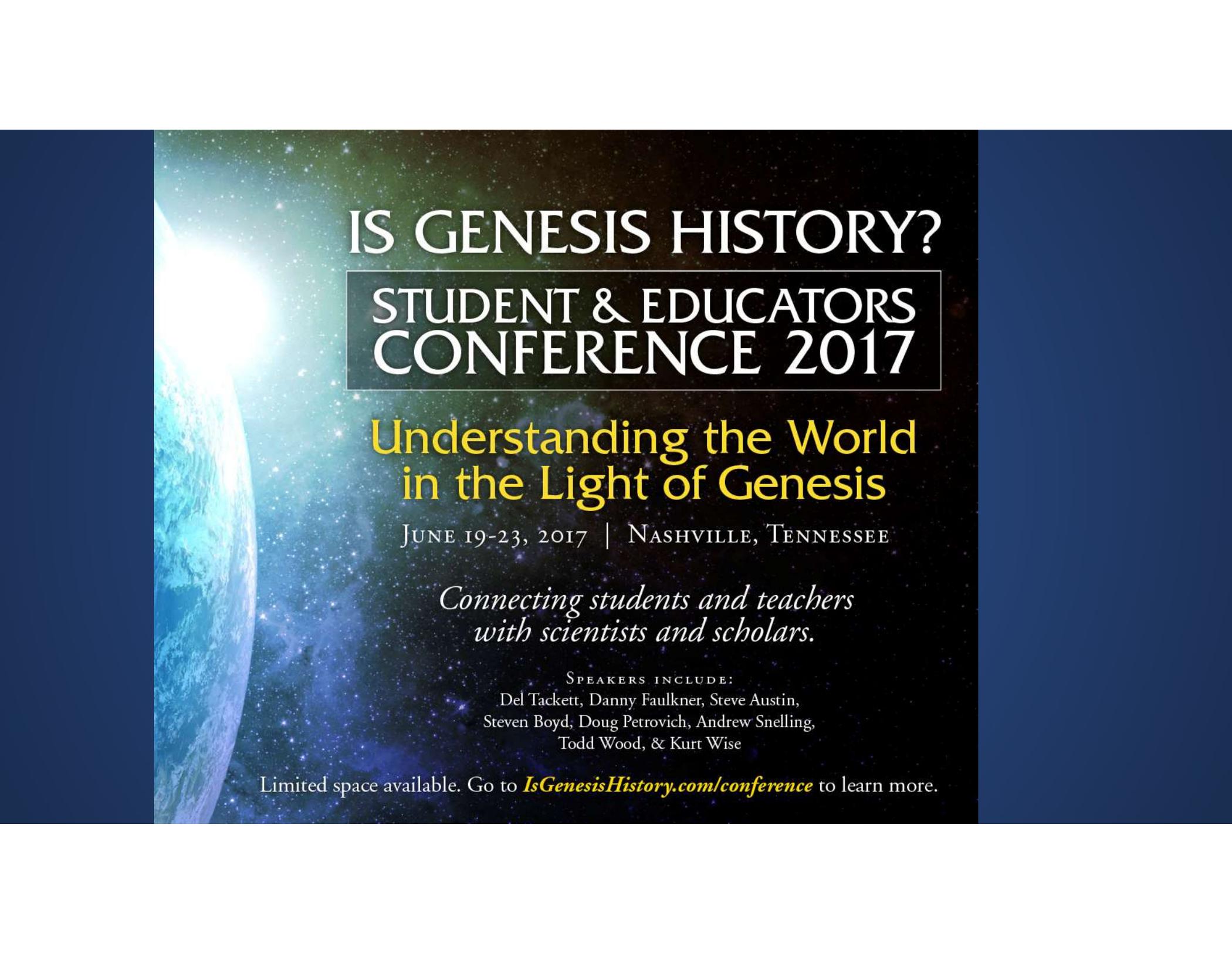


# EAGLE FERN FAMILY CAMP AUGUST 2017

Steven W. Boyd, Ph.D.

The background of the entire page is a deep space scene. On the left side, the curved horizon of the Earth is visible, showing blue oceans and white clouds. The rest of the background is a dark, star-filled sky with a subtle nebula or galaxy structure. The text is overlaid on this background.

