

## Investigating the Story of Noah's Flood According to Qur'anic Verses and Archaeological Researches

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ABSTRACT:

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One meaning of the word *āyah* in Qur'anic context refers to a sign, which is a divine miracle as attested in verse (Q.54:15): *Certainly We have left it as a sign; so, is there anyone who will be admonished?* The verse refers to the story of Noah's Ark and his nation's penalty, which is presented as a sign for posterity. There are various perspectives among interpreters about the reference of pronoun *it* in the verse, depending on whose antecedent, the verse can be considered as one of the verses expressing divine miracles. The present study tries to investigate the aforementioned verse and its miraculous aspects through an interdisciplinary method between the Qur'an and archaeology. Based on conducted studies, the word *āyah* implies to Noah's Ark or the Flood phenomenon and rescuing a few of his nation who are the only survivors of humankind. Given archaeological studies, there is no certain evidence yet to confirm the remains of the Noah's Ark and the verse cannot thus be considered as a scientific miracle. As a result, the miraculous aspect of the verse indicates *giving notice of the unseen* which is verified in verse (Q.11:49).

KEYWORDS: Noah, flood, Noah's Ark, archaeological researches.

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## 1. Introduction

One of the methods to prove the legitimacy of the Qur'an's scientific miracle is to study it based on archaeological documents. Investigating the miracle of the verse (Q. 54:15),<sup>1</sup> *Certainly We have left it as a sign; so, is there anyone who will be admonished?*" which refers to survival of Noah's ark, according to some interpretive opinions, needs an interdisciplinary study based on *interpretive* opinions and archaeological research. The most important questions in this study are as follows:

- What is the criterion for a thing to be *āyah* (sign) at any time, based on the fact that Qur'an's contacts are all times and generations: Seeing *āyah* or hearing about it?
- According to the Qur'an, is wreckage of Noah's ark or its story a miracle and sign for thinkers?
- According to interpretive opinions and archaeological documents, what is the miraculous aspect of the verse and to what extent can the miraculous aspect be considered scientific?

Thus, in the Qur'anic section, we have investigated lexical and interpretive verses to answer the questions. Then, we have inspected wreckage of Noah's ark through archaeological documents from the beginning until now in order to define the miraculous aspect of verse 15 of surah al-Qamar.

## 2. Lexical Study

The words *taraka* (left) and *āyah* are the most important and key terms which should be investigated to understand the miraculous aspect of the verse.

### 2.1. The Word *Taraka*

*Taraka* means "to give up" (al-Farāhīdī, 1988, 5:336), both intentional or obligatory (al-Rāghib, 1991, 166), whether giving up a material matter or a spiritual one (al-Muṣṭafawī, 1981, 1:386). Thus, in this verse, whatever God left as a sign among people can be a tangible matter like Noah's ark or an intangible one such as Noah's flood.

1. وَلَقَدْ تَرَكْنَاهَا آيَةً فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ (القمر/15)

## 2.2. *The Word Āyah*

*Āyah*, deriving from the root 'y-y, denotes sign and admonition (Ibn Manzūr, 1993, 14:51-63). Al-Muṣṭafawī (1981, 1:186) believes that *āyah* is derived from the root 'w-y "to be noteworthy." This word is also used in the sense of miracle, as frequently attested the verses of the Qur'an (Qurashī, 1992, 1:145-146). All of these meanings for *āyah* are to be found in the Qur'an; as in verse (Q.25:37) it means admonition and great sign for beholders and listeners (al-Ālusī, 1994, 10:20). Thus, *āyah* means a sign implying a divine affair. Such an implication can be obtained through seeing or hearing. Therefore, in verse (Q.54:15), the criterion of being a sign and miracle concludes both seeing and hearing the miracle.

## 3. *Interpretive Study*

In order to define the referent of *āyah* in verse (Q.54:15), we will probe the most authoritative Shiite and Sunni interpretations.

