

## Chapter 6

Vs. 1-4 has been stuck in here by the editors. This little blurb has nothing to do with the story of Noah (which chapter 5 leads up to, and the rest of chapter 6 continues). This strange story of demi-gods (the sons of God) mating with human females and producing the legendary race of Giant Warriors, the Nephilim, is a legend – though later in Israel’s history (Numbers 13:32-33) Israelite spies report seeing Nephilim in the land of Canaan. It’s also an origin story for how humans went from having 900 year lifespans to 120 year life spans, as the human-divine boundaries had been violated by these “sons of God” those boundaries had to be tightened by shortening the length of human life. We know that this piece was inserted at this spot with no context, because we find in the next few verses that Noah is a sprightly 600 years old when he builds the arc!

*Between chapters 6-9, the J and P authors once again intermingle their accounts of the Flood story (a story similar to ancient stories recorded in Babylon and Mesopotamia). The J source focusses only on human corruption and the destruction of only living things (6:5-7), while the P source focusses on the corruption of all flesh and the destruction of the earth (6:11-13). The J source notes that Noah found favor in God’s eyes (6:8), while the P source declares that he was a righteous man (6:9). The J source portrays the flood as a simple 40 day rain storm (7:4), while the P source describes the flood as a return to the watery chaos of pre-creation (6:17). The J source describes Noah as bringing 7 pairs of clean animals and 1 pair of unclean animals (7:2), while the P source describes Noah as bringing one pair of all animals of every kind (6:19). The length of the flood in the J source is 40 days (7:12, 24, 8:3-5), versus 150 days, with standing water for over a year in the J source (7:11, 24, 8:3-5, 13a, 15). And finally, always the simplest way to identify the difference between J and P sources is the divine name: J always uses “the Lord” and P uses “God.” The differences between these two accounts, we cannot conflate them or make them fit together, but must accept them as the accounts of two different authors telling the same story with slightly different details.*

Vs. 5-22, Perhaps the saddest words in the entire Bible come to us in vs. 6, because of the wickedness and continual evil of human beings, “the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.” This is not a story of rage, but a story of heartbreak first and foremost. Those who bore the image of God, who should have been the

crowning glory of creation, have instead so deeply disappointed and pained God that God vows to blot them and the whole earth which they have corrupted out and start over. Noah -descended from the line of Seth- is the only righteous man, the one who still walks with God. This means that he is in a trusting, loyal relationship with God, and he obeys and follows God's will. Vs. 11, the wickedness described earlier is further explained as the whole earth being full of violence, and that violence having a corrupting influence upon everything!

God tells Noah to build an Arc, 450 feet long by 75 feet wide, by 45 feet high, and to cover it with pitch to make it watertight. This is a 3 story ship large enough to contain Noah's family and all the food and 2 of every kind of animal, bird, and creepy thing in the entire world!

Beginning in vs. 18 God makes God's covenant with Noah -a formal promise between two parties, with expectations and responsibilities on both sides.

### Chapter 7

In the J version of accounts, it's clean and unclean animals that are named as those whom Noah saves on the ark. Clean animals are those who have at least 2 features that match with their natural environment (ie, fish have scales and fins and live in the sea, they are clean. Clams do not have scales or fins, they are unclean). As the story transitions back to the P source, we see a total reversal of creation! God is undoing the boundaries between the sky and the deep and the waters and the land which were solidified by God's act of creation. The flood waters are not just from the rain up above (the dome in the sky opening), but also from fountains of the deep bursting forth. The humans had behaved according to chaos, and now chaos is what's unleashed once again upon the earth. The flood waters surges so that they covered mountains, and the boat floated above the surging waters. Vs. 22, everything that had been given God's breath of life, that life was now taken back.

### Chapter 8

"God remembered Noah and all the animals" God's remembering of the covenant, leads to God's redemption of Noah and the animals. The winds blow over the earth -a second chance for creation! The same winds that enlivened the primordial waters, now push back these waters of death to make way for new life to emerge on the dry land below. According to the P source, the rains stopped after 150 days (5 months!) and the ark landed on

Mt. Ararat (Turkey) two months later, and 3 months later the tips of all the mountains were visible.

According to the J source (vs. 6-12), the flood abated after 40 days, and Noah then sent out a raven and a dove to see if there was dried land anywhere. After 1 week, he sent the dove out again, who came back with an olive branch, showing that the trees were now growing and visible (thus, the olive branch is a symbol of peace and hope), and after another week, the dove never again returned (suggesting that they had found dry land). Beginning in vs. 13, we transition back to the P source, who says that after 1 WHOLE YEAR the waters were finally dried up and the ground was dry, and God sent Noah and the animals out of the ark to “be fruitful and multiply” and thus restore creation. And as they stepped out now “as families” not just as “males and females” it seems that work of re-creation already began on the ark. According to the J source (vs. 20-22) The first thing that Noah did when he stepped out on dry land was worship. He built an altar to the Lord and took 1 of each kind of clean animal he had made sure to preserve, and offered them to the Lord as a burnt offering. The smell was pleasing to God (holy BBQ!) and the Lord vowed to themselves “I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth, nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done.” Ultimately, the flood did not wipe away the problem of evil, or the human heart’s inclination toward it, but it did change God’s heart, for now God vows to work within this reality of both good and evil to stay in loving relationship with humans and all creation. God limits God’s future option in how to deal with the problem of evil, and God chooses a way of relationship with a fallen humanity that ensures God will continue to experience grief and disappointment for the sake of loving human beings, who just can’t help but be sinful.