# IS GENESIS HISTORY?

## STUDENT & EDUCATORS CONFERENCE 2017

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# HOW DO WE KNOW THAT GENESIS IS HISTORY?

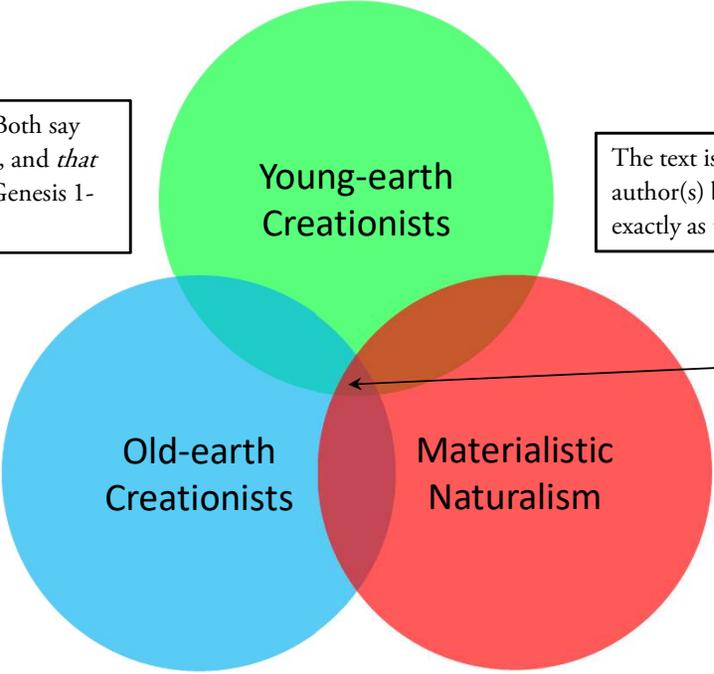
Steven W. Boyd, Ph.D.

IN AN EFFORT TO CORRECTLY  
UNDERSTAND THE TEXT—  
AND IN SOME CASES  
TO ACCOMMODATE  
THE EVOLUTIONARY PARADIGM—  
THE BIBLICAL TEXT  
HAS BEEN SUBJECTED  
TO VARIED APPROACHES:

**Literal**—Genesis transparently recounts *what* happened, i.e., the creation of the universe, the earth, and mankind, the Fall, the Flood, and the origin of language and the nations are to be understood in the plain, natural, and simple sense of the language. Therefore, it is real history.

Both camps are Christians. Both say they believe the Bible is true, and *that* certain events portrayed in Genesis 1-11 did occur.

The text is historical narrative, and its author(s) believes events happened exactly as they are portrayed.



All camps agree that scientific investigation has value.

**Not Historical Narrative, but Poetry/Structured Narrative/Allegory**—not meant to be read literally. The Genesis account does not specify *how* God created the universe, etc.

**Erroneous**—The author's presentation is historically *inaccurate*. The origin of everything is by materialistic evolutionary processes.

The Genesis account does not transparently recount *what* happened.  
Both camps agree, at least in part, with the conventional account of origins, and/or hold to deep time.

# WHAT KIND OF TEXT IS GENESIS 1-11?

A creation narrative written in prose, which is an erroneous archaic account?

A creation myth written in poetry, which may be interpreted with great latitude?

A creation narrative written in prose, which is historically accurate?

HOW DO  
WE KNOW  
WHAT TEXTS  
MEAN?

Readers

Text

Author

Event

historical theological  
prose narrative

mythic theogonical  
poetic epic

Form

 *Prose*

 *Poetry*

Diction

 *Unadorned*

 *Elevated*

Syntax

 *Typical*

 *Atypical*

Imagery

 *Absent*

 *Present*

Figures  
of  
Speech

 *Absent*

 *Present*

Subject  
Matter

 *Historical*

 *Myth*

Plot

 *No-suspense*

 *Suspense*

Character

 *YHWH*

 *A.N.E. deities* 

## historical theological prose narrative

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. <sup>5</sup>  
When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up- for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, <sup>6</sup>  
and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground- <sup>7</sup> then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.....

## mythic theogonical poetic epic

[“every single one of us] gods has declared war...

Excessive [toil] has killed us;  
Our work [was heavy], the distress much...

When Enlil heard that speech  
His tears flowed.

Enlil. . . his words  
And addressed the warrior Anu...

While the Anunnaki are present before you  
Summon one god and have him done to death.' ....