### 3.1. *The Antecedent of the Pronoun -Hā in (Q.54:15)*

There is disagreement about the reference of the pronoun *-hā* (it) in the verbal form *taraknāhā* (we left it), which indicates what God has left. Some, according to context, have referred to Noah's Ark as its antecedent, provided that the ark or its wreckage at least had remained until the descending time of this verse (al-Ṭabrisī 1993, 4:209). Tabataba'i, after declaring this attitude, points to the wreckage of Noah's Ark, which was found at the Ararat Mountains and confirms this perspective (Tabataba'i, 1996, 19:69). In addition, Qatādah affirms in interpreting the verse that the Noah's Ark had existed and Muslims had seen it (al-Suyūṭī, 1983, 6:135). On the contrary, some interpreters believe that the Flood story and the adventure of Noah and his opponents are the antecedent. Thus, the point is that God has kept the story of this event. It is also possible that the antecedent of the pronoun *-hā* is both Noah's Flood and rescue of the believers as well as the remains of the Ark (al-Ṭabrisī, 1993, 9:287; al-Ṭūsī, 2010, 9:448-449; al-Zamakhsharī, 1986, 4:435; al-Rāzī, 1999, 29:298-299). Ibn 'Āshūr, whilst admitting both aspects, believes that Noah's Ark is considered as the reference of the pronoun *-hā* since its remains were existed at the beginning of Islam and he also regards, due to widely transmitted traditions, the second aspect acceptable (1999, 17:179-180). Therefore, it seems that Noah's Ark had remained for a long time and had been a reminder for Noah's Flood. For further discussion, some related verses are examined.

### 3.2. *The Antecedent of the Pronoun -hā in Verse 29:15*

In Verse 29:15, God says, *Then We delivered him and the occupants of the Ark, and made it a sign for all the nations.*<sup>1</sup> This verse as the under-discussion verse, talks about Noah's Ark and his story as a sign and miracle for people. There is disagreement about the reference of the pronoun *-hā* in this verse too. Some ascribe it to Noah's Ark (al-Ṭabrisī, 1993, 8:433). Some others, while admitting this view, consider Noah's story, based on its fame and widespread transmission, as the pronoun antecedent (al-Zamakhsharī, 1986, 3:446; al-Rāzī, 1999, 25:37; Tabataba'i, 1996, 16:115).

### 3.3. *The Purpose of Āyah in 25:37*

The majority of interpreters have regarded the purpose of *āyah* in verse (Q.25:37)<sup>2</sup> to be the story of Noah and the drowning of the oppressors (al-Zamakhsharī, 1986, 3:380; al-Rāzī, 1999, 24:459), as well as the widespread transmission of this story (Ibn 'Āshūr, 19:51) but they have not referred to the remains of Noah's Ark.

As mentioned above, from the interpreters' viewpoints, Noah's Ark and its remains or the event of Noah's Flood itself is the antecedent of the *āyah*. However, most of the interpreters allow considering both material (Ark) and spiritual (the story of Noah's Flood) aspects.

## 4. *Quranic Evidence of the Universality of Noah's Flood*

Discussing locality or universality of Noah's Flood is a significant topic when debating about miraculous aspect of the verse. It is an important issue since the universality of the Flood confirms the miraculous aspect of Qur'an in citing this story while its locality decreases the miraculous of the verse.

The Bible affirms that Noah's Flood is universal and all humankind except Noah and his family perished so that human generations can keep on of Noah's loin (Hawkes, 1998, 896). Qur'anic verses refer to the universality of Noah's invitation and verify the Flood, as in verses such as verses (Q.54:12), (Q.11:40), (Q.23:17) exist evident signs about the universality of the Flood as follows.

1. فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَأَصْحَابَ السَّفِينَةِ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ (العنكبوت/15)

2. وَقَوْمَ نُوحٍ لَمَّا كَذَّبُوا الرُّسُلَ أَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ لِلنَّاسِ آيَةً وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (الفرقان/37)

*And the people of Noah, when they rejected the messengers, We drowned them, and We made them as a Sign for mankind; and We have prepared for (all) wrong-doers a grievous Penalty.*

#### 4.1. Verses (Q.54:12) and 11:44

These two verses talk about gushing of the water<sup>1</sup> before The Flood and subsiding (swallowing up) of it after that<sup>2</sup>. The context of the verses and the type of the prescript indicate that the earth means the entire surface of it, not just a limited part of it, as al-Zamakhsharī used the clause, “We made the whole earth as if it was like boiling springs,” in the interpretation of the first verse (1986, 4:434). Tabataba'i, in his interpretation of verse (Q.11:44) declares that God's Command to the earth and the sky is a creating command so that swallowing up the water on the earth at once is the referent of that Command (1996, 10:230).

#### 4.2. Verses (Q.11:40) and (Q.23:27)

In two verses, the creatures that Noah (pbuh) boarded to survive are spoken of using the phrase, “a pair of every kind [of animal]”<sup>3</sup>, which is the second evidence that shows the universality of Noah's flood.

