

genesis

Creation & Blessing

Genesis 8.1-9.17 → God's Covenant

A God remembered Noah and the ark rests. (8.1-5)

8 But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided. ²The fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, ³and the waters receded from the earth continually. At the end of 150 days the waters had abated, ⁴and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵And the waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.

*What does it mean that "God remembered Noah?"
Why is the dating so important?*

B The waters recede and the ark is emptied. (8.6-19)

⁶At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made ⁷and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. ⁸Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground. ⁹But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him. ¹⁰He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. ¹¹And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. ¹²Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore.

¹³In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth. And Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry. ¹⁴In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth had dried out. ¹⁵Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶"Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁷Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." ¹⁸So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. ¹⁹Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark.

How did Noah know it was safe to leave the ark?

genesis

Creation & Blessing

Genesis 8.1-9.17 → God's Covenant

C Noah offered sacrifices and God makes a promise. (8.20-9.17)

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹ And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. ²² While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

9 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. ² The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. ³ Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. ⁴ But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. ⁵ And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

⁶ "Whoever sheds the blood of man,
by man shall his blood be shed,
for God made man in his own image.

⁷ And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it."

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹ "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, ¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." ¹² And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³ I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." ¹⁷ God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

What things are significant about God's covenant with Noah?

genesis

Creation & Blessing

Genesis 8.1-9.17 → God's Covenant

Assyrian records may identify such a name in Armenia or eastern Turkey, but the precise location remains unknown. After it was clear that the earth was suitable for habitation, the eight people and all **the animals** left **the ark**. This was 377 days after they had entered it (cf. 7:11 with 8:13–14). The theme of “rest” seems to be quite strong throughout the story. The ark rested (v. 4); at first **the dove could find no place to set its feet** (v. 9; lit., “could not find a resting place for its feet”). When the ark came to rest on Ararat, this was more than a physical landing on dry ground. It was a new beginning; the world was clean and at rest.¹

8:20–22. Leaving the ark, **Noah** made a sacrifice to God, which was a **pleasing aroma** to Him. The people of God are a worshiping people, as Israel would learn, and that worship was to take the form of giving God some of the best of what was His. The redeemed of the Lord offer Him the praise of their lips (Heb. 13:15), the best of their possessions (Prov. 3:9), and the willingness and humility of their spirits. Noah received God's grace, walked with God in obedience and righteousness, was preserved from judgment, entered a new age with people's wickedness temporarily removed, and responded with worship and sacrifice.

After Noah made the sacrifice, God promised **never to curse the ground** in this way again. The continuity of seasons is evidence of God's forbearance.

9:1–4. God instructed Noah to **be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth** (vv. 1, 7) just as He had told Adam (1:28). And Noah, like Adam, was to have dominion over animals (9:2; cf. 1:26, 28). Also both were given food to eat (9:3; cf. 1:29; 2:16) with one prohibition (9:5–6; cf. 2:17).

9:5–7. With Noah's new beginning came a covenant. It was necessary now to have a covenant with obligations for mankind and a promise from **God**. Because of the Flood's destruction of life people might begin to think that God holds life cheap and assume that taking life is a small matter. This covenant shows that **life** is sacred and that **man** is not to destroy **man**, who is made **in the image of God**.

In essence, then, this covenant was established to ensure the stability of nature. It helped guarantee the order of the world. People would also learn that human law was necessary for the stability of life and that wickedness should not go unchecked as it had before. So human government was brought in.

9:8–17. That this **covenant** (vv. 9, 11–13, 15–17) is cosmic and universal (**every living creature**, vv. 10 [twice], 12; **all living creatures**, vv. 15–16; **all life**, vv. 11, 15, 17) is seen from the **rainbow** God gave as a **sign** (vv. 12–13, 17).

When it arches over the horizon after a rainfall it is an all-embracing sign of God's faithfulness to His work of grace. Signs remind participants in a **covenant** to keep the stipulations.