While [Belet-illu, the birth-goddess, is present],

Let her create *Lullu*-[man] .  
Let him bear the yoke...

They summoned and asked the goddess  
The midwife of the gods, wise Mami,...

Nintu [[another name for Mami]] opened her mouth  
And addressed the great gods,

## historical theological prose narrative

....So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." <sup>24</sup> Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. <sup>25</sup> And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (ESV)

## mythic theogonical poetic epic

'It is not possible for me to make things,  
Skill lies with Enki.

Since he can cleanse everything  
Let him give me the clay so that I can make it'...

Let one god be slaughtered...

From his flesh and blood  
Let Nintu mix clay,...

We-ila, who had personality,  
They slaughtered in their assembly...

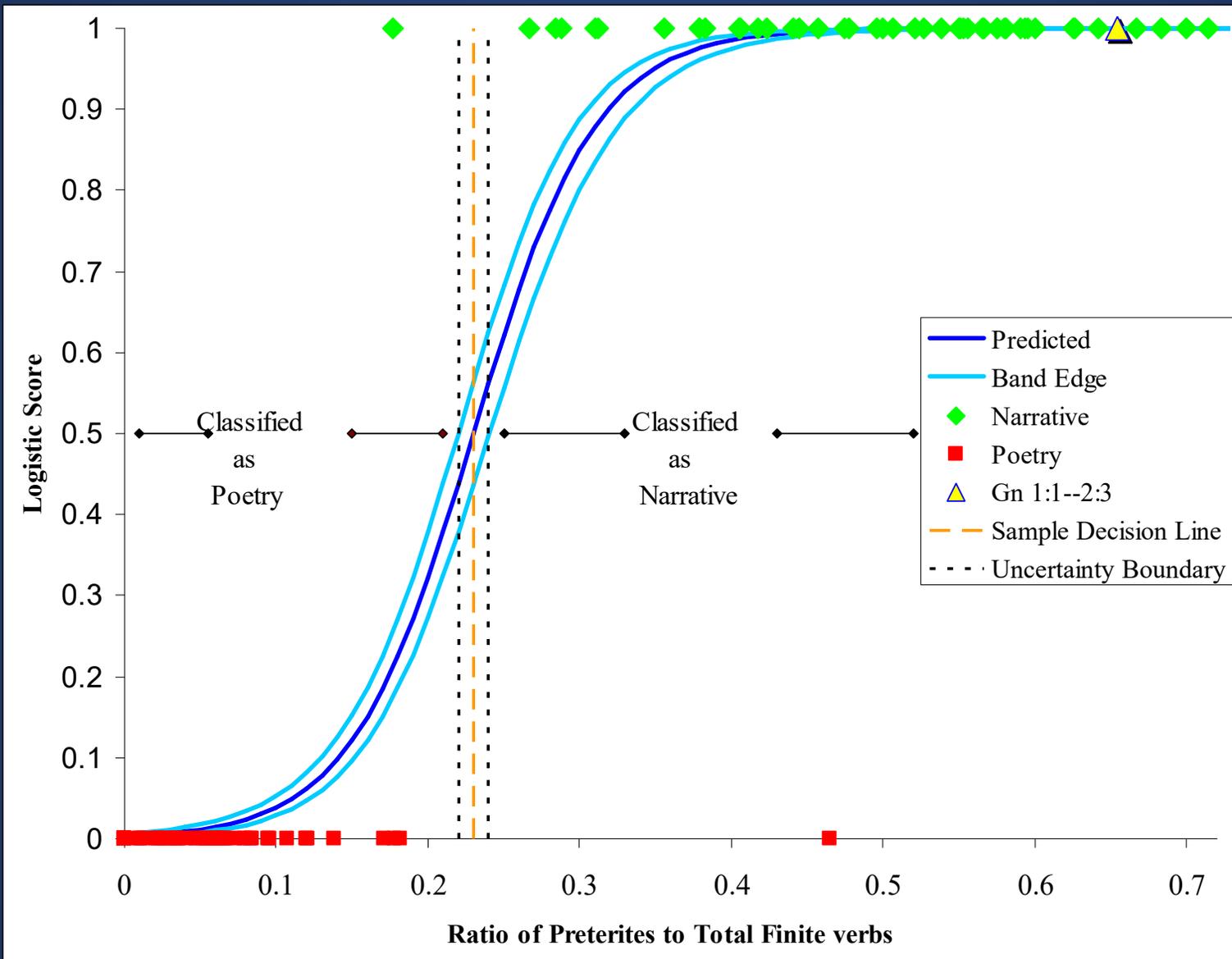
Mami opened her mouth  
And addressed the great gods,...