Interpreters have announced about verse 40 of Surah Hūd<sup>4</sup> that this phrase refers to a male and female pair of each animal (al-Ṭabrisī, 1993, 5:249; al-Rāzī, 1999, 17:347; Tabataba'i, 1996, 10:226). In contrary with Ḥafṣ's *qirā'ah* (reading), if the word *kullin* (all) is written as *idāfah*, without *tanwīn*, then the phrase means two of each male and female class (al-Bayḍāwī, 1997, 3:135). However, according to Ḥafṣ's reading and numerous opinions of the interpreters, the first viewpoint seems correct.

1. وَ فَجَّرْنَا الْأَرْضَ عُيُونًا فَالْتَقَى الْمَاءُ عَلَى أَمْرٍ قَدْ قُدِرَ (القمر/12)

And We made the earth burst forth with springs, and the waters met for a preordained purpose.

2. وَقِيلَ يَا أَرْضُ ابْلَعِي مَاءَكَ وَ يَا سَمَاءُ أَقْبَلِي وَ غِيضَ الْمَاءِ وَ قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَ اسْتَوَتْ عَلَى الْجُودِيِّ وَقِيلَ بُعْدًا لِلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (هود/44)

Then it was said, “O earth, swallow your water! O sky, leave off!” The waters receded; the edict was carried out, and it settled on [Mount] Judi. Then it was said, “Away with the wrongdoing lot!”

3. مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ

4. حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَ فَارَ التَّنُورُ قُلْنَا اجْمَلْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ ... (هود/40)

When Our edict came and the oven gushed [a stream of water], We said, “Carry in it a pair of every kind [of animal].”

Interpreters, based on the famous reading of verse 27 of al-Mu' minūn<sup>1</sup>, considered a male and female pair of each animal as the referent of the phrase (al-Ṭabrisī, 1993, 7:127; al-Zamakhsharī, 1986, 3:184; al-Rāzī, 1999, 23:273; Tabataba'i, 1996, 15:29). Therefore, Noah had shipped, with respect to God's command, a pair of males and females of any species to survive them so that it implies that the Flood was universal.

### 5. *The Place of Descent of Noah's Ark According to Interpretations*

There are different opinions in Islamic references about where the Noah's Ark had settled. Al-Ṭabrisī quotes from Abū Muslim that *Jūdī* is the name of every tough mountain and ground (1993, 5:350). Al-Rāzī states the place on where the Ark rested i.e., *Jūdī* Mountain is in India (1999, 29:298). Others introduced a place near Kufah (al-'Ayyāshī, 2001, 2:141; al-Qommī, 1983, 6:175), south of Armenia (Ibn 'Āshūr, 1999, 20:147) al-Sham, Amol (al-Bayḍāwī, 1997, 3:136) and the Ararat Mountains (Tabataba'i, 1996, 19:69) as the place where Noah's Ark settled. Most of the interpreters mentioned that the location of Mount *Jūdī* is around Mosul (al-Zamakhsharī, 1986, 2:398; al-Ṭabrisī, 1993, 5:350).

#### 5.1. *The Historical Background of Noah's Story*

In 1872, George Smith among the clay tablets of the library of Ashurbanipal ran into the story of a flood, which had an entire similarity with Noah's story in the Torah. This story was known as Epic of Gilgamesh (Heidel, 1949, 194). After that, archaeologists discovered older version of this story, which date backs to 1700 BC while excavating the city of Nippur. The Babylonian text was later discovered.

The protagonist of the story is named Ziusudra in the Sumerian text, Atrahasis in the Babylonian text and Utnapishtim in the text discovered in the Assyrian library (Kramer, 1956, 42-44). We encounter, in part of this tablet, with gods' decision to send a flood and destroy humankind.

1. فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ أَنْ اصْنَعْ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحَيْنَا فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُورُ فَاسْلُكْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ  
أَنْثَيْنِ... (المومنون/27)

*So We revealed to him: "Build the ark before Our eyes and by Our revelation. When Our edict comes and the oven gushes [a stream of water], bring into it a pair of every kind [of animal]."*

Ziusudra is equated with Noah whom was described as a religious and deist king and a god informed him about the decision of an assembly of gods to send a flood and destroy human race.

Forty lines of the tablets were broken and possibly associated with shipbuilding and storm rescue. The text becomes meaningful when we see that a severe storm has flowed over the land and ravaged it seven days and nights. Utu, The Sun god, rises and Ziusudra prostrate before him and makes sacrifices for him (Majidzade, 1997, 2:270)

This story in wholeness corresponds to the story of Holy Scripture. However, with differences in the details of the story, its principal discrepancy with the great heavenly religious is to have assembly of gods instead of The One God. The base story of the Flood is so ancient and must have been flowed in 2400 BC, and reached to Babylonians and then to Assyrians through cuneiform and Sumerian- Akkadian language. It has been constantly repeated, newly embellished and apparently exaggerated about the story and slang tendencies have been attached, too (Burkhardt, 2004, 12).