The rainbow arcs like a battle bow hung against the clouds. (The Heb. word for rainbow, *qeshet*, is also the word for a battle bow.) Elsewhere in the Old Testament God referred to judgment storms by using terms for bows and arrows... The bow is now “put away,” hung in place by the clouds, suggesting that the “battle,” the storm, is over. Thus the rainbow speaks of peace. In the ancient Near East, covenant treaties were made after wars as a step toward embarking on peace. Similarly God, after judging sin, made a **covenant** of peace. Israel certainly would be strengthened to see in the skies again and again God's pledge that He keeps His promise of grace. But certainly it also reminded the faithful in Israel that God's judgment was completed for that age. Judgment will come once again in the end times (Zech. 14:1–3; Rev. 19:15) before there can be complete millennial peace and rest (Rev. 20:6). So Genesis 9:8–17 anticipates that in the end Israel will beat her swords into plowshares (Isa. 2:4; Micah 4:3). In the meantime life goes on in a new order; the divine will of forbearance, “common grace,” is at work until that end.

But the next time you find yourself in a storm, Genesis 8 can give you new hope and encouragement; because the major theme of the chapter is renewal and rest after tribulation. The chapter records the end of a storm and the beginning of new life and hope for God's people and God's creation. Just consider what God does in Genesis 8 and take courage!²

Feeling forsaken is a normal human emotion that most of us have experienced, whether we admit it or not. “Why do You stand afar off, O Lord?” asked the psalmist. “Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?” (Ps. 10:1, NKJV) Paul confessed that his troubles in Asia had been so severe that he almost gave up on life (2 Cor. 1:8); and Jesus, who experienced all our human trials, cried from the cross, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matt. 27:46, NKJV)

The word “remember” in Genesis 8:1 doesn't mean to call something to mind that may have been forgotten. God can't forget anything because He knows the end from the beginning. Rather, it means “to pay attention to, to fulfill a promise and act on behalf of somebody.” ... To remember means to act on behalf of another.

The Hebrew text says that “the ark came to rest,” reminding us that Noah's name means “rest” and that his father Lamech had hoped that his son would bring rest to a weary world (Gen. 5:28–29). Though the ark had rested safely, Noah was waiting for the Lord to tell him what to do. He waited forty days and then sent out the raven; and being an unclean carrion-eating bird (Lev. 11:13–15), it felt right at home among the floating carcasses.

¹ Allen P. Ross, “Genesis,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 39–40.

² Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Basic*, “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Pub., 1998), 103.

genesis

Creation & Blessing

Genesis 8.1-9.17 → God's Covenant

A dove bearing an olive branch is a familiar symbol of peace around the world. A week later, when Noah sent the dove out the third time, it didn't return; so he knew the water had dried up.

Noah was a man of faith whose name is recorded in Hebrews 11 with those of other heroes of faith (v. 7). He had the faith to walk with God when the people of the world were ignoring and disobeying God. He had the faith to work for God and to witness for God when opposition to truth was the popular thing. Now that the Flood was over, he exercised faith to wait on God before leaving the ark.

Noah was like a "second Adam" as he made this new beginning for the human race. God had brought the earth out of the waters during Creation week, preparing it for Adam and Eve; and now He had brought the earth through the Flood and made it ready for Noah and his family. The Lord even gave Noah's family and the animals the same mandate that He had given at the beginning: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 8:17; 1:22, 28).

The ground cursed no more (v. 21a). God had cursed the ground because of Adam's sin (3:17) and had added a further curse because of Cain's sins (4:11–12). God's promise recorded here didn't invalidate either of those curses, and they won't be removed until Jesus returns and God's people dwell in the holy city (Rev. 22:3). But in His grace, God decided not to add to man's affliction.

