

# Geographical and historical concerns in Genesis 8:4—part 2

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The evidence against identifying Mt Ararat as the landing place of Noah's Ark does not mean that there is no evidence at all for the biblical story or that there are no archaeological remains of the Ark—in fact, there is an abundance of evidence supporting the final berth of Noah's Ark right on the very southern edge of the Uartian Mountain chain overlooking the Cizre Plain (the northern end of the Mesopotamian Plain), on a mountain currently called Cudi Dagh. This mountain is in southeastern Turkiye, just east-northeast of the Turkish city of Cizre, near the tripoint where the borders of Syria, Iraq, and Turkiye meet. Its highest peak rises to 6,853 ft / 2,089 m, and the Tigris (Dicle) River flows below it. Five reasons in support of this identification are presented below.

## First reason: the consensus of diverse ancient witnesses

A consensus of diverse ancient witnesses points to Cudi Dagh (figure 1) as the landing place of the Ark. These include pagan, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic sources.

### A pagan source

A very important pagan reference to this southern site in the mountains of Uartu comes from Berossus, a Babylonian priest of Bel/Marduk who composed a history of Babylonia for the Seleucid king Antiochus I (281–261 BC). His work, the *Babyloniaca*, has only survived in quotations from other sources. The most important excerpters of Berossus are Alexander Polyhistor, who wrote in the first century BC, and Juba of Mauretania (c. 50 BC – c. AD 23).<sup>1</sup> These abridgments of Berossus are themselves only preserved in quotations or paraphrases by Josephus, Abydenus, and Sextus Julius Africanus. The fragments of Abydenus and Africanus are, in turn, mainly preserved in quotations by Eusebius, in a work that is preserved in an Armenian translation and in excerpts by the 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine chronographer George Syncellus. Berossus wrote his history in Greek, but there is evidence that he was also competent in both Akkadian and Sumerian.<sup>2</sup> His account of the Flood is preserved both in the Armenian translation of Eusebius and in a Greek quotation by Syncellus.<sup>3</sup> This account draws heavily on the Babylonian Flood account, as one would expect. According to the version in Eusebius/Syncellus, Berossus wrote: “A portion of the ship which came to rest in Armenia still remains in the mountains of the Korduaians of Armenia, and some of the people, scraping off pieces of bitumen from the ship, bring them back and use them as talismans.”<sup>4</sup> Josephus also quotes what Berossus says about the Ark's final resting place, with minor

differences from Syncellus. Josephus' quotation of Berossus is in Whiston's translation: “It is said there is still some part of this ship in Armenia, at the mountain of the Cordyaeans; and that some people carry off pieces of the bitumen, which they take away, and use chiefly as amulets for the averting of mischiefs.”<sup>5</sup> It may be noted that Josephus uses the singular form of the word for ‘mountain’ (ὄρει, from ὄρος), as opposed to the plural form (ὄρεσσ) found in Syncellus. The singular form could be interpreted as a reference to a specific mountain, although the Greek ὄρος, like the Hebrew רֶהַב, can be used to mean ‘mountainous region’. Perhaps Josephus was aware of a tradition associated with a specific mountain and modified his citation of Berossus accordingly.

It is known that the original Babylonian flood story located the landing place of the Ark on Mt Nisir/Nimus, which most scholars identify as Pir Omar Gudrun in modern-day Iraq (see figure 2).<sup>6</sup> It is interesting that Berossus decided not to identify the Ark's landing place with the mountain named in the cuneiform tablets, instead identifying a site that is more in agreement with the Hebrew Bible. Berossus indicates that he did this based on the testimony of eyewitnesses who reported seeing the Ark in the location he named. The mountain of the Babylonian flood account, Pir Omar Gudrun, is in the Zagros Mountains. They conceivably could be called the ‘Kurdish (Korduian) mountains’, but Armenia never extended that far southeast, so Pir Omar Gudrun could not be considered a mountain in Armenia. Additionally, while Kurdish tribesmen currently live in villages surrounding contemporary Mt Ararat / Agri Dagh, and have lived there for hundreds of years, they did not live there at the time of Berossus (third century BC). It was not until the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries AD that the Kurdish people migrated there from the northern parts of Mesopotamia.<sup>7</sup> However, at the time of Berossus, Cudi Dagh was indeed a Kurdish mountain in Armenia.<sup>8</sup> Thus,

