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## Flood level ambiguous?

Michael J. Oard

I would like to comment on Max Hunter's article about the variation in water level during the Genesis Flood.<sup>1</sup> It would be good to know the water levels during the Flood, but I believe Genesis 7 and 8 are too ambiguous to make too many definitive statements on the exact levels in relation to the mountains or higher terrain. Creationists disagree on the details of the Flood. Nevertheless, a strong case can be made that **most** of the floodwaters increased during the first 40 days and that the Flood ended on Day 371.

Despite the ambiguous wording of Genesis 8:3, I agree with Hunter that the Flood likely peaked on Day 150. Reasons for this belief are:

1. The waters **prevailed** for 150 days (Genesis 7:24) covering all the 'high' mountains during that time (Genesis 7:19,20),
2. The Ark grounded on Mt Ararat on Day 150 (Genesis 8:4), and
3. The water did not start to decrease until Day 150 (Genesis 8:3b).

I lean towards the belief that, at the end of the Flood, the ocean was constrained at **near** the present sea level, but not exactly where it is now. (Roy Holt, personal communication, on the other hand, leans toward the view that sea level was at the present level immediately after the Flood.) The text strongly indicates that the Flood had ended around at least the Mt Ararat region, where Noah could directly observe. Although it is a reasonable Scriptural and geological extrapolation to conclude that the Flood was finished worldwide,<sup>2</sup> there are differences of opinion. Froede, for instance, believes the Flood continued for several hundred more years at least in the southeast United States.<sup>3,4</sup> I emphasize **near** present sea level because of the nonexistence of the Greenland and Antarctic Ice Sheets and other smaller factors that would result in a sea level about 40 m higher than present.<sup>2</sup> These ice sheets, if they existed before the Flood, would have been destroyed during the global Flood. So, they must have been absent immediately after the Flood. These ice sheets built up during the post-Flood ice age and afterwards.<sup>5,6</sup>

Reading Genesis, I can see a case that the Flood could have peaked in 40 days or in 150 days. I do not believe Scripture is emphatic enough to say one way or other. Given that most of the Flood water was added to the pre-Flood ocean within 40 days, I can accept that the waters remained at steady state or increased slowly, up until Day 150. Even if all the water was produced within the first forty days of the Flood, it is also possible that not all of the higher terrain was covered until Day 150 or sometime in between,

due to tectonics, continued erosion of higher terrain, and the dynamics of Flood water on a totally inundated globe.<sup>7</sup> It is also possible that the Flood waters abated **before** Day 150,<sup>8</sup> which is hinted at in Genesis 8:3a.

Hunter makes a case that the Flood peaked at Day 40. However, I can see weaknesses in his arguments. He states that it is logical from Genesis 8:2 that the ‘fountains of the great deep’ had stopped by Day 40, just as the ‘windows of heaven’ had been stopped by Day 40 (Genesis 7:12). The problem with this deduction is that Genesis 8:2 occurs **after** Genesis 7:24, which seems to be a summary statement that the Flood prevailed for 150 days. So the fountains could have stopped anytime between Day 40 and Day 150. Furthermore, even if the fountains were stopped on Day 40, the floodwaters could have kept rising or land was still exposed up until Day 150,<sup>9</sup> due to the factors mentioned above.

Hunter draws further support from a letter to the editor by Warren H. Johns.<sup>10</sup> I thought I had adequately shown that Johns also is reading too much into Genesis 7 and 8.<sup>11</sup> In that article I addressed one of Hunter’s main supports for the Flood peaking at Day 40, and that is the use of the word *mabbul*. Hunter and Johns correctly note that this word is only used for the first 40 days, being last used in Genesis 7:17, and the word for water or waters is used thereafter. However, as stated in a previous article: ‘The reason *mabbul* isn’t used after Genesis 7:17 could easily be due to the emphasis shifting from the Flood itself to the water of the Flood.’<sup>11</sup>

It would be helpful in constructing a Flood model, of which there are several, to know whether all the high terrain was covered by Day 40, Day 150, or sometime between. Unfortunately, the text of Genesis 7 and 8 does not seem to be definitive enough to decide. Some aspects of the Flood seem clear:

4. That most of the water was added to the pre-Flood ocean within the first 40 days, and
5. That the Flood ended in a little more than a year.

The abating of the Flood starting on Day 150 is more ambiguous, but I believe Scripture favors this view. Regardless of whether the Flood peaked on Day 40, Day 150, or in between, model builders should still be able to construct reasonable geological Flood models.

## Max Hunter replies

Michael Oard questions the interpretation, held by many creationists,<sup>12–17</sup> that the floodwaters reached their maximum level on Day 40, suggesting that Genesis 7 and 8 are ‘too ambiguous’ to allow such a dogmatic interpretation. Oard suggests that the Scriptures allow us to interpret that the waters could have peaked at any time between Day 40 and

Day 150.