I have removed your heavy work,  
I have imposed your toil on man...

Seven [[pieces of clay]] she put on the right,  
Seven on the left...

[[various birth rituals and customs follow]]

Atra-Hasis, Lambert and Millard



Population



The logistic band shows a 99.5% confidence interval for the probability that a text is a narrative.

The range of probability for Genesis 1:1—2:3 at this confidence level is as follows:

$$.999942 \leq P \leq .999987$$

The nature of statistics is that all results are stated in terms of probabilities. So strictly speaking, we can say that with two choices for the genre of Genesis 1:1—2:3 (poetry or narrative), this text is narrative, not poetry, with a very high degree of probability. Or to put the results in scientific terms: the text is a narrative with statistical certainty. In other words,

*It is statistically indefensible to argue that this text is poetry.*



SINCE THE TEXT  
IS A NARRATIVE,  
WHAT DOES THAT IMPLY?

DID THE AUTHORS  
OF HEBREW NARRATIVES  
BELIEVE THAT THEY WERE  
WRITING ABOUT REAL EVENTS?

1. God's people are defined in terms of their past
2. God's people are commanded to keep the memory of their past alive
3. God's people engage in retrospection on their past
4. The remembrance of the past devolves on the present and determines the future
5. Customs are elucidated
6. Ancient names and current sayings are traced back to their origins
7. Monuments and pronouncements are assigned a concrete reason as well as a slot in history
8. Historical footnotes are sprinkled throughout the text
9. Written records used as sources are cited
10. Precise chronological reference points are supplied
11. Genealogies are given
12. Observations of cultic days and seasons are called acts of commemoration
13. Prophetic utterances are recalled and related to events in the narrative
14. "Time" words challenge ancient readers to validate historical claims made in the text
15. Historical "trajectories" link different portions of the text and widely separate historical periods



“... if as seekers for the truth, professional or amateur, we can take or leave the truth claim of inspiration, then *as readers we must simply take it—just like any other biblical premise or convention, from the existence of God to the sense borne by specific words—or else invent our own text*”

M.S.

# TEXT

A LITERARY PORTRAYAL  
OF HISTORICAL EVENTS  
WHICH COMMUNICATES  
A THEOLOGICAL MESSAGE

TEXT

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

LITERARY PORTRAYAL

THEOLOGICAL MESSAGE

# HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

Sequence of Verbs

Meaning of “Flood”

Temporal Constraints

Coordination with Geology

# Deluge Time Line

T5: God caused a wind to pass over the earth (8:1a), which reduced the power of the water (7:20a; 8:1b).

**T6: Flood Crest; water was powerful (7:19b-20).**

- R1: The water sources closed up (8:2a).
- R2: The rain stopped (8:2b).
- R3: The water steadily receded (8:3a).

- R4: Water volume was significantly less at the end of 150 days while the power of the water was sustained (7:24; 8:3b).
- R5: The Ark ran aground (8:4).

- R6: The water volume steadily reduced (8:5a).
- R7: The mountain tops appeared (8:5b).