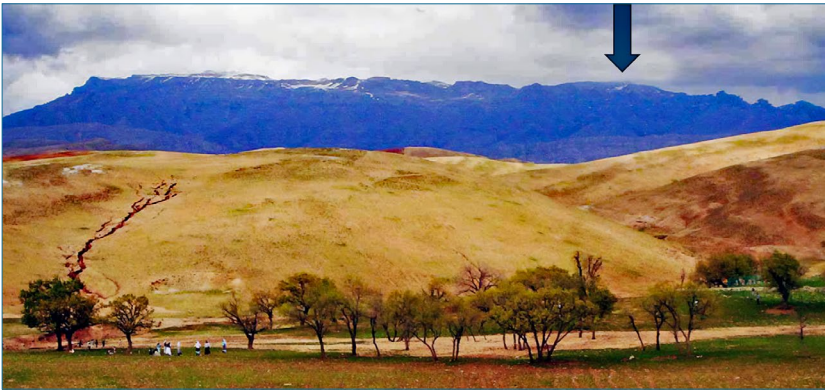


Figure 1. Panoramic view of Cudi Dagh looking North

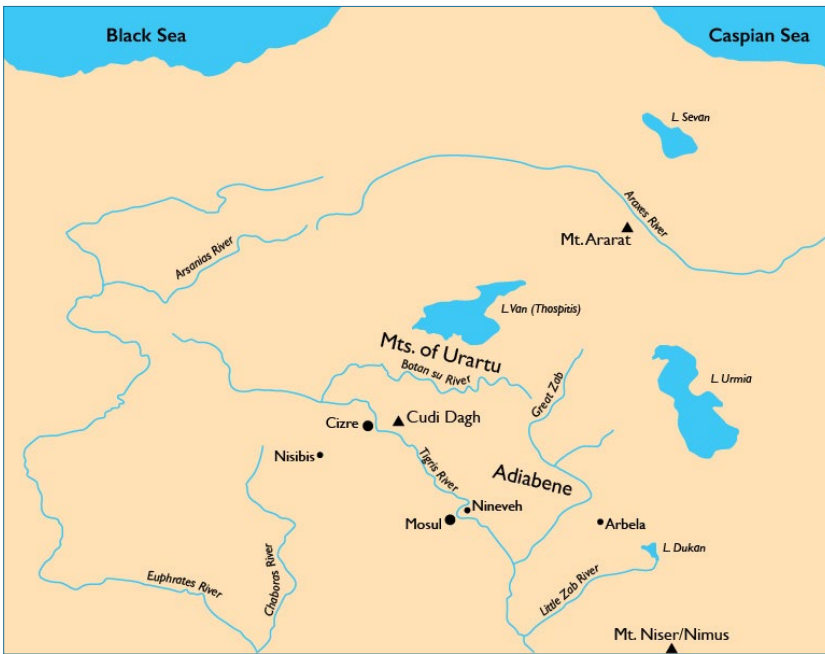


Figure 2. Map by Jason Young

while the location given by Berossus fits with Cudi Dagh, it does not fit with either Mt Nisir or Mt Ararat.

Jewish sources

Two important Jewish sources, the Targums and Josephus, point to the area of Cudi Dagh as the landing place of the Ark.

The first source, the Jewish Targums, are Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew Old Testament, which range in style from close literal translations of the Hebrew to running commentaries. After their long captivity in Babylon, many of the Jews lost proficiency in Hebrew, making it necessary to have a translation of the biblical text into Aramaic. These translations were originally oral and may have begun as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC (Nehemiah 8:8). The Targums began to attain a fixed form as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD

and were written down and preserved.<sup>9</sup> Two of these Targums, Onkelos and Neofiti, put the landing place of the Ark in the Qardu (Kurdish) mountains.<sup>10</sup> It should be remembered that some of the Jews from the northern 10 tribes were taken by their captors to these very mountains, as well as to northern Mesopotamia (2 Kings 17:6).<sup>11</sup> The kingdom of Urartu/Ararat had ceased to exist after being conquered by the Medes in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, so the change from ‘Ararat’ to ‘Qardu’ updated the original place name to a contemporary one. In addition, in 2 Kings 19:37, Isaiah 37:38, and Jeremiah 51:27, Targum Jonathan updates the Masoretic Text “the land of Ararat” (אֶרֶץ אֲרָרָט) to “the land (of) Qardu” (אֶרֶץ קַרְדּוּ).<sup>12</sup>

Another important Jewish source is the 1<sup>st</sup> century historian Josephus. In addition to the quotation of Berossus mentioned above,<sup>13</sup> the works of Josephus contain four other references to the landing site of Noah’s Ark.<sup>14</sup> A careful examination of the various ways in which Josephus described the location of the Ark shows that they can all be harmonized, with the possible exception of Josephus’ puzzling quotation of Nicolaus of Damascus.

Josephus’ first three statements about the landing place of Noah’s Ark are all found in the same context. First, Josephus gave his own summary of the

biblical story, noting that “the ark rested on top of a certain mountain in Armenia”, and that “the Armenians call this place The Place of Descent; for the ark being saved in that place, its remains are shown there by the inhabitants to this day.”<sup>15</sup> What is notable is that Josephus replaced the biblical geographical term ‘Ararat’ with ‘Armenia’, the term that was contemporary in his day.

After giving his own account of the landing place of the Ark, Josephus cited a number of what he called “barbarian” (pagan) writers who “make mention of this flood and of this ark.”<sup>16</sup> The first of these is Berossus, who located the Ark specifically on a Kurdish mountain (or mountain range) in Armenia.

After noting that Hieronymus the Egyptian, Mnaseas, and “a great many more” ancient historians mention the Ark,

Josephus proceeded to quote Nicolaus of Damascus,<sup>17</sup> who wrote:

“There is a great mountain in Armenia, over Minyas, called Baris, upon which it is reported that many who fled at the time of the Deluge were saved; and that one who was carried in an ark came on shore upon the top of it; and that the remains of the timber were a great while preserved. This might be the man about whom Moses, the legislator of the Jews wrote.”<sup>18</sup>

Minyas/Minni is one of the three kingdoms mentioned in Jeremiah 51:27 along with Ararat (Urartu) and Ashkenaz (Scythia). It is usually located south of Lake Urmia in what is now Iran. The identification of the “great mountain ... called Baris” is uncertain, as there is no other ancient source yet uncovered that uses that name for a mountain in that area. If Nicolaus was indeed referring to Mt Ararat, which lies to the northwest of Minni, it is strange that Mt Ararat was never called ‘Baris’ by anyone other than Nicolaus. Cudi Dagh is in the general vicinity of Minni, but to the west and south. Bailey argues that ‘Baris’ refers to Mt Elbruz, but that seems even less certain and is certainly not in the biblical ‘mountains of Ararat’.<sup>19</sup> Sayce is quite sure that ‘Baris’ is the same as ‘Lubar’, as found in the *Book of Jubilees* and some Second Temple literature.<sup>20</sup> Syme suggests it is likely the result of a textual error.<sup>21</sup> In any case, Nicolaus’ Flood account is most likely influenced by Babylonian mythology and contradicts the Genesis account on several points (e.g., that many people survived the Flood by fleeing to a high mountain). Nicolaus does corroborate the reports of other ancient historians regarding the existence of remains of the Ark, though he contradicts other sources by indicating that the remains were no longer in existence when he wrote. Josephus apparently quoted him because he referred obliquely to Noah, which shows that even a pagan historian gave some credence to the biblical Flood account.

