

## The Bible in Context Ep 19: Noah's Flood and Floating Temple Gen 6:13-8:19

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Hey everybody, welcome back to the Bible in Context. How's it going, Nate? It's going good. Great to be here. So last time we covered the land being ruined by humanity and the Sons of God incident and all that mess. And so now we are going to talk about the Temple Boat. The Temple Boat. All right, so.

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Yeah, it's important for us to stop and take a minute to understand the literary features surrounding this boat in this arc, to understand how significant it is within the narrative. So I guess we'll just jump right in and start talking about some of the features of this boat in the narrative. So to make sure I understand what you're saying here, you're saying the arc that Noah built is also a temple. And you're going to compare...

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the temple or maybe the tabernacle to the ark that Noah built. All right. Yes, and the Garden of Eden since we talked about how the garden is also a temple. So we have really these, yeah, the tabernacle and the garden both looping into this imagery. So the first thing is, it's kind of cool, is the fact that it's made out of gopher wood. I think a lot of modern translations will say, actually, what does the ESV say?

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Okay, the ESP does say gopher. I think some of the older English translations also have that gopher in there. And that's because there's not like a certain gopher wood. It's because in Hebrew, the word is gopher. So they just transliterate it. Yeah, it's not a translation. It's just a transliteration. That's hilarious. And Walton has actually pointed out in the Lost World of the Flood that this could be a reference to kind of a reed hut based on an Akkadian word that bears some similarities.

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I think it that's very possible. I think it might actually be here to establish a wordplay going on with the ark with the Like the word art Yes, well not sorry not the word arc, but I'll show you so The arc is to be covered in pitch right now in Hebrew that means it's supposed to be Kaparta in Kofor So it's the same Hebrew letters in both those

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words. The ark is supposed to be made out of gopher and then kaparta with kofor. How about that? And so you've got to remember that Hebrew doesn't have vowels in the original language. So the repetition of letters is what is most significant here. What a Hebrew reader would see

here is something more along the lines of he needs to make an ark out of gopher and then kofor it with kofor. Something sort of like that. Just like this alliteration rhyming going on.

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guessing what the vowel sounds are supposed to be? No. So they do have actual vowels and they change based on the person or the tense of the word, so on. And these, the Masoretes who became copyists of the Hebrew text put all these vowel pointings in there so we would know. But these were all done, you know, a thousand years after the canon is closed. And so they could be wrong. So we are guessing a little bit. We are guessing a little bit. Going off of play.

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Scholars do spend time actually going back and repointing the vowels in places where they think something else might make sense. That doesn't happen by and large on most words, but it happens. Not enough to make us mistrust our Bibles, but you know, it happens. And by the vowel points, those are the little dots that you see around the Hebrew letters. That's what you're talking about, right? Yes. Yeah, those are the big block letters and then the little lines and scratches that you see all around that tell us what the vowels are. What's really significant is that the word...

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Kofor or the root is Keper is the word for atonement. And so what you need to hear here is this alliteration around the word atonement getting you to think about the atonement that is done at the tabernacle or at the temple or the atonement cover on the ark. So you've got this wordplay going on. Yeah, you've got the author trying to make you think of the word atonement, which

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the tabernacle. Oh yeah, so you have that word show up a lot in concentration when you get to things like the atonement cover, the lid of the ark, or in Leviticus when you're making atonement at the tabernacle. So that word's going to bring you back to kind of a tabernacle context. And then you've also got with the ark, you've got these detailed instructions from God where God speaks, Noah does what is said.

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by God. And then there's notes about his obedience. You see in chapter six, verse 21, where it talks about Noah being obedient, doing all that the Lord commanded. You get the same pattern with Moses at the building of the tabernacle. God speaks, there's details about exactly what God said was done. There's notes of obedience. Sailhammer, in his commentary, the Pentateuchas narrative points out that there's just these pattern repetitions that don't really happen elsewhere in the Bible.

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just this level of detail about a construction that does not happen elsewhere. So again, the author is trying to use this pattern repetition and this level of detail to link these two stories

together about the building of the tabernacle and the building of the Ark. So the author is trying to show that the Ark is this image of a tabernacle where, just like the Garden of Eden, which was a temple and tabernacle, is filled with the elect family with all the animals.

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placed in charge of those animals, just like Adam and Eve were put in charge of the animals. Yeah, so you kind of got this new temple garden of Eden setting going on here. And we'll see that garden imagery gets picked up again whenever the boat lands. But for now, the Ark is having this tabernacle imagery applied to it. So we'll talk about this more as we keep going in the story. But for now, this is kind of this place where the elect family comes.