I believe that the Scriptures, correctly interpreted, at least strongly infer that both the ‘fountains of the great deep’ and the ‘windows of heaven’ were stopped on Day 40. I must concede however that those who question this interpretation<sup>18–20</sup> may have some justification in appealing to the ambiguity of our interpretations of the Scriptures. The problem, I suggest, is not with the original Scriptures, but with our translations (KJV, NIV, etc.). A thorough analysis of the Flood narrative by a Hebrew scholar would be very useful.

The matter is, I believe, very relevant to the development of a credible Flood geological model.

My interpretation is strongly influenced by what I perceive to be the means by which God ‘stopped’ (KJV) or ‘closed’ (NIV) the ‘fountains’ and ‘windows’ on Day 40. I believe that the Scriptures (Genesis 8:2) strongly hint that the same physical phenomenon which caused the closing of the ‘windows’ on Day 40 (Genesis 7:12, ‘And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.’) also caused the stopping of the ‘fountains’ at the same time. Thus my interpretation that all of the land had been covered and all air-breathing life extinguished by the end of Day 40, and that the water level did not rise after Day 40, is not based solely on the Scriptures.

Oard suggests that it may be wrong to infer from Genesis 8:2 that the ‘fountains’ were also stopped on Day 40, as well as the ‘windows’. He claims that I state that it is logical to conclude from Genesis 8:2 that the ‘fountains’ **had** stopped **by** Day 40 and the ‘windows’ **had been** stopped **by** Day 40. What I actually stated was: ‘... the “fountains of the great deep” **had been** stopped **on** Day 40’ and the ““windows of heaven” **had been** stopped **on** Day 40’ (emphases added). The difference, I suggest, is that ‘**had been**’ strongly hints at some definite action by God as the cause of the stopping of both the ‘fountains’ and the ‘windows’ at the same time, rather than a passive stopping due to ‘natural’ causes.

In my paper about the pre Flood/Flood boundary<sup>21</sup> I speculated that the Genesis Flood was initiated suddenly (‘the same day’, Genesis 7:11) due to decompression of the Earth as the result of a sudden, temporary reduction of the gravitational force. Such a sudden decompression, I speculated, would have simultaneously initiated exsolution of water from the Earth’s mantle (‘the fountains of the great deep’) and precipitation of the water vapour canopy (‘the windows of heaven’). A logical extension of this model is that, at the end of a short period of temporary decompression, when God restored the gravitational force, a recompression might cause the ‘stopping’ or ‘closing’ of both the fountains and the windows, at the same time.

The fact, noted by Oard, that Genesis 8:2 occurs after Genesis 7:24 need not necessarily mean that Genesis 8:2 cannot refer to an event that happened before Day 150, as long as the tense of the verb (‘had been’, NIV) is translated correctly.

Oard suggests that Genesis 8:3 hints at the possibil-

ity that the floodwaters abated **before** Day 150. In my paper<sup>6</sup> I examined this passage, in both the KJV and NIV translations, noting that the NIV implies, incorrectly in my opinion, that the waters began to abate prior to Day 150. I suggested that the KJV translation is also ambiguous, but more accurate, in saying ‘**after** the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters **were abated**.’ I suggested that a clearer alternate translation might be, ‘... the waters **began to be abated**’. This interpretation was supported by one of the reviewers of the paper, on the basis of correct translation of the tense of the Hebrew verb *wayyachesru* (‘were/had been abated’, KJV).

Oard notes that he has ‘addressed one of Hunter’s main supports for the Flood peaking at Day 40 ... the use of the word *mabbul*’ and agrees that both Johns<sup>4</sup> and myself are correct in noting that *mabul* is only used for the first 40 days. Oard then suggests: ‘The reason *mabbul* isn’t used after Genesis 7:17 could easily be due to the emphasis shifting from the Flood itself to the water of the Flood.’

I suggest that a good reason why the emphasis might shift from *mabul* (the Flood) to *mayim* (water) after Genesis 7:17 is that it (*mabbul*) was not happening after Day 40.

Regarding ‘the exact levels in relation to the mountains or higher terrain’ I refer Oard to my reply to Kevin May in this issue. Regarding changes in present sea level since the Flood, this is not an area of my expertise and so I must defer to others who are more familiar with the subject.

Oard states, ‘I agree with Hunter that the Flood likely peaked **on** Day 150’ (emphasis added). Because I concluded that the waters peaked on Day 40, and because Oard doesn’t agree with this, I can only assume that he meant to say ‘**by** Day 150’ (emphasis added).

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## The foundation of science

What we learn from experience depends on the kind of philosophy we bring to experience. It is therefore useless to appeal to experience before we have settled, as well as we can, the philosophical question.

CS Lewis

*Miracles: How God Intervenes in Nature And Human Affairs*

Macmillan

New York, p. 3, 1978