In his fourth mention of the Ark’s landing place, Josephus located it in a region called ‘Carrae’ or ‘Carron’, which was within the kingdom of Adiabene, and he noted that remains of the Ark can still be seen there.<sup>22</sup> Some scholars of Josephus believe that ‘Carrae’ here is a corruption and should read ‘Kardu’.<sup>23</sup> If Josephus were reading a Hebrew or Aramaic text about the kingdom of Adiabene, it would have been very easy to confuse the letters  $\daleth$  (*dalet*) and  $\resh$  (*resh*).<sup>24</sup> The Jewish kingdom of Adiabene was concentrated to the southeast of the mountains of Urartu, with its centre in Arbela (present-day Irbil) (see figure 2). Since it is known that there was a Jewish population in the Cizre Plain in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, it is highly likely that the kingdom of Adiabene extended that far to the northwest and included Cudi Dagh. According to Pliny



**Figure 3.** Greater and Lesser Ararat sitting in the middle of a plain, and not as a part of the range known in antiquity as ‘the mountains of Ararat/Urartu’.

the Elder, Adiabene even included Nisibis, which is to the west of Cizre and Cudi Dagh (see figure 2).<sup>25</sup> Josephus also added the detail that the Ark landed in a land where much amomum grows. This is a plant from which a spice similar to cardamom is derived.<sup>26</sup> It was native to Media and grows in mountainous areas in that part of the world but does not grow in the harsh climate in the region around Mt Ararat.

In the fifth reference, Josephus wrote that the Ark came to rest “on the heights of the mountains of Armenia.”<sup>27</sup> The word for ‘mountains’ here is plural, which makes it doubtful that Josephus was referring to Mt Ararat. The kingdom of Armenia by this time did include the northern area where Mt Ararat lies. However, Mt Ararat is an isolated mountain that is not part of a larger range (see figure 3); the main ‘mountains of Armenia’ were to the southwest of Mt Ararat and included Cudi Dagh.

#### Christian sources

A number of ancient and early medieval Christian sources point to Cudi Dagh as the landing place of the Ark. The sources cited below are the Syriac Peshitta, Ephrem the Syrian, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, Isidore of Seville, and Eutychius of Alexandria.

First, the Peshitta is a translation of the Bible that was likely produced by Jewish Christians who spoke the Syriac dialect of Aramaic. The Pentateuch was translated into Syriac at least by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. In Genesis 8:4, the Peshitta reads that the Ark came to rest “on the mountains of Qardu” (ܩܪܕܘ ܩܪܕܘ), just like the Aramaic Targums mentioned above.

A second Christian witness is Ephrem the Syrian, an exegete and biblical scholar who wrote, in the fourth century, that “the ark came to rest on Mt. Qardu.”<sup>28</sup> While Ephrem may have been following the Peshitta, what is interesting, and must carry some weight, is that he lived in Nisibis (near Cudi Dagh), (see figure 2) and that he was a student of, and was ordained by, the Jacob of Nisibis who was said to have recovered a piece of wood from the Ark as a relic.

A third source is Epiphanius, who was born in Palestine. As bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, he was a fierce opponent of heresy in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. He wrote that the Ark landed

“in the highlands of Ararat between Armenia and Cardyaei on the mountain called Lubar.”<sup>29</sup> He adds, “The remains of Noah’s ark are still shown in Cardyaei. And if one were to make a search and discover them—it stands to reason—he would surely also find the ruins of the altar at the foot of the mountain.”<sup>30</sup> Epiphanius was evidently acquainted with the Jewish traditions in the book of *Jubilees* and the *Genesis Apocryphon* which identify ‘Mt Lubar’ as the landing place of the Ark.<sup>31</sup> What Epiphanius adds to these traditions is a measure of exactness when he comments that Mt Lubar lies between Armenia and Cardyaei (the Gordyene/Kurdish region), and that remains of Noah’s Ark could still be seen there in his day.

A fourth source is the famous preacher John Chrysostom, who was known for his oratory. He became archbishop of Constantinople in 398. While he did not get very specific about the location of Noah’s Ark, it is notable that he said people could still go there and view the remains. He wrote:

“Let us therefore ask them [the unbelieving]: Have you heard of the Flood—of that universal destruction? That was not just a threat, was it? Did it not really come to pass—was not this mighty work carried out? Do not the mountains of Armenia testify to it, where the Ark rested? And are not the remains of the Ark preserved there to this very day for our admonition?”<sup>32</sup>

A fifth source, Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636), was archbishop of Seville, Spain and an encyclopedist. In his compilation of all knowledge (*summa*) he wrote: “Ararat is a mountain in Armenia, on which historians attest that the Ark settled after the Flood. Whence even to this day remnants of its wood can be seen there.”<sup>33</sup> As has already been noted, at the time when Isidore wrote, ‘Ararat’ was one of the names used for Cudi Dagh.<sup>34</sup>

A sixth Christian witness is Eutychius of Alexandria (877–940), who was a patriarch of Alexandria, a physician, and a historian. His most important work is *Nazm al-Gewahir* or *Nazm al-Jauhar* (*Chaplet of Pearls* or *Row of Jewels*), a history of the world from Adam to the year 938 that was written in the Arabic language. Regarding the Ark, he wrote, “The ark rested on the mountains of Ararat, that is, Jabal Judi near Mosul.”<sup>35</sup> Mosul is a city near ancient Nineveh, about 80 miles (130 km) south of Cudi Dagh (Jabal Judi). While it is likely that Eutychius was influenced by the Quran, he was more precise than the Quran about the location of Cudi Dagh, as he noted that it lies in the general vicinity of Mosul (see figure 2).

