smith’s revelations qualifies this promise as follows:

I have asked of the Lord concerning His coming; and while asking the Lord, He gave a sign and said, “In the days of Noah I set a bow in the heavens as a sign and token that in any year that the bow should be seen the Lord would not come; but there should be seed time and harvest during that year: but whenever you see the bow withdrawn, it shall be a token that there shall be famine, pestilence, and great distress among the nations, and that the coming of the Messiah is not far distant.”⁵⁵

Source

Genesis Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, adapted from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 292–293.

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Genesis 8:21–22

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⁵⁴ Sarna, *Genesis*, 60.

⁵⁵ Joseph Smith Jr., May 7, 1844, in Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1969), 340–341.