**T1-T6: The *Mabbûl* blotted out all non-marine life except those on the Ark (7:21-23).**

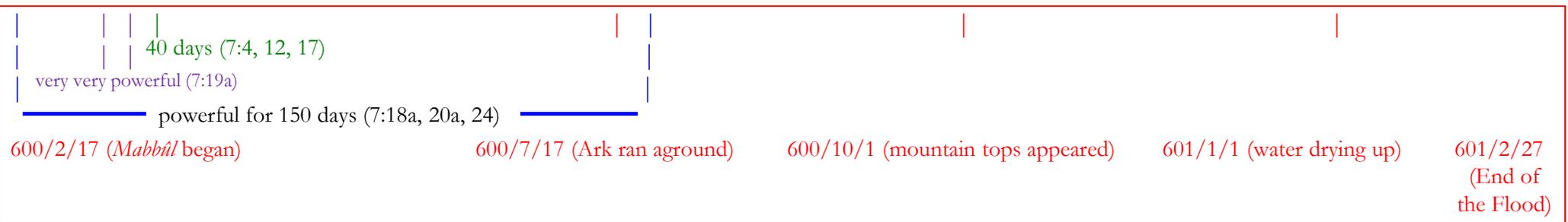
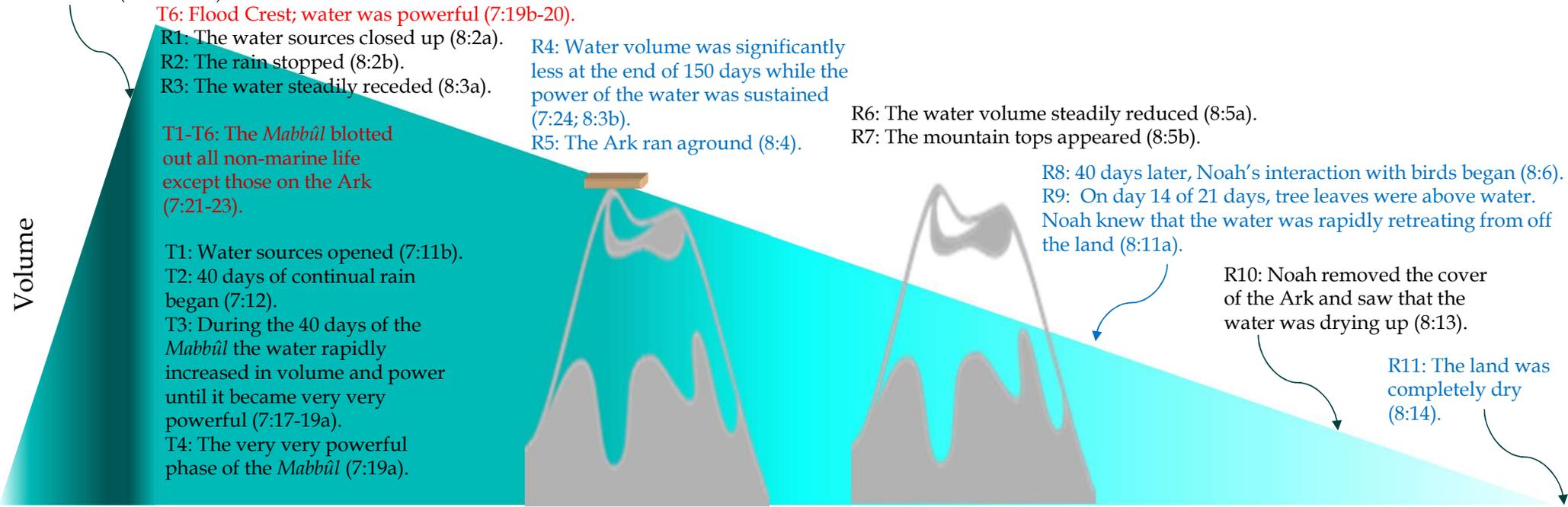
- T1: Water sources opened (7:11b).
- T2: 40 days of continual rain began (7:12).
- T3: During the 40 days of the *Mabbûl* the water rapidly increased in volume and power until it became very very powerful (7:17-19a).
- T4: The very very powerful phase of the *Mabbûl* (7:19a).

- R8: 40 days later, Noah's interaction with birds began (8:6).
- R9: On day 14 of 21 days, tree leaves were above water. Noah knew that the water was rapidly retreating from off the land (8:11a).

R10: Noah removed the cover of the Ark and saw that the water was drying up (8:13).

R11: The land was completely dry (8:14).