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as really, I mean, the whole world is cleansed. There's just kind of a tournament made through the destruction of the world. Yeah. So in the tabernacle, there's layers or there's the Holy of Holies. And then you've got the Holy place and then you've got the outer court. Is there anything similar to that in the boat? Yeah. Yahweh also tells Noah to make, uh, make it three decks. And so you kind of still get that, that, yeah, that tripartite, um, structure going on there.

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So again, it's built to mimic the tabernacle and the Eden structure. Yeah, because in Eden, you had the three layers also, right? You had the garden of Eden, you had Eden, and then you had the outside of Eden. Yeah, right. Right. The wilderness outside of that. Right. And I mean, this story, it really picks up the ancient worldview, which part of that is the temple-like structure of the garden, but also that idea that the world is endless waters and the earth resides inside a kind of...

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bubble that Yahweh has made in the waters and put the earth and the humans to reside in there. Because as it goes on, the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven both open up. Now, that's not just their idea of, I don't know, geysers and rainfall or whatever it may be. To them, they were thinking there is the endless watery abyss below the earth and then the waters above the earth that are between us and the realm of God.

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So they see a complete cosmic collapse. The bubble in which the entire earth resides for them was destroyed. So at least per the narrative, again, we know that the earth is a sphere. I'm not advocating being a flat earther, but the ancients thought this way. And to them, what this story is communicating is complete cosmic collapse, a complete destruction of all creation. There's actually quite a few stories that relate to this story in the ancient Near East. They help us to know that

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This was a common story that an ancient would have understood. You got stories like Atrahasis or the story of Utnapishti and Gilgamesh. Basically the gods, there's this lower class of gods and

they're doing all the work to feed the higher gods. They don't like their jobs, so they appeal to the gods and the gods say, okay, we'll make man. So they make man so that all the lower level gods can come enjoy company with the big guys. Well, humans are noisy. They don't like them.

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completely wipe them off the face of the earth except for one. There's also on the smaller level, there have been scholarly evaluations of the flood in the Elpuk of Gilgamesh and in the Bible. And there's lots of small points of contact to the point that, you know, again, some scholars have said, well, the Bible is just copying off the older story that comes from Gilgamesh. I don't think that's the case. I think he's reusing the story just like there's a thousand different Cinderella stories in our culture, all trying to make unique

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points with the same theme, that's what the Bible's doing. They're taking a well-known theme and communicating how Yahweh is on top by not only using the story, but making sure that they make clear that they are using the flood motif that is found in Gilgamesh. To do what? To show how... So, in Gilgamesh's version, for instance, humans, they're noisy creatures, the gods don't like them after they've created them, so they decide to wipe them off the face of the earth. And one god decides to save Utnapishtim.

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bring him through the flood and the gods are angry about it. Well, in this one, it's not about humans being annoying and gods being fickle. It's about humans, our fallenness, we have destroyed God's good creation, the temple he has made, and he is, one, bringing justice, but even more than that, he is working to preserve the original family that he has created and to continue the project of expanding his goodness until...

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all the ruin and chaos that's out there is gone. So once again, like we've talked about before, the flood narrative a lot of times is kind of poking fun at some of these other ancient stories. Maybe not poking fun at them or just trying to help the Israelites see that they're part of a better story. Their story is the real story, the one true story. Is that what you're thinking? Right, absolutely. Yeah, there's...

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lots of stories in the first few books of Genesis that are mirrored by other mythologies in their culture, but that's exactly part of the biblical author's strategy to communicate who Yahweh is. Pete They're using the language of the day to make connections that people would understand very clearly to paint a picture of Yahweh that is not the same as these other gods that

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are being worshiped. Right. And they're also showing that Yahweh is the one controlling it all, not the other nation's gods. He's the one on top of it. He's also doing it with wisdom instead of just fickleness or whatever it is. He is the one with ultimate power, provision, life, care for his

creatures, all these things that go into this story. Yeah. The biblical narrative definitely paints a much different picture of God than what

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Near Eastern's would have understood God to be. And so in the flood story, especially you see very much the, like you were talking about, the faithfulness of God and the love of God to preserve humanity even though they've messed up terribly. He's there to help them. And there's justice involved with the flood, like you said, but there's very much the sense of God saving us from ourselves, that we were about to destroy.

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ourselves and God swoops in and rescues humanity and basically gives us a chance to start over, which is something we all need at times, right? Right. I mean, you brought this up last week, I think, where the correct translation at the beginning of this chapter is not for God to say, I've decided to make an end of all flesh. The correct translation is the end of all flesh has come up before me.