As noted earlier, between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, Christian sources began to point to Mt Ararat in the north as the landing place of the Ark. But prior to that, Christian sources had pointed to Cudi Dagh. The mountain known today as ‘Cudi Dagh’ was in an area that was known in ancient times as the mountains of Urartu/Ararat; it was also

in the Kurdish mountains (spelled in a variety of ways), and in the Armenian mountains. The Kurdish mountainous area was an enclave in the Urartian mountains, which were later called the Armenian mountains.

#### Islamic sources

The area around Cudi Dagh was conquered early in the history of Islam, so it comes as no surprise that many Islamic sources mention it as the landing place of Noah’s Ark. The most important Islamic source is the Quran, which dates to the 7<sup>th</sup> century. It says in Surah 11:44: “And it (the ship) came to rest upon (the mount) Al-Jūdī.”<sup>36</sup> The writer of the article for ‘Jūdī’ in the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān* is familiar with the early traditions that the Ark came to rest on Cudi Dagh, but believes that Muhammad was referring to the Judi Mountains in Saudi Arabia.<sup>37</sup> This is not certain. Muhammad was very familiar with Christian and Jewish traditions, and it is possible that he travelled to the area of Cudi Dagh during his days as a merchant. In the English translation of the Quran made by George Sale in 1734, a footnote concerning the landing place of the Ark states that the Quran is following an ancient tradition.<sup>38</sup> At least four medieval Islamic sources state clearly that the landing place of the Ark was Cudi Dagh in modern Turkiye, not the Judi Mountains in Saudi Arabia.

An important medieval Islamic source is al-Masudi, a tenth-century scholar and native of Baghdad who was known for his extensive travels. He wrote that

“... the ark stood on the mount el-Jūdī. El-Judi is a mountain in the country of Māsūr ... eight farsangs from the Tigris. The place where the ship stopped, which is on the top of this mountain, is still to be seen.”<sup>39</sup>

This is a very specific reference to the landing place of the Ark on Cudi Dagh near the Tigris River. It appears that some remains of the Ark could still be seen in the tenth century.

Another medieval Islamic reference to the landing place of the Ark comes from Ibn Haukel, also a 10<sup>th</sup>-century native of Baghdad, and an early Islamic geographer. He wrote,

“Joudi is a mountain near Nisibin. It is said that the Ark of Noah (to whom be peace!) rested on the summit of this mountain. At the foot of it is a village called ثَمَابِين *Thamabin*; and they say that the companions of Noah descended here from the ark and built this village.”<sup>40</sup>

Nisibin is modern Nusaybin, which is about 50 miles (80 km) west of the actual site of Cudi Dagh (see figure 2).

A third medieval Islamic source is Ibn al-ʿAmid, or (al-Makin, Elmacin), who wrote a history of the Saracens in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. He reported that the early 7<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine emperor Heraclius climbed Cudi Dagh to see the Ark after decisively defeating the Persians. He wrote:

“Heraclius departed thence into the region of Themanin (which Noah—may God give him

peace!—built after he came forth from the Ark). In order to see the place where the Ark landed, he climbed Mt Judi, which overlooks all the lands thereabout, for it is exceedingly high.”<sup>41</sup>

Being born in Cappadocia of an Armenian family, Heraclius must have had knowledge of the biblical story of the Flood and also of the traditional landing place of the Ark. Heraclius’ visit may have taken place after the Battle of Nineveh in 627, where he defeated the Sassanids. It is likely that he would have passed by the Cizre Plain on his return to Constantinople, and so determined to climb Cudi Dagh to see the Ark.

A 4<sup>th</sup> medieval Islamic source is Zakariya ibn Muhammad al Qazvini, a 13<sup>th</sup>-century geographer from modern Qazvin, Iran. He was not a traveller but compiled his two major works from the writings of others. He wrote that wood from the Ark was still seen on Mt Judi as late as the Abbasid period (8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries).<sup>42</sup>

Hence, the first reason that Cudi Dagh should be regarded as the landing place of Noah’s Ark is the abundance and diversity of ancient sources which point to this site.

### Second reason: reliable eyewitness accounts

The second reason why Cudi Dagh should be regarded as the landing place of Noah’s Ark is that over millennia it has been seen by thousands. Consider the scenario: if an object the size of the Ark was abandoned on the very edge of Cudi Dagh overlooking the Cizre Plain (see figure 4), such an object would be readily visible for many kilometres. Given that it was made of durable wood and coated with a preservative to retard decay, its remains could have been preserved for several thousand years.

