



העמק דבר

HA'AMEK DAVAR

THE NETZIV'S CLASSIC WORK
TRANSLATED AND EXPLAINED



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BEREISHIS 7:19-23

19. And the water very greatly strengthened on the earth and all the tallest mountains under the heaven were covered. 20. Fifteen cubits above them did the water increase and all the mountains were covered. 21. And every flesh that moves on earth perished; amongst the birds, cattle and animals and every crawling creature that crawls on the ground and all of mankind. 22. Everything with living breath in its nostrils amongst all that was on dry land, died. 23. And it [the water] disintegrated every inhabitant upon the face of the earth from man to cattle to creature and till bird of the heavens and they were [all] wiped away from the earth and there remained only Noah and those with him in the Ark.

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21. And every flesh that moves on earth perished; amongst the birds, cattle and animals and every crawling creature that crawls on the ground and all of mankind.

כ"א. ויגוע כל בשר הרמש על הארץ בעוף ובבהמה ובחיה ובכל השרץ השרץ על הארץ וכל האדם

The word גויעה - *perished* in this context means deliberate suffocation by drowning as opposed to its usual meaning; dying through natural causes.

The living creatures are mentioned in this order to demonstrate that they succumbed to the waters in order of their vulnerability. Hence, the birds were the first to drown and man was the last.

23. And it [the water] disintegrated every inhabitant upon the face of the earth

כ"ג. וימח את כל היקום אשר על פני האדמה

This refers to the bodies that the water disintegrated. The Torah deliberately stresses that it was only those carcasses upon the face of the earth that were dissolved. Carcasses that were forced deep underground by the upheaval of tremendous volumes of soil however, did remain intact during the Flood. It follows that the remains of extinct animals discovered by archaeologists date back to this period in the world's history. Although many interpret these findings as historical remnants of earlier "worlds" or life systems that Hashem created, as mentioned in the *Bereishis Rabbah* (9:2) and the *Zohar*, it is clear from *Shemos Rabbah* (30:3) that these systems were totally destroyed.

Animal species that were lost in the waters of the Flood deserved to be wiped out due to their perverted breeding habits. This cross-breeding (similar to that of a camel and horse which produces a certain type of mule), is also the reason why archaeologists have discovered many unusual forms of skeletal remains. The fact that they are found in areas of unsuitable climatic conditions lends itself to those very breeding habits which they preferred to practice away from the animal population.

Hashem purposely intended that later generations should find these bones and appreciate the hidden wonders Hashem implanted into nature, (See *Ha'amek Davar*; *Devarim* 32:40). At the time of the Flood, Hashem intentionally hid those carcasses under great mounds of earth so that no creation would be reminded of them and try to re-breed them. The repetition of the phrase "And they were [all] wiped away from the earth" stresses this last point; that even the preserved carcasses were hidden away in that generation.

From man to cattle to creature and till bird of the heavens and they were [all] wiped away from the earth

מאדם עד בהמה עד רמש ועד עוף השמים וימחו מן הארץ

The order of life forms in this Posuk reflects the tendency of each to disintegrate. Here, mankind is first, for his flesh is the most delicate. On a similar note, the Torah does not specifically mention חיה, *animal*, as in terms of durability its flesh is classed with בהמה, *cattle*.

בראשית ז'

אונקלוס

(ט) והמים גברו מאד מאד על הארץ ויבסו כל ההרים הגבהים אשר תחת כל השמים: (כ) חמש עשרה אמה מלמעלה גברו המים ויבסו ההרים: (כא) ויגוע כל בשר הרמש על הארץ בעוף ובבהמה ובחיה ובכל השרץ השרץ על הארץ וכל האדם: (כב) כל אשר נשמת רוח חיים באפיו מכל אשר בחרבה מתו: (כג) וימח את כל היקום אשר על פני האדמה מאדם עד בהמה עד רמש ועד עוף השמים וימחו מן הארץ וימחו אתו בתבה:

רש"י

(כ) חמש עשרה אמה מלמעלה - למעלה של כל גובה כל ההרים לאחר שהשוו המים לראשי ההרים: (כב) נשמת רוח חיים - נשימה של רוח חיים: אשר בחרבה - ולא דגים שנים: (כג) וימח - לשון ויפעל הוא ואינו לשון ויפעל והוא מגזרת ויפן ויפן. כל מינה שסופה ה"א כגון בנה, מחה, קנה, כשהוא נותן וי"ו יו"ד צראה נקוד צחיקת תחת היו"ד: אך נח - לצד נח, זהו פשוטו. ומדרש אגדה היה גונח וכוהה דם מטורח הצהמות והחיות. ויש אומרים שאיחר מונוות לארי והכשו, ועליו נאמר (משלי יא לא) הן נדיק צרצק יסולס:

KEY POINTS

19. Formation of new mountain ranges during the Flood. The status of Mount Ararat as the world's highest peak.
21. The order in which all living beings perished.
23. Unusual bone-forms discovered by archaeologists. The sequence in which all forms of life physically disintegrated.

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19. And the water very greatly strengthened on the earth.

ט"ט. והמים גברו מאד מאד על הארץ

This means that the water rearranged the very soil and changed the landscape to create mountain ranges that did not exist before the Flood. This is evident from the way our Parashah uses Mount Ararat to indicate maximum height even though it is common knowledge that there are other mountains taller than Mount Ararat. These other mountains therefore, must have been formed by the waters during the Flood. We do find other instances of geological change by the Flood mentioned in Chazal; compare with those hot springs that opened at the time of the Flood and were left open until the present day (See *Bereishis Rabbah* 33:4).

All the tallest mountains.

כל ההרים הגבהים

This cannot mean the tallest mountains of the present day, since the height of these mountains is not indicated. Thus, they cannot be used to calibrate the height of the water. The Torah must be referring to the Ararat mountain range which is really the only mountain range specifically mentioned in the saga of the Flood and whose height was known. This further strengthens the assertion that Ararat must have been the tallest mountain at that time; before the waters of the Flood created the even taller ranges we know of today.