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It's like I can see them destroying themselves. So I'm just going to go ahead and get this over with, but I'm going to do it early so that this family I have chosen can survive, period. Yeah. And I think there's some mercy there too. I mean, the world had become such a demonized, awful, wicked place to live in. And I think part of it was him mercifully putting an end to all of that and saying, let's clean, like you said, let's cleanse the land.

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and start fresh with Noah, which humanity goes down the same path. Right. But yeah, so I think it probably worth talking about a little bit. Whenever you start talking about how these mythologies from the surrounding culture are so closely compared to the Bible, it starts to raise questions of like, did this happen? Is this a real history that's being portrayed here or am I supposed to read it differently? And so...

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think first we should probably talk about some of the dates that are given surrounding the flood. And it'll make sense why these need to be brought up first. And that's because a lot of these dates have been organized to fit onto Israel's festival calendar and remind us of important dates that happened during the Exodus. So we'll come back to the question of like, how does this fit historically? How does the Bible story?

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fit in history. But first, I think, yeah, we should talk about how the dates work. So the Ark actually comes to rest after it's, you know, been going through the waters, it comes to rest during the week of the Feast of Booth, which is the week in which Israel, after they come out of the Exodus, they're to remember the provision that Yahweh gave them in the wilderness under God's shelter, under Yahweh's shelter. So Noah, he has just come through the waters, which

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Really, we talked about how that has similar connotations with the wilderness, this place that's ruined, it's uncreated space that humans can't survive in. And so he's been going through pretty much by faith in Yahweh's provision in the realm of chaos for a long while. The fact that he comes down and lands during the week of the Feast of Boos, that's pretty significant. The meaning here matches up pretty well with the meaning of the Feast of Boos. And then you've got the mountains, they become visible on the 10th new moon.

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and the waters finish receding on the first new moon. So it's been a whole year, we're at New Year's Day, the day that the Exodus was done, because after the Exodus, Yahweh comes to Moses and Aaron and says, hey, this is gonna be the first day for you guys now. The first day of the year is also the day that the tabernacle was erected and the day that the wilderness generation is renewed in the book of Numbers. So, you know, the old ones die off and then Miriam dies off and then.

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the new generation is kind of renewed on New Year's Day. So... The date of kind of like new birth, new... Yes. Exactly, yeah. Noah comes through his exodus and all things are made new right there on New Year's Day. So there's intentionality with the way that these dates are placed on this narrative. Now there's one more thing to bring up about the dates and that is the amount of time that this took place in. The flood starts on the second month of the 17th day.

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and the ark comes to rest on the seventh month on the 17th day. So it's five months between the ark going up and the ark coming down. The author says in chapter 7 verse 24 and in chapter 8 verse 3 that that is 150 days. Now the Hebrew calendar didn't have 30 day months all the time. Kind of like us, we have some months that are 31 days, some that are 30, some that are 29. So the fact that they say that this is five months and it's 150 days doesn't work.

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Some of those months would be 29 days, and so this would have been like 147 days or 148 days. And the only reason that's significant is because the author is rounding and using what might be called like schematic days instead of chronological days. He's trying to use these dates to impart meaning, and he's not as concerned with exact date precision. So he's not trying to be literal 150 days. And we see that in other places too when...

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Somebody says 40 days and 40 nights. It's not necessarily exactly 40 days But it's a significant amount of time the author is not trying and we do this in our when we talk There's times where we'll round up or we'll make a statement That's not exact but it's because when sometimes we're doing that intentionally because we're trying to communicate something and that's what's

going on here is He's Intentionally not being literal because he's one he's wanting to communicate something significant, right

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Right, yeah. He's not as concerned with precision to the level that we're used to, like historical precision. He's trying to communicate stories to people with significant meaning. You can see how the dates we talked about are very significant. Right, right. So yeah, we just need to get a little bit comfortable with the author fudging some things for the sake of making a good story and making a meaningful story. Right, right. So it's the same kind of thing of like when we use slang or when we...

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use hyperbole or exaggerating. Yeah, we're not being literal in that moment, but it's intentional though, and the biblical authors do the same thing. And that's why we have this podcast, right? You've got to understand the context of what's going on to better understand some of the slang and some of the things they say may not be literal.