Ancient sources frequently mentioned that the remains of the Ark could still be seen in their day. Sources already noted which make this assertion include Berossus, Nicolaus of Damascus, Josephus, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, and Isidore of Seville. Additionally, al-Masudi, Ibn al-ʿAmid, and Qazvini reported that wood from the Ark could be seen on Cudi Dagh in the early medieval period. Theophilus, a late 2<sup>nd</sup>-century bishop of Antioch, stated that the remains of the Ark could still be seen in his day.<sup>43</sup> Benjamin of Tudela reported that wood was taken from the Ark by Omar ben al Khataab in the 7<sup>th</sup> century to build a mosque.<sup>44</sup> The unanimous testimony of ancient and early medieval witnesses cannot easily be dismissed, and would lead one to believe that archaeological excavation in the proper place might still uncover buried remains of the Ark.



Figure 4. Drawing showing the proposed landing site of the Ark

A curious Jewish tradition connected the famous Assyrian king Sennacherib with the remains of Noah’s Ark. Sennacherib conducted his fifth campaign in the area of Cudi Dagh in 697 BC, only a few years after experiencing firsthand the power of the God of the Jews when his army was decimated in Judah (Isa 37:36). In the hills around Cudi Dagh he carved eight rock inscriptions in panels describing his exploits in the area.<sup>45</sup> He called this mountain Mt Nipur.<sup>46</sup> While his inscriptions do not mention the Ark, a rabbinic tradition recorded in the Talmud claimed that Sennacherib took a plank from Noah’s Ark back to Nineveh as a talisman (*b. Sanh.* 96a): “Sennacherib went and found a beam from Noah’s ark, from which he fashioned a god.”<sup>47</sup> A 19<sup>th</sup>-century traveller reported that the Kurds who lived near Cudi Dagh “retain among themselves the tradition that King Sennacherib himself had divine service performed in memory of the ark.”<sup>48</sup>

Besides these references, there are both historical records and preserved remains of stone shrines and monasteries that were built on Cudi Dagh, near the site of the Ark.<sup>49</sup> People of all faiths climbed to the landing place of the Ark to perform religious rites every 14 September, as described by Wigram:

“Noah’s sacrifice is still commemorated year by year on the place where tradition says the ark rested—a *ziaret* which is not the actual summit of the mountain but a spot on its ridge. On that day (which, strange to say, is the first day of Ilul, or September 14 of our calendar, and not May 27 mentioned in the account in Genesis) all faiths and all nations come together, letting all feuds sleep on that occasion, to commemorate an event which is older than any of their divisions. Christians of all nations and confessions, Mussulmans of both *Shiah* and *Sunni* type, Sabaeans, Jews, and even the furtive timid Yezidis are there, each group bringing a sheep or kid for sacrifice; and for one day there is a ‘truce of God’ even in turbulent Kurdistan, and the smoke of a hundred offerings goes up once more on the ancient altar.”<sup>50</sup>

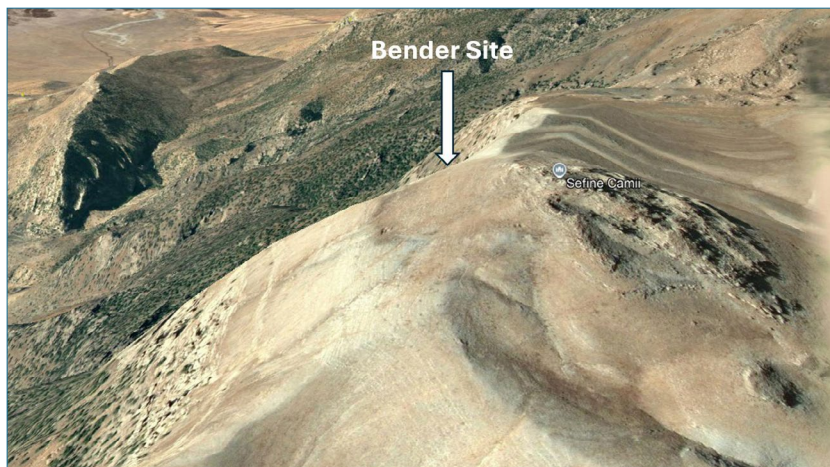


Figure 5. Google Earth photo from 23 Jun 2016 with the 'Bender Site' indicated

### Third reason: the geography of Cudi Dagh

The geography of Cudi Dagh is another reason to identify it as the landing place of Noah's Ark. Cudi Dagh is one of the mountains of Ararat/Urartu, unlike Mt Ararat, which is an isolated volcano and not part of a larger mountain range (see figure 3). That the Ark landed in a mountain range is also indicated by Genesis 8:5, which says that Noah saw the tops of other mountains when he looked out from the window of the Ark.<sup>51</sup>

Cudi Dagh is an ideal mountain for disembarking from the Ark. Cudi Dagh's tallest peak has an elevation of 6,850 ft / 2,089 m and overlooks the Mesopotamian plain. It is relatively flat near the traditional landing place of the Ark, with an easy descent to the plain below. It would have been greatly beneficial for Noah and the people and the animals that were with him for the Ark to come to rest on a low mountain that stood at the head of a fertile plain. Proponents of the Mt Ararat thesis have yet to give reasonable explanations as to how animals and people could have exited the Ark from the high elevation and steep slopes of that mountain; indeed, it would be difficult to breathe near the summit of Ararat.