God had told Adam and Eve to "be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth" (1:28), and He repeated that mandate *twice* to Noah and his family (9:1, 7). All of Noah's descendants were important to the plan of God, but especially the line of Shem. From that line Abraham would be born, the man God chose to found the Jewish nation. From that nation would come the Redeemer who would fulfill 3:15 and crush the serpent's head.

In Scripture, children are described as a blessing, not a curse; and to have many children and grandchildren was evidence of the favor of God (Gen. 24:60; Pss. 127:3–5; 128:3–4). God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as the stars of the sky and the sand of the sea (Gen. 15:5; 22:17), and the patriarchs invoked the blessing of fruitfulness on their heirs (28:3; 35:11; 48:4). The Lord covenanted with Israel to give them many children if the nation would obey His laws (Lev. 26:9; Deut. 7:13).

However, God put one restriction on the eating of animal flesh: the meat must be free of blood (9:4). God stated concisely to Noah what He later elaborated through Moses: the life is in the blood, and the life must be respected, even if you're butchering an animal to eat at a feast. (See Lev. 3:17; 7:26–27; 17:10–14; 19:26; Deut. 12:16, 23–25; 15:23.) In this restriction, God revealed again His concern for animal life. The life is in the blood, and that life comes from God and should be respected. Furthermore, the blood of animals would be important in most of the Mosaic sacrifices, so the blood must be treated with reverence.

From instructing Noah about the shedding of animal blood, the Lord proceeded to discuss an even more important topic: the shedding of human blood. Thus far, mankind didn't have a very good track record when it came to caring for one another. Cain had killed his brother Abel (4:8), Lamech had killed a young man and bragged about it (vv. 23–24), and the earth had been filled with all kinds of violence (6:11, 13).

Under Old Testament Law there was no police force as we know it. If a murder was committed, it was up to the family of the victim to find the culprit and bring him to justice. There's a difference between murder and involuntary manslaughter (Ex. 21:12–14), so the Lord instructed the nation of Israel to establish six cities of refuge to which an accused murderer could flee for safety (Num. 35:6–34; Deut. 19:1–13). The elders of the city would protect the accused until the case could be investigated; and if the accused was found guilty, the family of the deceased could proceed with the execution. Since the murderer had shed blood, the murderer's blood must be shed.

Government was established by God because the human heart is evil (Gen. 6:5) and the fear of punishment can help to restrain would-be lawbreakers. The law can restrain but it can't regenerate; only the grace of God can change the human heart (Jer. 31:31–34; Heb. 8:7–13). But if individuals, families, or groups were allowed to deal with offenders in their own way, society would be in a state of constant chaos. Human government has its weaknesses and limitations, but government is better than anarchy and people doing what's right in their own eyes (Jud. 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).

God ordained and established three institutions on this earth: marriage and the family (Gen. 1:26–28; 2:18–25), human government (9:5–6), and the church (Matt. 16:13–19; Acts 2). Each has its sphere of responsibility and one can't substitute for the other. The church wields the sword of the Spirit (Heb. 4:12), not the sword of justice (Rom. 13:4; John 18:36); but if the government interferes with matters of Christian conscience, believers have the right to disobey (Acts 4:18–20).

A covenant with creation. At least four times in this covenant, the Lord mentioned "every living creature." He was speaking about the animals and birds that Noah had kept safe in the ark during the Flood (v. 10). Once again, we're reminded of God's special concern for animal life.

A covenant sign. To help His people remember His covenants, God would give them a visible sign. His covenant with Abraham was sealed with the sign of circumcision (Gen. 17:11; Rom. 4:9–12), and the Mosaic Covenant at Sinai with the sign of the weekly Sabbath (Ex. 31:16–17). God's covenant with Noah and the animal creation was sealed with the sign of the rainbow.