There are more than 600 different legends around the world (Greek, Indian, Scandinavian, Chinese, etc.) about the Great Flood. They possess some commonalities such as a universal flood, a favorite family, rescuing by boat or ship, the flood happening because of people's unjust actions, settling on the top of a mountain, sending a bird out by survivors, donating a sacrifice to thank for their rescuing (Lahaye & Morris, 1977). In Persia, the story of Jamshid corresponds to the Flood story. Furthermore, some researchers have investigated and compared these stories with each other. For example, in 1949 an archaeologist by the name of Heidel compared Gilgamesh and The Scripture with each other. He wanted to know the difference and similarity points in these books, since it was supposed that the Torah and the Gospel have adopted the Flood story from Mesopotamia (Heidel, 1949).

Historians pay attention to the Flood since it is important and attractive. The most ancient historic document, which is related to third century BC, belongs to Berossus, a Babylonian historian. (Lanser & Div, 2008, 15) Indeed, Berossus should be considered as a reference for historians like Josephus and Nicolaus of Damascus who had written about the Flood from first century AD. In addition, there is some information about Noah's Ark in many travelogues. The story of the Flood from the beginning was narrated in many regions of the Middle East from one generation to another because of its greatness so that the residents of each region consider the location of the Ark in their areas, and many interpretations were and are about the place of descent.



### 5.2. *The Time of the Flood*

We do not know the exact date of this significant event. There is no access to any authentic narration. Muslim historians have estimated the occurrence date around 3250-3000 BC. For instance, Ḥamzah Iṣfahānī (1988, 11) has assessed 3104 BC, al-Mas'ūdī (2002) 3236 BC, and Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (1984, 25) 3102 BC.

Archaeologists have given an approximate date for this event in accordance with Mesopotamian tablets. Mallowan, according to the Epic of Gilgamesh and dynasties of Sumerian kings, proposed the date of the Flood about 2900 BC or a previous century, i.e., the Early Dynastic Period (Mallowan, 1971). He believes that evidence of this Flood has been found in layers of the Early Dynastic Period. Burkhardt considers some factors such as the period of Gilgamesh's rule, the fifth king of the ancient dynasty of Uruk to be in 2650 BC, and having studied Sumerian texts and individuals' names corresponding them to historical names, announced this time to be at least 200 years earlier (Burkhardt, 2004, 12). Thus, according to the present resources, this phenomenon had probably happened during 3000-2600 BC.

### 5.3. *The Place of Descent of Ark*

Researchers have reported different countries like Turkey (the mountain of Ararat, Cudi Dagh and Durupinar), Persia (Delfan Sarkeshti Mountain, Nahavand, Takht-e Suleyman and Dasht-e Kavir), Lebanon, Iraq (the mountain of Pir Omar Gudrun and Judi), Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia (mount of Judi), Syria and Yemen as the place of descent. Most of these places have no scientific documents; however, legends and religious texts talked about the place of descent. In the Epic of Gilgamesh, it is mentioned as Mount of Nisir (Montgomery, 1972) which is considered to be identical with Mount of Pir Omar Gudrun in north of Sulaymaniyah, Iraq (Mallowan, 1964, 65). Mount Ararat is mentioned in the Old Testament and in Genesis 7-8 (Genesis, 8:5) and Mount of Judi mentioned in the Holy Qur'an (Q.11:44). Berossus and Pliny have referred to the Kardu mountains which some have considered it as Mount of Cudi Dagh in Turkey.

#### 5.3.1. *Turkey*

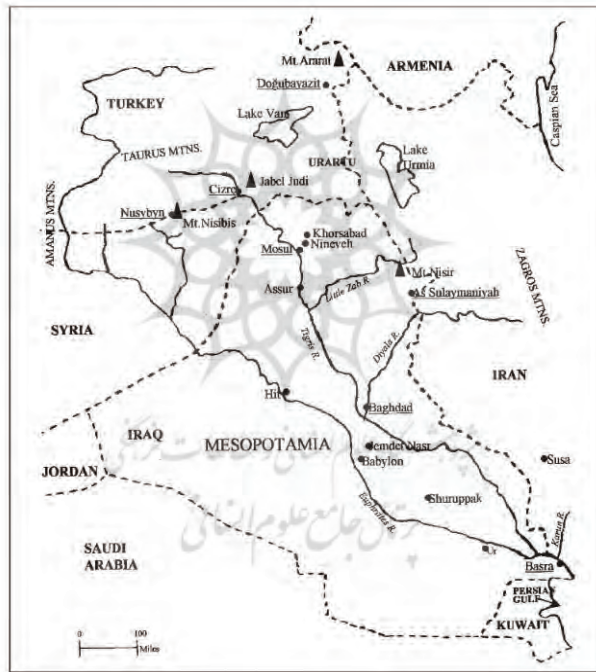
Turkey has been the focus of explorers, historians, geographers, archaeologists, geologists, clerics from the third century BC onwards. The