Volume



Darkness of Color  
Indicates Power

Time

# LITERARY PORTRAYAL

Narrative and Speech

Deliberate Duplication

Progressive Parallel Panels

PANEL IDENTIFICATION	TEXT: GENESIS	MARKED BY ית	INCLUDED MOTIFS (DROPPED MOTIFS [OR THOSE WHICH WILL BE DROPPED] IN GRAY)	DEVELOPMENTS	COMMENTS
	5:32	■	j. (see below) <b>Noah</b>	When Noah is "a son of 500 years (499 years old according to our reckoning)" he causes Shem, Ham, and Japheth to be born	Noah's age given using יָן 'son of ' idiomatically as a noun of relation. Often Noah's name appears. Bold face of "Noah" indicates an actual lexicalization of the name. Underscore = Noah is the Main Topic/Subject. <b>N.B. Observations about time are in blue.</b>
PF1	6:1-10	■	a. domination of the evil of mankind (narrative) (6:1-2, 4) b. YHWH's cogitation (internal Divine speech) (6:3) c. His observation of the same (narrative) (6:5) d. His disapprobation of the same (narrative) (6:6a, 7b) e. His reaction (narrative) (6:6b) f. His proclamation of obliteration (divine speech) (6:7aa) g. animals' incorporation (6:7ab) h. YHWH's contrasting reaction to <b>Noah</b> (narrative or Divine speech) (6:8) i. description of <b>Noah</b> 's character and actions (narrative or Divine speech) (6:9ab, 9b) j. statement concerning procreation of <b>Noah</b> 's family or the animals (narrative) (6:9aa, 10)		PF = Pre-Flood a.-e. as a block occur only here  YHWH' speaks (to Himself). The root to describe the obliteration is מחה 'blot out'
PF2	6:11-22		a. 6:11 b. c. 6:12a d. e. g. 6:12b h. 6:13aaa <b>Noah</b> f. 6:13aab a. 6:13ab f. 6:13b h. 6:14-16 f. 6:17 h. 6:18a <b>Noah</b> j. 6:18b <b>Noah</b> (6x) g. 6:19ab <b>Noah</b> , <b>Noah</b> j. 6:19b	the quantity/extent of evil described in 6:5 has caused/was causing the ruination of the earth; owing to this the earth was becoming filled up with violence  YHWH sees that the earth is becoming ruined  all flesh, not just man, contributes to the ruination  God informs Noah of His plans to obliterate all flesh  the imminence of the obliteration YHWH affixes the blame for the earth becoming filled up with violence, which violence exists on account of the presence of all flesh; YHWH describes the obliteration as a ruination comparable to the ruination they have effected on the earth, and the ruination of all flesh involves the earth in some way YHWH's instructions to Noah for building a large wooden structure with individual compartments and pitched with pitch; the structure will have a top deck, an obscure direction regarding the finishing of the structure at the top, a door in the side, and three internal decks reprise of f explaining the reason for the instructions is that the obliteration will involve the מַבּוּל <i>Mabbûl</i> (translated 'Flood') of water on the earth; the obliteration encompasses all sentient life under the sky; everything which is on land will גּוּע 'expire'  YHWH will cause the existing covenant with mankind to be in force with Noah; Noah and his family will בּוֹא 'enter' the ark (implying entering the ark is the means of survival)  Noah will cause the animals to <u>enter</u> the ark in pairs so that they keep themselves alive with him	6:11-13 appears to be a tightly structured unit.  God speaks to Noah, qualifying in a general way the nature of the obliteration that is to come.  This might start a new panel. This is the first mention of the <i>Mabbûl</i> .  Roman of "Noah" indicates pronominal reference only. The root בּוּא means both 'come', 'arrive' and 'enter'. The <i>weqatal</i> of the root indicates what will happen in the future; it is not a command.