Three rainbows. Three men in Scripture saw significant rainbows. Noah saw the rainbow *after the storm*, just as God's people see it today. But the Prophet Ezekiel saw the rainbow *in the midst of the storm* when he had that remarkable vision of the wheels and the throne (Ezek. 1:28). Ezekiel also saw living creatures and each one had four faces! One was like a man, one like a lion, one like an ox, and one like an eagle—the same faces John saw (Rev. 4:6–7).

genesis

Creation & Blessing

Genesis 8.1-9.17 → God's Covenant

Of course, the Apostle John saw the rainbow *before the storm of judgment broke loose* (v. 3). In fact, John saw a complete rainbow around the throne of God! On earth, we see “in part”; but one day in heaven, we will see things fully as they really are (1 Cor. 13:12).

The personal lesson for God's people is simply this: in the storms of life, always look for the rainbow of God's covenant promise.

Noah was saved by faith, as the writer of Hebrews makes so clear: “By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith” (11:7b). Noah believed God, and righteousness was imputed to him. He is the first man in the Bible to be described as righteous: “Noah was a righteous man, blameless ...” (6:9; cf. 7:1). And his faith and righteousness produced towering obedience in him. Four times the account gives variations of the declaration that “Noah ... did all that God commanded him” (6:22; cf. 7:5, 9, 16).³

As we saw in the preceding chapter, the flood story divides into perfect halves of de-creation and then re-creation, with the second half providing a mirror image of the first half, but in reverse order. The symmetries in this re-creation half of the account are astounding because it not only mirrors the events of the first half but also presents a mirror-image repetition in the use of the numbers of days, as Wenham's chart shows:

7 days of waiting for flood (7:4)
7 days of waiting for flood (7:10)
40 days of flood (7:17a)
150 days of water triumphing (7:24)
150 days of water waning (8:3)
40 days of waiting (8:6)
7 days of waiting (8:10)
7 days of waiting (8:12)

Moses' attention to detail amazes us. And if that is not enough, this re-creation half of the account not only mirrors the de-creation of the flood's rise but parallels the events of creation in Genesis 1—the re-creation parallels the original creation!

As Brevard Childs said, “God's remembering always implies his movement toward the object.... The essence of God's remembering lies in his acting toward someone because of a previous commitment.”

So now God acted to bring restoration and re-creation to the flooded world: “But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided” (8:1). This wind echoed “the Spirit” (“wind” and “Spirit” are the same Hebrew word) in Genesis 1 hovering over the waters at creation

The effect of the God-ordered wind caused enough abatement that “At the end of 150 days the waters had abated, and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat” (vv. 3b, 4)—somewhere in Armenia. And there the ark sat for over two more months, until “in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen” (v. 5). They sat in the grounded ark for sixty days plus as they waited for the land to dry out, now some seven months in all.

Righteous Noah not only displayed scrupulous obedience when he did everything God commanded him over a hundred-year period while building the ark but then displayed astounding endurance and faith as in the midst of confinement and discomfort he waited patiently for God's deliverance. There is no recorded evidence that God spoke to him during the months on the ark or that Noah had a new word from God. But he persevered in faith, manifested by his amazing obedience and patience—“walking with God.”

Noah also learned as he went. He released the raven first because as an unclean bird it was expendable since it was good for neither food nor sacrifice (cf. Leviticus 11:15; Deuteronomy 14:14). But the dove was an altogether different bird. It was white and clean and often used for sacrifice (cf. Leviticus 1:14; 12:6). Because it was from among the clean animals, a dove would be sacrificed in Noah's post-flood burnt offerings (cf. 8:20).

Altar built. It was glorious. But the first thought of Noah was Godward: “Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar” (v. 20). Joyous worship, surrender, and atonement were in this offering. The burnt offering described here represented Noah's total surrender and dedication to God (cf. Leviticus 1). The offering was totally incinerated to picture the total giving of oneself. At the same time it was wholly celebratory—thanking God for the salvation just rendered. As it burnt and then incinerated to ashes, Noah was indicating in effect, “All my life is yours—everything!”