significance is justified since the largest area of Urartu territory in the eighth century BC was in this country and the Scripture has mentioned the Ararat Mountain as the place of descent of the Ark. Ararat is considered as identical with Urartu from the third century BC onwards. Moreover, the Holy Qur'an has mentioned Mount of Judi as the place of descent which is also a mountain of the same name in Turkey. Durupinar Mountain is the third option that Turkey is trying to attract tourist to it.

### 5.3.1.1. *The Ararat*

Volcanic Mount of Ararat (Fig 1) located in east of Turkey consists of two major cones: Greater Ararat (5,137 m) and Little Ararat (3,896 m).



**Fig 1.** *Location of the Ararat Mountain (Hill, 2002, 173)*

Most of the researchers began to hypothesize due to the names of Ararat Mountains attested in Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, Latin, American and Turkish. Brynner believes that since the tenth century west Christians have misinterpreted Hebraic phrase in the Torah, Ararat Mountains, as mountain (in singular form not plural) and introduced the highest

mountain in Ararat as the place of descent. While Ararat is derived from Urartu, as a Hebraic word, it is predicated to a kingdom in the East Turkey, which included both Ararat and Judi Mountains. This kingdom was recalled in older documents, e.g., Ashurnasirpal's annals (1280-1261 BC). Mount Ararat had not been in Urartu's territory (Plotrovsky, 1969, 43). The works of this areas have rarely been discovered through archaeological excavation around Mount Ararat (Başaran et al, 2008, 76). In the Book of Genesis, the name of the mountain, identical with the place of descent, was written as *rrt* so that it is also interpreted as the name of Urartu. In fact, the exact name of the mountain is not attested in Genesis and merely a geographical area is mentioned (Habermehl, 2008, 486).



**Fig 2.** Navarra while picking up the wood of Ararat highlands (Bailey, 1977, 139)

Philostorgius, a historian of fifth century AD, referred to Ararat where Noah's Ark had rested and its wreckage existed in his time (Habermehl, 2008, 486). Artsruni, in the tenth century AD, introduced this mount as the place of descent (Young, 1995) and this opinion remained as a persistent tradition in 14<sup>th</sup> century AD. Mandeville visited Mount Ararat in 1356 and could see pieces of the Ark (Berlitz, 1991, 23). Chardin sketched the assumed Ark based on natives' narrations in the seventeenth century. In 1820, news about seeing the Ark by Parrot, Prince Nouri and Hagopian were published (Lanser & Div, 2008, 1-7). Then, Roskovitsky in 1916, American pilots in 1943, Jefferson in 1952 and Turkish air force in 1959 reported a puddle like

a ship on this mountain. In 1955 and 1969, Navarra experimented some pieces of wood of Ararat and claimed that picked them up from the Ark (Navarra, 1974). Of course, numerous individuals attributed many uncovered pieces of wood with various colors and solidity to the Ark's remains since 1826 onwards. Navarra's samples (Fig 2) indicated an antiquity of 5000 years or even in some samples 4000 to 6000 years through Radiocarbon dating. In the following studies, the wood was dated to seventh and eighth centuries AD and was probably related to monument built by Armenians in memory of Noah (Bailey, 1978).

There had been rarely geological information about Mount Ararat until 1966. Then, Burdick showed that Mount Ararat had existed before the Flood and even before creation time and its lava layer was estimated at most to be 6100 meters deep, which reached the height of 5165 meters because of erosion. According to evidence like sediment and pillow lava, he believed that 4200 meters of the mount were under water when the Flood happened. Therefore, The Ark had settled on the Ararat. This theory was rejected since a small amount of pillow lava, which was newer than the Flood was found in Ararat. Rock salt and sea fossils are not unique to this mount which were also found several kilometers away. Geologists believe that the mountain sediment belongs to post-flood era (Habermehl, 2008).