### Fourth reason: the archaeology of Cudi Dagh

A fourth reason to identify Cudi Dagh as the landing place of the Ark is that some possible remains have been found there. Some sources claim that bronze spikes have been found.<sup>52</sup> In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century a German geologist, Friedrich Bender, visited the site and dug one metre down, where he found particles of highly decayed wood which also tested positive for asphalt (see figure 5). His carbon dating tests on the wood yielded a date of 4,500 BC.<sup>53</sup> A Turkish archaeologist, Muvaffak Uyanik, also reported not

only finding wood, but paleolithic rock carvings in 1971.<sup>54</sup>

These discoveries are of course inconclusive, but it may be that in the future some of the greatest archaeological discoveries ever will be made at and around this site, corroborating Cudi Dagh as the place where life on earth began anew after the Flood. Traditions about Noah, the Flood, and the Ark are still strong in the area around Cudi Dagh.<sup>55</sup> The first city built after the Flood, called 'Thamanin' or 'Tamanun' (meaning "[place of] eight") is reputed to be located in the area. Two sites, Sah (Caglayan) and Heshton, have been noted as possible

sites of Thamanin, supported by local tradition. Extensive surveys of potential archaeological sites in the Cizre Plain have been carried out by Guillermo Aglaze of the University of Chicago and Bradley Parker of the University of Utah.<sup>56</sup> Dozens of sites have been identified that await excavation and study.<sup>57</sup> Most of these have been proven to contain Iron Age remains, but Aglaze and Sinclair believe that much earlier remains lie beneath them.

### Fifth reason: the geology of Cudi Dagh

A fifth reason for identifying Mt Judi as the landing place of Noah's Ark is that Friedrich Bender, the German geologist, found evidence that Cudi Dagh was once covered by water. The possible remains of the Ark itself lie in "a loamy silt sediment".<sup>58</sup> A depression roughly the size of the Ark can be seen in satellite images via Google Earth at coordinates 37°21'56.96" N 42°29'41.23" E (decimal degrees 37.365822, 42.494786) (see figure 5).

### Conclusion

Although Mt Ararat (Agri Dagh) is the mountain most frequently identified today as the landing place of Noah's Ark, there are strong reasons to reject this identification. First, the tradition associated with Mt Ararat is not sufficiently ancient. Second, Mt Ararat is a volcano that was apparently formed after the Flood, as it contains no fossils or sedimentary rock though it lies on a basement of sedimentary limestone. Third, Mt Ararat is an isolated volcano that is far from the mountain range known in antiquity as 'the mountains of Ararat/Urartu'. Fourth, while there have been many eyewitness claims to have seen the Ark on Mt Ararat, each of these reports is problematic. Fifth, enormous resources have been spent trying to find remains of the Ark on Mt Ararat, yet it has

not been found. An object as large as the Ark, if it exists on Mt Ararat, should have been found in the course of the thorough exploration of that mountain.

While Cudi Dagħ is not as well known in Western churches, there are strong reasons to identify it as the landing place of Noah's Ark. First, Cudi Dagħ is the site with the strongest ancient traditions identifying it as the landing site of the Ark. Second, there are reliable eyewitness accounts and local traditions of people who, before modern times, saw the remains of the Ark on this mountain. Third, Cudi Dagħ is part of the mountain range known in antiquity as 'the mountains of Ararat/Urartu', and its location fits well with other geographical details in Genesis 8 and 11. Fourth, preliminary archaeological investigation on the summit of Cudi Dagħ and on the surrounding plain have yielded promising results. Fifth, there is geological evidence that Cudi Dagħ was once covered by water.

Identifying the landing place of Noah's Ark is an issue of considerable importance, as an archaeological excavation of the Ark has the potential to powerfully corroborate the biblical account of the Flood. Our hope is that increasing awareness of the potential of the Cudi Dagħ site will lead to a proper and thorough archaeological excavation.