From here on to 9:17 the story switches from Noah's faithfulness to God's response to Noah—a response of *grace, blessing, and covenant*—three words for the new world.

³ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 141.

genesis

Creation & Blessing

Genesis 8.1-9.17 → God's Covenant

Blessed multiplication. Next God responded to Noah by repeating the blessing first given to Adam (cf. 1:22–25, 28–30), but with some qualifications due to human sin. God charged Noah's family to multiply and by implication to exercise dominion over the earth. "And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth' " (9:1). The blessing still is intact. It has been true, and always will be, that children are a blessing from God (cf. Psalm 127:3–5). God's people are charged to procreate and fill the earth.

This grand covenant was/is *universal, unilateral, and unconditional*. Its universality is evident because it encompasses not only every human being (good or evil) but every living creature on the planet. It is unilateral in that God alone is the sole initiator. He twice calls it "my covenant" (vv. 8, 11). It does not require any assent, action, or ratification from mankind—not even acknowledgment. It is unconditional because there will never be another cosmic destruction by water no matter what we earthlings do. The covenant is the self-motivated promise of an unconditional mercy throughout human history.

Beautifully, God called the rainbow simply "my bow." And twice Scripture associates a rainbow with God's glory, once to speak of his brightness (Ezekiel 1:28) and once to describe the light around his throne (Revelation 4:3). There was no suggestion that the bow was a new phenomenon. Rather, it was divinely owned as a sign for future generations.

The expression "remembered" (*zākar*) does not mean "calling to mind" here; it is covenant language, designating covenant fidelity (e.g., the Fourth Commandment, Exod 20:8; cf. Luke 1:72). God is acting in accordance with his earlier promise to Noah (6:18). We find the same expression in the Noahic covenant, where the Lord commits to carrying out his promises (8:21) and establishes the covenant sign of the rainbow (9:14–15). "Remembered" often is found in the circumstance of deliverance, based on God's prior covenant commitments, as in Israel's exodus and occupation of Canaan (e.g., Exod 2:24; 6:5; Num 10:9). It describes the Lord's response to the requests of his people, as when he delivers Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah on account of Abraham's mediation (19:29) and when he hearkens to barren Rachel, who gives birth to Joseph (30:22). Divine "remembrance" was the appeal of Moses' intervention on behalf of apostate Israel (Exod 32:13), and it was reason for God's return to a contrite people (Lev 26:42, 45). "Remember" speaks of the future as well as the past and present, for the psalmist declares that for the sake of covenant the Lord will bring about a future "blessing" on his people (Ps 115:12). People of the covenant, whether yesterday or today, are expected to exercise covenant allegiance by "remembering" the Lord (e.g., Deut 8:18; Ps 103:18). Israel's God had remembered Noah, and by this Israel too was incited to remember the Lord of Sinai.⁴

The three movements of the Lord's salvation include (1) the receding floodwater (8:1b–5), (2) the drying earth (8:6–14), and (3) the disembarkation (8:15–19)... Description of retreating floodwater dominates the first phase (8:1b–5), where four times in the Hebrew we are told that the waters "receded" (*šākak*, v. 1b), "receded steadily" (*wayyāšūbū ... hālōk wāšōb*, v. 3a), "had gone down" (*wayyaḥsērū*, v. 3b), and "continued to recede" (*hālōk wāḥsōr*, v. 5). The centerpiece of the narrative (8:6–14) reiterates the "earth dried up" (vv. 7, 13–14), forming an inclusio by the repetition of "dried up" (*yēbōšet*) at v. 7 and the concluding "was dry" (*yābēšā*) at v. 14. Sandwiched between is the twice repeated "dried up" (*ḥārab*, v. 13). This recessionary culminates in the last movement (8:15–19), containing the third divine speech, "Come out" (v. 16) and "Bring out" (v. 17), followed by the corresponding, "Noah came out" (v. 18), and "all the animals ... came out of the ark" (v. 19), all derived from the same Hebrew word (*yāšā*). God commanded the wind, the waters, and the inhabitants of the ark, and all obeyed.