Fasold and researchers of the Ataturk University focused their attention on studying the area (Fig 3) since 1985. They showed the molecular frequency of a bulky and massive body under the snow and inside an elliptically dusty hill of the mount by scanner device. Evidences for the presence of iron in the form of parallel and intersecting lines were also found (Fig 4), which were apparently used to connect timber and to build animal cages.

Furthermore, they found remarkable iron fittings, which were used in 5400 points of the Ark. They drew some points in order to show internal frame and the hall of a giant ship. In Fasold's belief, the dimensions of the supposed ship agreed with the dimensions in the Book of Genesis. The existence of different rooms and floors confirms the theory of advanced engineering. Detector device showed nine arches which agreed with description in Babylonian texts that referred to nine separate sections. Five thousand nails with round ends were also identified. Radar imagery demonstrated that iron strips or metal beams were tilted at the descending site (Collins, 1996; Berlitz, 1991).



**Fig 3.** *Location of the Ark claimed by Fasold*

The researchers confirmed interior walls, a three-layer wooden wall of the Ark, cavities, rooms and two large cylindrical tanks by radar scan experiment. They claimed that a cement-like material accompanied with a pitchy and impregnated to Manganese covered the exterior hall of the Ark (Berlitz, 1991, 234-235). Furthermore, analysis of the compounds of one nail confirmed the presence of alloys of aluminum, titanium and other metals. However, until the twentieth century, no sign of these alloys has been discovered anywhere in the world.



**Fig 4.** *Marked strips of iron lines with regular arrangement of ship frame <http://www.anchorstone.com>*

Bayrak Tutan indicated that figures presented by Wyatt and Fasold would not show morphological characteristics and internal structures. However, investigating through Fasold's underground radar an internal symmetry with regular distribution was discovered. According to Tutan's discoveries, the site has natural outcrops and regular geometric features. At Fasold's request, Collins studied the detected iron hook from Dogubayazit to determine whether it was produced in furnace or not. An examination of the hook confirmed that it had been made in the Ararat region rather than Mesopotamia as the place of departure. Therefore, the discovery has no relation to the actual Noah's Ark. Collins, after conducting experiments, declared that renovation of the Ark's hall through radar and electronic devices done in Ararat was not man-made and the present form could have been formed naturally. Lack of fossilized wood and any trace of carbon element, wood and straw fragments reinforced the theory that the boat-shaped structure is normal despite lack of archaeological evidence (Collins, 1996).

In Fasold's studies, eleven flat boulders were discovered each with a circular cavity at the beginning weighed between 4-10 tons in 24 kilometers of Ararat. According to Fasold, they were the ship's anchors (Fasold, 1988, 319-25). The theory of anchoring these boulders was rejected because the same were detected in Arzap, Durupinar, Toklucak, Kazan, Ahora, and Carahunge. The question raises here is whether Noah had hundreds of anchors that he threw into the water during the flood, which have been scattered everywhere and how these multi-ton boulders had been thrown into the water (Snelling, 1992). Further, chemical isotopic and mining experiments conducted by Merling on the Arzap and DonaPinar boulders showed that these boulders were basalt and native to Ararat. As a result, the boulders were created and carved in site not in Mesopotamia where the Ark moved. Thus, there is no evidence to confirm any connection between these cavity boulders and the Ark (Collins, 1996).

Geissler and Keles, as Arc Imaging group, conducted an archaeological study in 2001 around Mount Ararat to find Noah's Ark. They discovered some remains related to Stone Copper Period, which was near the Flood time. In Arzap area, Toklucak ground in the southeast of Carahunge ground and Ahora cemetery in the northeast of Ararat stones (Fig. 5) similar to Fasold's boulder were found (Başaran et al, 2008). Therefore, they are not related to Noah's Ark because the study of Fasold's samples proved to be local.



**Fig 5.** *Hypothetical ship anchors in Arzap (Başaran et al., 2008, 80)*

Lanser and Div, according to Berossus's writings, eyewitnesses and toponymy consider Ararat as the place of descent (Lanser, 2006; Lanser and Div, 2008) in 2008 and 2010, Noah's Ark Ministries International archaeological team from Turkey and Hong Kong explored Mount Ararat and announced that they found Noah's Ark. The team has not yet published authentic scientific results of their research. Thus, we cannot actually assess the validity or invalidity of their findings.