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that doesn't demean them at all. It doesn't mean we're looking at the Bible as less authoritative or less truthful or anything. It just means we have to understand their language and their context. Yeah, we may not take it literally, but we take it very seriously. Oh, that's a good way to put it. I like that. I'm gonna steal that. Go for it. Yes. I mean, we want to try and take the meaning that they are giving just like

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What's a good slang phrase that makes no sense? Oh gosh, we live in Kentucky. We ought to be able to figure out a few of those, right? Stop horse playing. Yeah, yeah. So yeah, that's a good one to say quit horsing around. Yeah, quit horsing around. Right, yeah. Like are your kids actually pretending to be horses? If I took you literally, your children are horses. But if I take you seriously, I just mean your kids are going crazy and you want to tell them to stop. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So.

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Yeah, I think you're actually honoring the biblical text more by digging into the context and understanding what they're really intending to say. Even if it's not literal, it's, again, taking it seriously. So yeah. Yeah, that's definitely something we need to remember is to, within the context of the Bible's own culture and literary conventions, take it only as literally as it wants to be taken.

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be more concerned with taking it seriously. Yeah, yeah, we always want to take it seriously, but we need to be careful because sometimes it's not meant to be taken literally. Right, so then where does that leave the flood? Where does that leave the historical question of, was there a

worldwide global flood? Well, we talked about that the Bible's worldview is one of a flat earth sitting inside a bubble. And I think we have reason to take that worldview seriously

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in that it communicates a lot of profound meaning within that worldview, but it's not asking us to actually believe that the earth is flat. Same thing here, I think that there is a long tradition of flood stories, both in the ancient Near East as well as actually around the world. And the biblical author is piggybacking on that exact same theme, that same story, but communicating true facts about Yahweh's relationship to his

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people in that story. So was there a world wide flood? I don't know. I don't think the biblical author knows. I don't think the story really wants to answer that question. It's very possible that there was, and maybe that's where these stories come from. It may also just be that these stories come from a belief about the waters being chaos. And so when the earth is covered in chaos, it's kind of like a flood. That's why you see things like Babylon's destruction of Jerusalem being described as a flood.

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you're saying is something that we've said from the very beginning when we started Genesis is the biblical author, they're more focused on the why than the how. And so when we're going through the story of creation, we're not focused on like, how does all this make sense with our scientific knowledge that we have now? Because that wasn't even on their radar. They weren't thinking about

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they were just focused on, okay, why did God create the world? And I think the flood narrative is very similar to that, that we have here the author trying to communicate a very important why question. Sometimes we, like we've talked about before, we try to get the Bible to answer questions that it's not actually trying to answer. And so we need to be careful not to do that.

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This isn't trying to teach us about a literal worldwide flood. What happened? What's the event? That's a good question. I mean, and I don't know that we necessarily know for sure. I mean, like you, I think there's a good possibility that there was some kind of flood. They didn't believe in a globe though. And so was it a worldwide flood that went over the globe? That's not what they're trying to communicate here. I don't think. I think they're trying to communicate, like you said, that the whole cosmos was being

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destroyed and basically re-created. So I think something happened. Right. So, I mean, what could be happened here is throughout the Bible, enemy nations are described as floods and chaos waters or wilderness. And so this could be an artistic depiction of a conquering nation



that swept through and there was just mass slaughter or something or a war. Or it could be there was an actual flood that covered...

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the hills that everybody could see. And well, if you think the earth is flat and the hills are covered, it must be everywhere. Yeah. I think it's wise for us to approach texts like this with a whole lot of humility and recognize that the Bible just doesn't give us a whole lot of answers. It doesn't tell us if there was a boat that had all the animals, it doesn't tell us how all the animals could have possibly fit in there or what that looks like. The Bible, we have to, and it's not bad for us to wrestle with those things and ask those kind of questions. But at the end of the day...

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What's most important is the story that the author is intending to tell, which is a story about God rescuing humanity and the cosmos coming in on itself and being remade to give us a new beginning, new start. Yeah. When we're trying to teach the meaning of this text, which is showing Yahweh's commitment to his people, try to keep that very separate and distinct.

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from our speculations about history and chronology. Yeah, yeah. I think it's probably a good spot for us to stop now as we kind of think through this story as we read through it. We've talked about how the boat is kind of this new tabernacle where as the earth is being cleansed, he brings the elect family with all the animals into this new kind of garden-ish boat where humanity has dominion over the animals again and how the Ark lands.

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during the week that Israel remembers Yahweh's provision in the wilderness and the waters finished receding on Exodus day, all these significant things built into this narrative, into the literary structure. And so, I think that sets us up for next week. We're going to look at what happens whenever ReNoah gets off the boat and the covenant and the conversations that he has with Yahweh and then how his family plays out from there.

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very middle of the chiasm for the flood narrative where God remembers Noah. So, yeah, it's a good place for us to pick up next time. Well, with that, we'll see you all next time.