8:1b–2 "Wind" (*rūaḥ*) echoes the description of God's "Spirit" (*rūaḥ*) hovering over the "waters" at creation (1:2c). *Elohim*, as in Genesis 1, brings this to pass, indicating that the wind is the renewed work of the Creator. "Remembered" in the previous sentence reflects the covenant name *Yahweh*, who is faithful to his promise, and by *Elohim* we find that the divine power of creation is unleashed anew to the ends of accomplishing that covenant pledge.

Significant time periods and dates are often cited in chap. 8, acting like milestones in tracing the water's steady regression. The flood's inversion of mounting waters to receding waters is perfectly paralleled by the number "a hundred and fifty days" (see 7:12 discussion). The ark at last comes to rest on the "seventeenth day of the seventh month" (v. 4), giving a five-month period from first rains (7:11) to the ark's grounding. The same five-month period extends from the first sighting of the mountains (8:5) to the completely dried earth (v. 14). The seventh month in the religious calendar of the Hebrews was Tishri, the most important month of the sacred convocations; it included the Day of Atonement as well as the Feasts of Trumpets, Tabernacles, and Sacred Assembly (Lev 23:23–36). It was appropriate, therefore, that the ark should find refuge in the cultic month celebrating atonement and God's provision. By the ark coming to "rest" (*nūaḥ*, v. 4), the passage is reminiscent of Noah's naming (see 5:29). In a play on "Noah" (*nōaḥ*) the author indicates that the patriarch achieved, in a most unexpected way, the hopes of his father Lamech.

"Ararat," known as ancient Urartu in Assyrian records, was an extensive territory and bordered the northern Mesopotamian region. It reached its political zenith in the ninth to sixth centuries B.C. Urartu surrounded Lake Van with boundaries taking in southeast Turkey, southern Russia, and northwest Iran. Among the mountains of modern Armenia is the impressive peak known today as Mount Ararat, some seventeen thousand feet in elevation, which the Turks call Byk Ari Da. "Mount Ararat" as a

⁴ K. A. Mathews, [Genesis 1-11:26](#), vol. 1A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 382–383.

genesis

Creation & Blessing

Genesis 8.1-9.17 → God's Covenant

geographical designation comes from later tradition. During the eleventh to twelfth centuries A.D., it became the traditional site known as the place of Noah's landing.

Our verse alludes to creation's gathering of waters on the third day when the "dry land appeared" for the first time (1:9–10). Both verses have the verb "appeared/ visible" (*r'h*), and creation's "dry land" (*yabbāšā*) is echoed later in our narrative by its verbal forms "dried up" (v. 7) and "was dry" (v. 14, *yābaš*).

According to rabbinic tradition, the raven was released first as expendable since it was neither good for food nor sacrifice. Also Isaiah, in predicting Edom's desolation, drew on the symbolic raven and on the creation language of 1:2, *tōhū* ("wasteland") and *bōhū* ("empty"), to depict its demise (34:11). Its departure from the ark signified that the impurities of the past had been removed and the creation of the new world had a fresh start.

After waiting another seven days, the second release of the dove proves promising because it returns with the first testimony to life, "a freshly plucked olive leaf" (8:10–11). As a fresh leaf, it was newly born and thus was confirmation that the earth again was yielding its herbage (as 1:11–12, 30). The detail of an "olive" leaf too may have caused early readers to reflect on connections with the tabernacle, where olive oil fueled the menorah in the tabernacle (Exod 27:20; Lev 24:2–4) and was added to the mixture of perfumed oil for anointing tabernacle and furnishings (Exod 30:24–29). It was obviously something that pleased God.

8:20 Although worship was known from the days of Cain and Abel (4:3–4; also 4:26), this incident is the first account of an "altar" erected for that purpose.