		<p>g. 6:20 <b>Noah</b></p> <p>g., h. 6:21 <b>Noah (6x)</b></p> <p>i. 6:22 <b>Noah Noah</b></p> <p>h. 6:22</p>	<p>breakdown of animals (to be preserved) into עוף 'flyers', בהמה <i>behemah</i> 'mammals'?, and שרמם <i>remes</i> 'creepers', 'crawlers'; the animals will <u>come</u> to Noah to be preserved</p> <p>Noah is to gather food for all who will occupy the ark</p> <p>Noah obeys God</p>	
PF3	7:1-5	<p>a.</p> <p>b.</p> <p>c.</p> <p>d.</p> <p>e.</p> <p>h. 7:1a <b>Noah Noah</b></p> <p>j. 7:1ab</p> <p>i. 7:1b <b>Noah</b></p> <p>g. 7:2-3 <b>Noah (2x)</b></p> <p>j. 7:2</p> <p>g. 7:2</p> <p>j. 7:2</p> <p>g. 7:3</p> <p>j. 7:3</p> <p>f. 7:4</p>	<p>YHWH commands Noah and his household to <b>enter</b> the ark. This implies that the ark has been built by this time.</p> <p>YHWH tells Noah the reason he and his household to enter the ark is He has seen that he is righteous in His presence in that generation</p> <p>Noah is to take clean animals in pairs of seven man and his wife (clean animals)</p> <p>Noah is to take unclean animals in pairs man and his wife (unclean animals)</p> <p>flyers of the sky in pairs of seven male and female (flyers); to preserve a seed on the face of all the earth</p> <p>The cataclysm <b>will begin in seven days</b>; it will involve continuous rain over 40 days; YHWH will personally cause it to rain; the <i>rain</i> is imminent; the obliteration (מחה 'blot out' again) will involve all living existence which YHWH made</p>	<p>Time has advanced since YHWH's speech to Noah recorded in 6:13-21</p> <p>Fronting of pron. DO (with "Noah" as antecedent) is emphatic</p> <p>First reference to time.</p>
		<p>i. 7:5a <b>Noah</b></p> <p>h. 7:5b <b>Noah</b></p>	<p>Implicit statement of Noah's entry into the ark.</p>	<p>This statement of Noah's obedience applies to all YHWH's commands, which includes "enter the ark" (7:1). This statement, therefore, reports Noah's entry into the ark—an entry which is 7 days later than YHWH's announcement recorded in 7:4.</p>
T1	7:6-9	<p>a.</p> <p>b.</p> <p>c.</p> <p>d.</p> <p>e.</p> <p>f. 7:6 <b>Noah</b></p> <p>i. 7:7 <b>Noah Noah (4x)</b></p> <p>j. 7:7ab</p> <p>h. 7:7</p> <p>g. 7:8-9a <b>Noah</b></p> <p>g. 7:9aa</p>	<p>Noah's age given when the <b>מבול</b> <i>Mabbûl</i> began (or when it was on the land), using בן 'son of ' idiomatically</p> <p>The explicit <b>entry</b> of Noah and his family into the ark is reported perhaps in the presence of the water of the <i>Mabbûl</i>. The verb is a <i>Qal wayyiqtol</i>.</p> <p>clean and unclean land animals; flyers; and ground crawlers</p> <p>The <b>arrival</b> of the animals at the ark in pairs—and possible subsequent entry into the same is reported.</p>	<p>T = Transgression phase of the Flood</p> <p>Noah's age given using בן 'son of ' idiomatically as a noun of relation (as in 5:32); it is possible that this verse is an introductory encapsulation for 7-9, and is therefore not the first report of the coming of the <i>Mabbûl</i>.</p> <p>The advance of time since YHWH made the statement recorded in 7:4 can be inferred.</p> <p>This would have happened before Noah's entry into the ark.</p>

			j. 7:9ab i. 7:9b Noah	male and female animals' obedience linked to Noah's	
T2	7:10-16		a. b. c. d. e.		
		■	f. 7:10-12 Noah	the 7 days passed (which YHWH warned would be immediately followed by onset of the <i>Mabbûl</i> ); and the water of the <i>Mabbûl</i> came upon the earth	likely introduces the time envelope of verses 11-16. An explicit statement about the advance of time since YHWH made the statement recorded in 7:4. This is the same time as the event reported in 7:7
			f. 7:11a h. 7:11a	the exact date for the beginning of the <i>Mabbûl</i> is given the date is in terms of the life of Noah	
			f. 7:11b	the mechanisms which effected the coming of the <i>Mabbûl</i> on this day are described	
		■	f. 7:12 h. 7:13	the accompanying rain came upon the earth continuously for 40 days implicit	
			i. 7:13 Noah (3x) Noah	Noah and his family entered the ark on this selfsame day	This might be understood to be the pluperfect "had entered."
			j. 7:13ab-13b	the most complete description of Noah's family	
			g. 7:14-16aa Noah	the most complete description of the animals--wild animals distinguished from domestic animals and possibly two different types of flyers	
			g. 7:15	the animals from all flesh in which is the breath of life (to be saved [contrast 6:17]) come to Noah and the ark	
			j. 7:16aa	the animals from all flesh enter (the ark)	
			i. 7:16ab Noah h. 7:16b Noah	YHWH shut (the door) behind him	
T3	7:17-23		a. b. c. d. e.		
		■	f. 7:17a	the <i>Mabbûl</i> lasted 40 days	This appears to be an introductory encapsulation for 7:17b-23. Last mention of <i>Mabbûl</i> before YHWH's later retrospection.  There are the three lexicalized topics in 17b-23: מים 'water', תבה 'ark', and הר 'mountain.  Same starting time as can be inferred from 7:7 and is reported in 7:10.
			f. 7:17ba	the water became much/increased/multiplied	<i>Qal</i> stative, most likely has the situation aspect <i>achievement</i>
			h. 7:17bb	lifted the ark	The verb either has the situation aspect accomplishment "lift" or transitory stative "carry." The next verb suggests that the first possibility is correct.
			h. 7:17bc	and it rose up from upon the land	
			f. 7:18a	water became powerful and multiplied exceedingly upon the land	<i>Qal</i> stative—either a transitory stative or achievement
			h. 7:18b	the ark went/moved upon the surface of the water	ארץ 'erets 'land' or 'earth' is not in the phrase, which adumbrates its disappearance; alludes to Gen 1:2