Despite the efforts made in Great Ararat, many researchers disagree with Ararat's theory. The reasons are as follows:

- It does not refer to Great Ararat Mountain as the place of descent in primary sources, although it refers to Ararat Mountains not the peak of Ararat in Genesis.
- It is a volcanic mountain which had not been under water at all. It was also created after the Flood so it cannot be the place of descent.
- Great Ararat Mountain and Small Ararat Mountain are in flat and do not connect to Ararat Mountain Ranges.
- Witnesses' record is not trustworthy.
- They have found nothing after sixty years of searching.
- Mount Ararat had not been in territory of Urartu (Fig 6) when the Torah was written to attribute the name of Ararat that derived from a kingdom.
- Most of the individuals who visited Ararat and saw some evidence of the Ark, truly, saw Cudi Dagh Mountain and mistaken it for Ararat (Habermehl, 2008, 486; Albright, 1969, 48; Spencer & Lienard, 2005; Crouse & Franz, 2006; Groebli, 1999, 313; Hill, 2002, 177).





**Fig 6.** *The area of Urartu rule in which Ararat is not located (Habermehl, 2008, 486)*

Many claims have been made about seeing Noah’s Ark in Ararat since 1800. However, no result has been achieved so far despite determined reconnaissance teams, airy photographs, the use of satellites, and modern technology, and new competitors show up for Mount Ararat. The question now is if Mount Ararat was the place where the Ark rested, why Armenian historical sources had been silent about it until tenth century.

*5.3.1.2. Mount of Cudi*

Mount Cudi Dagh, at a height of about 2100 meters is located in the east of Mardin province (Fig 7).



**Fig 7.** *Position of Cudi Dagh compared with Ararat (Crouse and Franz, 2006, 100)*



Other names of Cudi Mountain in historical sources are Cardu, Nippur and Karduchian (Crouse and Franz, 2006). Berossus considers Cardu Mount as the place of descent. According to him, people used tar that had been applied in the Ark as preventative of evil eye (Crouse, 1992). Pliny and Josephus also accepted this opinion. Today, Mount Cardu coincides with Mount Cudi in Turkey (Lancer & Div, 2007). Jubilees Book regards Mount Lubar as one of the Ararat Mountains and the place of descent. In accordance with Jubilees when Noah settled on Lubar Mountain, planted grape tree and his three sons established three cities near the mount and Noah's tomb is on top of the mount (Crouse & Franz, 2006, 102). Early Christians and Babylonians considered Mount Cudi as the place of descent (Ainsworth, 1842). In the early Christian tradition, the name Gordian is used for it which is the English name for Greek word *Gordyae* denoting Kurds. Some researchers of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century considered Cudi as the deformation of Gordyae (Ainsworth, 1842; Sale, 1734).

During archaeological activities, artifacts from the third and second millennium BC were identified around Mount Cudi (Plotrovsky, 1969). The name of Nippur Mountain written in Sennacherib's relief is related to the seventh century BC. Christians built a monastery of the Ark around Cudi from seventh century onwards, on which a mosque was later built. On report of historic sources, until the end of the first millennium AD, people went on pilgrimage to Cudi Mount and picked up pieces of wood for blessing or charm (Crouse and Franz, 2006, 105).

Muslim writers mentioned the location of Judi Mount since the third century AH. Abū Ḥanīfah Dīnwarī (1989, 1), al-Maqdisī (1982, 139), Iṣṭakhrī (1992, 18), al-Mas'ūdī (1995, 21), al-Shābashtī (1986, 309), Ibn Jubayr (1907, 1:170) Ibn 'Ibrī (1998, 8), Ibn Baṭṭūṭah (1986, 245) have considered Judi in the Ibn 'Umar al-Jazīrah (southeastern of Turkey). Ibn Qutaybah (1978), al-Ṭabarī (1996, 1:129), al-Ya'qūbī (1992, 13), Ibn Athīr (1992, 292), Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (1988) have placed Judi in Mosul. It is while Jayhānī (1989, 195) and Abū al-Fidā' (1970, 283) considered this mountain near Nasibin.

Biazar Shirazi, a contemporary writer, based on historical texts, believes that Judi refers to several mountains: 1. Ararat Mountain in Armenia; 2. al-Jazīrah in north of Mesopotamia; 3. Judi height in Saudi Arabia; 4. Cardin Mountains near Mosul (Biazar Shirazi, 2001, 42-43). Most of Muslim historians and geographers have located Judi Mountain near Mosul. However, no archaeological activity was done to discover Noah's Ark in this region.