As already noted, the horned altar of the tabernacle was commonly described as "the altar of burnt offering," making Noah a prototype of Moses, who made sacrifice in the wilderness.

In 6:5 the emphasis is on the unprecedented pervasiveness of sin, which deserved divine retribution, and in 8:21 God acknowledges that sin is a given with humanity and has ruled the human heart from the outset (i.e., Adam's sin).

The troubling aftermath of the Edenic curse with its toil and pain continues in the new world. Here God pledges only to desist from imposing any further affliction on the already-burdened ground. The flood is viewed as another curse upon the "ground/earth" that was the result of human disobedience as in the garden, where the earth suffered its first judgment (3:17–19). Yet it is because of Noah as mediating priest that the world experiences some "comfort" from the pain of the cursed ground (see discussion at 5:29; 9:20).

Better is reading the clause as concession "even though" or explanatory "for" (AV, NASB, NRSV), meaning that despite warrant for another judgment God will exercise clemency.

Peter pointed to Noah's flood as evidence that God had already shown the will and capacity to bring about a worldwide cataclysm. The apostle forewarns there is yet a great conflagration that at the Lord's command will close the final chapter of Noah's new world (2 Pet 3:3–7). Ours is not a "world without end" (AV, Eph 3:21).

The fourth divine speech answers the description of the corrupt and violent creation before the flood (6:11–12). It consists of two divine utterances: (1) the renewal of promissory blessing with the inauguration of postdiluvian laws (9:1–7) and (2) the Noachic covenant and sign (9:8–17). "Increase" occurs in vv. 1 and 7, forming an inclusio and setting the literary boundaries of the blessing, which give focus to renewed procreation for human and animal. This blessing involves new dietary provisions, and within the passage are two prohibitions, each introduced by the same Hebrew term *'ak* ("but," "surely"), pertaining to the eating and killing of animals (v. 4) and to the killing of human life by animal or human (vv. 5–6).

The Noachic covenant's common allusions to 1:1–2:3 show that Noah is the second Adam who heads the new family of humanity, indicating that the blessing continues through the progeny of the Sethite line. Also 8:20–9:17 possesses lexical and thematic connections with the ratification of the Sinai covenant by Moses and the elders (Exod 24:4–18). Both have the building of altar and sacrifice followed by "covenant" (*bērīt*, 9:9; Exod 24:7); divine "blessing" (*bārak*, 9:1; Exod 23:25); provision for protection from beasts (*hayyat*, 9:2; Exod 23:29); divine preservation of the "land" (*'ereš*, 9:11; Exod 23:29); and the "cloud" for rainbow and the descent of the glory of God (*bē'ānān*, 9:13–17; Exod 24:15). If our author has joined Noah's covenant with that of Moses' Israel, we have another association of early Genesis with later Moses by which the author establishes the thematic linkage of God's blessing—Adam (1:26–28; 5:1–2), Noah as the new Adam (9:1–2), and Moses' Israel. By this means the author shows how God achieved the universal blessing through Noah's descendant Abraham, who is the covenant progenitor of all Israel.

The recipients of the renewed blessing, specifically stated to include Noah's "sons," underlines the corresponding term "descendants" ("seed") in the covenant that follows (v. 9).

9:2–3 Since 1:28 forms the background to the blessing (9:1), it is striking that the charge to "subdue" and "rule" (1:28b) is absent. This admits that the new circumstances of the sin-burdened world have altered this aspect of the Adamic blessing, which now will be difficult to accomplish in the hostile environs of the new world. The language of "beasts," "birds," creeping "creature," and "fish" mirrors the first divine command as well as the original commissioning on dietary practices (vv. 2–3; 1:28–30).

To insure that animal life will not be a threat to the human family, the Lord endows the animal population with a "fear and dread" of human beings, enabling mankind to exercise a limited authority over them... This appears remarkably different from the relationship that the first man and woman enjoyed in the garden with their animal residents (2:19–20).

