

GOD’S BOW OR A GODDESS’S NECKLACE (GEN. 9:8–17)

The Genesis Flood narrative closes with a promise by God that the destruction of the human race would not occur again. In Gen. 9:8–17 the covenant between God and Noah represents a binding commitment between God and humans. God initiates a covenant never to destroy humanity with water again, and the sign of this covenant forever is God’s rainbow placed in the sky.

At the end of the Mesopotamian flood narratives there are also speeches made by the deities that humans will not be destroyed again. There is also a sign established in the sky as a reminder. However, the purpose and context is quite different from that of the biblical Flood story. In both the Gilgamesh Epic and the story of Atrahasis the flood ends with the majority of gods glad to have the terror over.

The reaction of the deities varied. Ellil, the warrior god, is furious over the survival of the few remaining humans. On the other hand, the goddess Ninhursag (Nintu or Ishtar in some renditions), the goddess of both human and divine children, is devastated that her children have been destroyed. In an appeal made in highest heaven, Ninhursag declares that this deed by the gods is an evil against her and that her grief must be appeased. She takes the “big flies,” created by Anu, makes them into a necklace, and sets it up as a daily reminder to the gods never to destroy the people, on whom the gods depend, again.

In the Mesopotamian flood narrative the covenant was made solely on the divine level, and the sign was for the gods alone. In Genesis God’s rainbow is a visible sign of His covenant promises to Noah, to Noah’s descendants, and to all living creatures of the earth (Gen. 9:12, 17).



imagination of man’s heart *is* evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

22 “While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
Cold and heat,
Winter and summer,
And day and night
Shall not cease.”

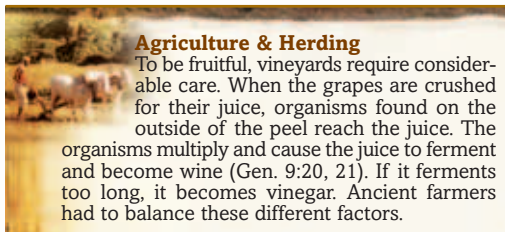
9 ¹So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” ²And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move *on* the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. ³Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. ⁴But you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood. ⁵Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the

hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man.

6 “Whoever sheds man’s blood,
By man his blood shall be shed;
For in the image of God
He made man.
7 And as for you, be fruitful and multiply;
Bring forth abundantly in the earth
And multiply in it.”

⁸Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: ⁹“And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants” after you, ¹⁰and with every living creature that *is* with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. ¹¹Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never

9:1 “Compare Genesis 1:28 9:9 “Literally *seed*



Agriculture & Herding

To be fruitful, vineyards require considerable care. When the grapes are crushed for their juice, organisms found on the outside of the peel reach the juice. The organisms multiply and cause the juice to ferment and become wine (Gen. 9:20, 21). If it ferments too long, it becomes vinegar. Ancient farmers had to balance these different factors.

TIME CAPSULE	4000 to 3500 B.C.
4000–3000	Copper-Stone Age
3700	Two villages combine to create Uruk, the earliest urban site
3500	Bronze is known in Ur
3500	Egyptian art shows greyhounds
3500	Village culture around Beersheba
3500	The olive is cultivated in Palestine