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- Speiser, E.A., Southern Kurdistan in the Annals of Ashurnasirpal and today, *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 8:18, 1926.
- Haroutyunian, S., Armenian epic tradition and Kurdish folklore, *Iran & the Caucasus* 1:88, 1997.
- See the map of Armenia in Armen, G., Artinian, V.A., and H., Abdalian, *Historical Atlas of Armenia*, Armenian National Education Committee, New York, p. 10, 1987. According to the boundaries on that map, the political boundary of Armenia in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC was just north of Cudi Dagħ, with the area of Korduk being around Cudi Dagħ. Berossus evidently viewed Korduk as part of Armenia, at least from a geographical standpoint. Borders in antiquity were generally not as precise and fixed as they are today.
- The distinctive Aramaic dialect of each Targum gives clues as to when and where it was written. However, Edwards notes that "At what point 'oral' Targumim were committed to writing and then the 'text' was stabilized is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain." Edwards, T.M., Targumim; in: *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, poetry & writings*, Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, p. 785, 2008.
- In Genesis 8:4, Targum Onkelos has עַל טוֹרֵי קַרְדּוּ, "on the mountains of Qardu", where the Masoretic Text has עַל טוֹרֵי אֲרָרָט, "on the mountains of Ararat". Targum Neofiti adds a *nun* for the plural form: עַל טוֹרֵי קַרְדּוֹן, "on the mountains of the Qardu".
- Dickson noted that in his travels in the area he encountered villages of Jews who had lived there since Assyrian times. Dickson, B., *Journeys in Kurdistan*, *The Geographical J.* 35(4):361, 1910.
- In each of these three scriptural references "the land of Ararat" is the land to which the sons of Sennacherib fled after they assassinated their father.
- Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.93/1.3.6.
- Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.90–92/1.3.5; 1.95/1.3.6; 20.24–25/20.2.2; *Against Apion* 1.130/1.19.
- Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.90–92/1.3.5, Whiston's trans.
- Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.93–94/1.3.6, Whiston's trans.
- Nicholas was born in Damascus at the end of the first century BC and wrote a history of the world. He was a biographer of Herod the Great and a tutor to the children of Mark Antony and Cleopatra.
- Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.95/1.3.6, Whiston's trans. There is a question here as to the translation and meaning of the word *ὑπέρ* ('over') in the phrase "over Minyas". This preposition can be translated as 'over' 'beyond', 'about', or 'above'. Thackeray's translation is as follows: "There is *above* the country of Minyas in Armenia a great mountain called Baris, where, as the story goes, many refugees found safety at the time of the flood, and one man, transported upon an ark, grounded upon the summit, and relics of the timber were for a long time preserved; this might well be the same man of whom Moses, the Jewish legislator, wrote [emphasis added]." Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, Thackeray, H. St J. et al., trans., Loeb Classical Library, William Heinemann, London, 1930–65, 1:47.
- Bailey, L.R., *Noah: The person and the story in history and tradition*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, SC, pp. 63–64, 1989.
- Sayce A.H., The cuneiform inscriptions of Van, deciphered and translated, *J. Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 14:389, 1882.
- Syme, R., *Anatolica: Studies in Strabo*, Birley A., (Ed.), Clarendon Press, Oxford, pp. 32–36, 1995. He notes that Strabo refers to a mysterious 'temple of Baris' and a mountain named Nibarus, which he believes could explain this solitary mention 'Baris' in Nicholas. He also thinks 'Nibarus', 'Niphates', and 'Nipur' (the Assyrian name for Cudi Dagħ) could be etymologically related.
- Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.24–25/20.2.2.
- The editor's footnote in the Loeb edition of Josephus reads as follows: "The location of Carron presents considerable difficulties. It is not Carrhae, which is in northern Mesopotamia. The emendation to Gordyene (*cf. Ant.* i. 93), on the Armenian border east of the sources of the Tigris, is more acceptable geographically, since it is closer to Ararat, the Biblical site where Noah's ark rested. Hence, the reading proposed by J. Macquart, *Osteuropäische und ostasiatische Streifzüge*, 1903, p. 289 n. 4, is *Καρδών*." Feldman, L.H., (Ed. and trans.), *Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, Book XX*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, p. 15, 1965.
- This suggestion is made by Harrak, A., Tales about Sennacherib: the contribution of the Syriac sources; in: Michèle Daviau, P.M., Wevers, W.J., and Weigl, M., (Eds.), *The World of the Aramaeans III: Studies in Language and Literature in Honour of Dion, P.E., J. Old Testament Supplement Series* 326, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, England, p. 171, 2001.
- Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 6.16.
- Dalby, A., *Dangerous Tastes*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, pp. 102–106, 2000. See also Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 12.28–29 (§§48–50). Syme, ref. 21, p. 54. Syme notes that Strabo also mentions that amomum grows abundantly in the area.
- Josephus *Against Apion* 1.130/1.19, Thackeray, H. St J. trans., Loeb Classical Library, William Heinemann, London, p. 215, 1926.
- Ephrem *Commentary on Genesis* 6.12.; in: McVey, K. (Ed.), *The Fathers of the Church: St. Ephrem the Syrian selected prose works 91*, Matthews, Jr, E.g., and Amar, J.P., trans., Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., p. 141, 1994.
- Epiphanius *Panarion* 1.2.1, 1.2.9. The full translation is: "Noah's ark had come to rest in the highlands of Ararat between Armenia and Cardyaei on the mountain called Lubar . . . And in going on and advancing from Mt. Lubar and the borders of Armenia, that is, from the land of Ararat, they arrived at the plain of Shinar." Williams, F., trans. and Ed., *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Book I (sects 1–46)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 63, Brill, Leiden, pp. 16–17, 2009.