The inclusive character of the directive ("everything," occurring twice) includes meat as a dietary feature, as shown in v. 4. God did not expressly prohibit the eating of meat in the initial stipulation at creation, but by inference 9:3's provision for flesh is

genesis

Creation & Blessing

Genesis 8.1-9.17 → God's Covenant

used as a dividing mark between the antediluvian and postdiluvian periods. Whether or not early man could eat meat by permission from the beginning, now it is stated formally in the Noahic covenant.

Restricting the “lifeblood” meant forbidding the eating of an animal while yet alive and, what logically follows, draining the blood from a slain animal as later required in the Mosaic proscription (e.g., Deut 12:24).

This restriction was not a matter of decorum but a recognition that the blood was representative of the life force. In Hebrew “blood” is in apposition to “life,” which the NIV has rendered “lifeblood.” This is the stated basis for the cultic prohibition of eating blood in later Israel: “For the life of every creature is its blood” (Lev 17:11a).

The general rule is that human life when violated, either by animal or fellow human, required the life of the offender. Exemplary of this in later Israel is the requirement of death by stoning for both ox and owner as responsible agents in the case where an ox’s goring results in a person’s death (Exod 21:28–32). Israelite tradition deemed monetary compensation as an unacceptable penalty where malicious murder was involved (e.g., Lev 24:17; Num 35:31–34).

Israel’s covenant law prohibited a double standard for Hebrew and alien in the administering of justice (Lev 24:22). With respect to human life, whether criminal or victim, God is no respecter of persons.

Obscured by the modern rendering “fellow man” (e.g., NIV) is the Hebrew idiom “his brother,” which possesses a double entendre. Here it echoes the first human murder, the fratricide of Cain and Abel, “his brother” (4:2, 8). “Am I my *brother’s* keeper?” argues Cain (4:9). Our passage answers explicitly yes.

The appointed instrument is society’s enforcement agency, a restraint on threatening behavior. No details here are given, but for later Israel restrictive prescriptions govern how society, especially the “blood avenger” in the case of a family member’s death, responds to homicide (e.g., Exod 21:12–14; Deut 19; Num 35). Exacting retribution is not a personal matter but a societal obligation. In Paul’s Roman correspondence he acknowledges the effectiveness and legitimacy of civil retribution for crime but decries personal vengeance (cf. 12:19; 13:1–5).

After establishing the inviolability of human life, how can the divine directive at the same time exact killing the criminal who also is the divine “image”? Capital punishment is not interpreted as a threat to the value of human life but rather is society’s expression of God’s wrath upon anyone who would profane the sanctity of human life. New Testament writings interpreted capital punishment as a necessary function of society, where the state is defined as the divinely designated “servant” (*diakonos*) that administers retribution (Rom 13:1–5; 1 Pet 2:13–14).

9:12 The eternal nature of the covenant promise is stressed in the second speech (vv. 12–16), where the giving of the “sign” guarantees the parties of its perpetual validity. This is the first occasion in the Bible where “sign” (*’ôt*) appears as “covenant sign” (*’ôt bē’rît*; cf. 1:14; 4:15). It bears a familiar pattern in the Hebrew tradition, most notably circumcision and Sabbath as covenant signs (cf. Gen 17:11; Exod 31:16–17). As a “sign” the bow functioned as a visible token of God’s invisible word of grace.

Three things are said of “sign” and “covenant” in v. 12. First, the “sign” is attached to the “covenant” promise; its purpose is to confirm “ritually” what has been committed by word. Second, this is the Lord’s doing, “I am making.” Third, the “sign” marks a universal covenant “between me and you [pl.]” and for “every living creature with you [pl.]”

3/25	8.1-9.17
4/2	9.18-10.32
4/8	11.1-32
4/15	WALKING WITH GOD