		f. 7:19a	as for the water it became exceedingly exceedingly powerful upon/over the earth	<i>Qal qatal</i> with transitory stative or achievement situation aspect
		f. 7:19b-20	all the high mountains which are under all the sky were covered; fifteen cubits from above the water was powerful--the mountains were covered	The structure here is striking: it serves to punctuate the text and in so doing likely marks the peak of the Flood. Following a <i>qatal</i> there is an inclusio involving two <i>wayyiqtol</i> s from the same root כסה, the subjects of which are secondary topics, both semantic role patient. The second <i>wayyiqtol</i> is redundant, in that we already know that the mountains “became covered” (achievement) or “were covered” (transitory stative).
		g. 7:21a		גוע ‘expire’ is the governing verb for “all flesh which moves ...” (refers to the animals)
		f. 7:21b		גוע ‘expire’ is the governing verb again (N.B. the verb occurs here only once)—this time for “all men.”
		f. and g. 7:22		מות ‘die’, a dominant verb in chpt 5, occurs in the Flood account only here and in 9:29. It is a <i>Qal qatal</i> with achievement situation aspect.
		f. 7:23a		מחה ‘blot out’ occurs twice as a <i>wayyiqtol</i> in an inclusio structure which is the same as that in 7:19b-20 and thereby connects the two texts. In addition, the wording from על פני through השמים is identical to that in 6:7, thus providing the maximum confirmation of its fulfillment. <b>Because 7:21 reports the obliteration of all terrestrial life, both מות and the repeated מחה are restatements and do not advance the time line.</b>
		g. 7:23a		The animal types is identical to that of 6:7.
		h. 7:23b <b>Noah</b>		
		g. 7:23b <b>Noah</b>		
		i. 7:23b		
		j. 7:23b		
T4-R1	7:24-8:5			R = Regression Phase of the Flood
		a.		7:24 is a Janus figure looking back at 7:17-23 and forward to 8:1ff?
		b.		
		c.		
		d.		
		e.		
		f. 7:24	The water was powerful for 150 days	<b>The instant of time at which the 150 days of powerful water begins cannot be known with certainty. Nevertheless, it is likely the instant about which it is said, “the water became powerful (in 7:18).”</b>
		h. 8:1a	God’s special treatment of Noah is described as Him remembering Noah	This is likely an introductory encapsulation for 8:1ba–5, which is elaborated in two parts: 8:1b and 8:2–5.
		g. 8:1a	and the animals with him in the ark.	
		h. 8:1b	First, God causes a wind to cross over the land, which causes the power of the water to diminish.	
		h. 8:2	And second, the water sources close up, which causes the water to recede.	As in 7:17–20 there are the three lexicalized topics: מים ‘water’ (8:2-3), תבה ‘ark’ (8:4), and הר ‘mountain’ (8:5).
		h. 8:3	The water steadily recedes. Its volume is considerably reduced after 150 days.	<b>We cannot assume that this is the same 150 day interval mentioned in 7:24. This later mentioned interval commences just as likely at the beginning of</b>

S

h. 8:4

h. 8:5

The ark comes to rest in the mountains of Ararat. The exact date is given for this event.

The water continues to recede until the mountain tops appear. The exact date is given for this event.

the 40 day *Mabbûl* or at its end as at the moment it could be said, "the water became powerful."

# THEOLOGICAL MESSAGE

Connection to Creation