30. Epiphanius *Panarion* 1.18.3.3–4, Williams trans., *Book I (Sects 1–46)*, 48.
31. *Jubilees* 5:28 and 7:1 have the Ark landing on “Lubar, one of the mountains of Ararat.” According to *Jubilees* 7:1, 17, Noah planted a vine on this mountain and each of his sons built cities near the mountain, naming them after their wives. The *Genesis Apocryphon* mentions that “the ark rested on one of the mountains of Ararat” (10.12; 12.8), and later says that Noah “planted a great vineyard on Mount Lubar” (12.13). Machiela, D.A., *The Dead Sea Genesis Apocryphon: A new text and translation with introduction and special treatment of columns 13–17*, Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah, 79, Brill, Leiden, pp. 52, 55–56, 2009.
32. This is from Chrysostom’s sermon collection “On Perfect Charity”. The original Greek text can be found in *Patrologia Graeca*, Migne, J.-P. (Ed.), vol. 56, cols. 287–288, Paris, 1862. Translation is from Montgomery, J.W.M., *The Quest for Noah’s Ark*, Bethany Fellowship, Minneapolis, MN, p. 78, 1972.
33. *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, 14.8.5, Barney, S.A. and Lewis, W.J. et al. trans, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 298, 2008.
34. The fourth-century Armenian historian Faustus clearly identified Mt Ararat as a mountain in the canton of Korduk (Garsoïan, *Epic Histories*, 77). See also Garsoïan, *The Epic Histories*, 252–253, no. 3. Bailey notes that “By the twelfth century, however, it is clear that many Armenians had come to assume that Faustus’ story was about an area near Agri Daği.” Bailey, ref. 19, pp. 77–78.
35. *The Annals of Eutychius of Alexandria*, chap. 1, pt 4; translated and quoted in Bailey, L.R., *Where Is Noah’s Ark?* Abingdon, Nashville, p. 29, 1978. There currently is no published English translation of Eutychius’ work, which was originally written in Arabic. A Latin translation of the Arabic can be found in *Patrologia Graeca*, Migne, J.-P. (Ed.), vol. 111, Paris, col. 916, §40, 1863.
36. Translation is from Pickthall, M., *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran: An exploratory translation*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, p. 227, 1930.
37. Brinner, W.M., Jüdi; in: *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, vol. 3, Brill, Leiden, pp. 68–69, 2003.
38. Sale, G., *The Koran: Translated into English from the original Arabic*, Frederick Warne, pp. 215–216, 1734. Pagination differs between the various printings of this book.
39. Sprenger, A. trans., *El-Mas’ûdî’s Historical Encyclopaedia Entitled, vol. 1: Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*, Oriental Translation Fund, London, p. 73, 1841. Arabic words have been omitted from the quote. A modern farsang (parasang) is equal to 6 km; thus, 8 farsangs is about 48 km. This seems to be longer than the actual distance to the alleged landing place; however, in medieval times the farsang was not as precisely defined.
40. Ouseley, W. trans., *The Oriental Geography of Ebn Haukal: An Arabian Traveler of the Tenth Century*, T. Cadell, London, p. 30, 1800.
41. Erpenius, T. trans. and ed., *Historia Saracenicæ*, Leiden, p. 17, 1625; quoted and trans. in Montgomery, J.W.M., *The Quest for Noah’s Ark*, Bethany Fellowship, Minneapolis, MN, p. 327, 1972.
42. Le Strange, G. trans., *The Geographical Part of the Nuzhat-al-Qulûb Composed by Ḥamd-Allāh Mustawfî of Qazwîn in 740 (1340)*, E.J. Brill, Leyden, p. 184, 1919.
43. Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus* 19; in: Roberts, A., Donaldson, J., and Coxe, A.C. (Eds.), *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*, trans. Marcus Dods, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, Christian Literature Company, Buffalo, NY, p. 117, 1885.
44. Adler, M.N., *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, Oxford University Press, London, p. 33, 1907. The mosque with the leaning minaret in Cizre was originally an Armenian church before being converted to a mosque in the year 639. See Yaşin, A., *Tarih Kültür ve Cizre*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Çevik, S. (Ed.), Kent Işıkları, İstanbul, p. 140, 2011.
45. King, L.W., Studies of some rock-sculptures and rock-inscriptions of western Asia, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 35:66–94, 1913. Translations of these inscribed rock panels can also be found in: Luckenbill, D.D., *The Annals of Sennacherib*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, pp. 63–66, 1924. See further: Roller, T., *A New Overview of the Rock-Sculptures on Cudi Dag / Mt. Nipur, Morija*, version 1.3, 2017/12/11.
46. See Syme, ref. 21.
47. Translation is from the William Davidson digital edition of the Koren Noé Talmud, online at korenpub.com, accessed 9 Feb 2024. If this tradition is historically accurate, it could explain the reference to the god Nisroch, mentioned in 2 Kings 19:37 and Isaiah 37:38. Scholars have struggled to find an Assyrian god equivalent to “Nisroch”; perhaps this name is related to the Aramaic word for ‘board’ or ‘plank,’ which is נִסְרוֹךְ, *neser*. See Jastrow, M., *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, Title Publishing, New York, p. 919, 1943.
48. Benjamin II, J.J., *Eight Years in Asia and Africa from 1846–1855*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Hanover, p. 93, 1863, (p. 67 in 1<sup>st</sup> edn).
49. Benjamin, ref. 48, pp. 93–94 (pp. 67–68 in the 1<sup>st</sup> edn); Bell, G.L., *Amurath to Amurath*, William Heinemann, London, pp. 292–293, 1911.
50. Wigram W.A. and Wigram, E.T.A., *The Cradle of Mankind: Life in Eastern Kurdistan*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Adam and Charles Black, London, p. 335, 1922. See also Bell, ref. 49, p. 292.
51. As to why the mountain peaks were not seen immediately when the Ark came to rest, one possibility is that there was fog produced by the evaporation of the water, thereby reducing visibility.
52. See the editor’s note in Rich, C.J., *Narrative of a Residence in Koordistan*, vol. 2, James Duncan, London, pp. 123–124, 1836.
53. Bender, F., Wood Remains from the ‘Landing Site of Noah’s Ark’ nearly 6,500 Years Old, *Bible and Spade* 19(4):112–113, 2006. See also Bender, F., *Wanderungen*, Sven von Loga, Geowissenschaften, p. 124, 1995.
54. Uyanik, M., *Petroglyphs of South-Eastern Anatolia*, Saltikgil, H.V. trans., Akademische Druck-u Verlagsanstalt, Graz, Austria, p. 88, 1974.
55. Sirmak, a city just north of Cudi Dag is translated ‘Noah’s town’. See Uyanik, ref. 54, p. 83.
56. Aglaze, G., A new frontier: first results of the Tigris-Euphrates Archaeological Reconnaissance Project, 1988, *J. Near Eastern Studies* 48(4):241–281, 1989; Parker, B.J., The northern frontier of Assyria: an archaeological perspective; in: *Assyria 1995*, Parpola, S. and Whiting, R.M. (Eds.), The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki, pp. 217–244, 1997; Parker, B.J., *The Mechanics of Empire: The northern frontier of Assyria as a case study in imperial dynamics*, The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki, p. 70, 2001.
57. Sinclair, T.A., *Eastern Turkey: An architectural and archaeological survey*, vol. 3, Pindar Press, London, pp. 334–338, 1989. This monumental study by Sinclair cites ancient directions to the ruins of Thamanin, which he believes lie under the ruins of the Syrian village of Sah.
58. Bender, ref. 53.

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