In 1910, Bell discovered a ship-shaped stone structure in Cudi which was known as the Ark of Prophet Noah in the region. According to him, on September 14 every year, Muslims, Christians, Yazidis, Şābi'īn and Jews celebrate in honor of Noah's sacrifice after subsiding the Flood (Bell, 2002, 289-294). Bender's carbon-14 dating on a piece of wood (Fig 8) from Cudi Dagh showed 6500 years ago. In his belief, as Cudi Dagh was the first mountain on the northern edge of Mesopotamian plain (the Flood location), it is the place of descent; however, because of the few numbers of samples this experiment is not valid.



**Fig 8.** *Bender while picking up wood from Cudi Dagh (Bender, 2006, 113-114)*

Rohl, Hill, Crouse, Franz, Habermehl, Spencer, and Lienard believe that Genesis refers to the mountains of Ararat, rather than the peak of Ararat, and the witnesses' claims to have seen Noah's Ark in Ararat would not confirm the existence of the Ark. Since they have no evidence for their claims, only the pilots are more credible among them, and it can be assumed that the mountain, due to its structural substance, has basalt blocks, which are seen in coherent and regular shapes in some cases, and their images lack details. Although, the mountain is volcanic and lacks alluvial evidences, abundant historical texts and ancient traditions have made Cudi Dagh well known.

According to historical texts, Jewish, Assyrian, and Christian sources, the Book of Jubilees, and early historians such as Josephus and Nicolaus of Damascus, Berossus and Pliny, The Holy Qur'an and Islamic texts, the mountain in question is Cudi Dagh. This place had been for pilgrimage, worship and ritual so that pilgrims took the wood of this place for blessing or as a charm by themselves for a millennium. Cudi is also in the territory of Urartu, where olives and vineyards are planted. According to the Bible,

when Noah sent a pigeon to show the dry land, the pigeon had an olive branch in its beak in return then, Noah established a vineyard there after disembarking (Crouse and Franz, 2006, 99- 112; Rohl, 1998; Hill, 2002, 177; Habermehl, 2008). As mentioned, alluvial evidences have not been seen in the mountain. Therefore, we cannot talk about the existence of the Flood. There is a discrepancy between geological studies and written sources. Thus, the acceptance of Cudi Dagh as the place of descent is in doubt.

### 5.3.1.3. Durupinar Site

The Durupinar site of the boat-shaped formation (Fig. 9) located in 30 kilometers south of the Great Ararat has attracted the attention worldwide in 1959. Due to the adaptation of the dimensions of the flat space on the mountain with the dimensions mentioned in the Bible, some accepted this opinion (Habermehl, 2008, 492). A few large boulders were also discovered, which Fasold called them anchors (Fasold, 1988, 25-319); however, similar boulders were observed in the Arazap region. The stone anchors claimed by Fasold in this region according to chemical, isotopic and mining experiments are basalt and native to Ararat (Başaran et al, 2008, 95). Therefore, they do not belong to Mesopotamia. Furthermore, the study of Turkish and American archaeologists in 1985 and 2001 did not have any results in this regard (Başaran et al, 2008, 87).



**Fig 9.** *Durupinar boat-shaped formation (Başaran et al, 2008, 88)*

### 5.3.2. Azerbaijan

The Azerbaijanis have considered Mount of Gemikaya as the place of descent (Franz, 2013) and Nakhichevan as the first city established by Noah after the Flood and attributed a tomb to this prophet (Fig 10). These views have no scientific basis (Lanser & Div, 2008; Dwight, 1855).



Fig 10. The tomb attributed to Noah in Azerbaijan (Lanser & Div, 2008)

### 5.3.3. Iran

In Iran, areas such as Nahavand, Mount Takht-e Suleyman, Delfan Sarkeshti Mountain and Dasht-e Kavir have been introduced as the place of descent. In 290 AH, Ibn Faqih (1970, 93) considered Nahavand as the equivalent of *nūḥ āwand* that means made by Noah. The author of *Mujmal al-Tawārikh wa al-Qaṣaṣ* (1939, 186), Ibn Athīr (1992, 335), Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (1988, 361), Qazwīnī (1994, 545), Abū al-Fidā' (1970, 473) and the unknown author of *Ṣuwar al-Aqālim* (1974, 92) repeated Ibn Faqih's view. Based on these texts, Afrasiabpour considers the origin of Nahavand as *nūḥ āb band* which has been converted to *nūḥ āwand* (2002, 87). The toponymic study should be presented based on toponymical and philological studies. Therefore, this etymology should not be unscientific and accompanied with ethnic prejudices.

Cornuke in 2005 visited Mount Takht-e Suleyman in the Alborz Mountain range in northwest of Tehran and introduced it as the place of Ark's descent (Cornuke, 2005, 16). He had introduced Mount Sabalan as such (Cornuke & Halbrook, 2001). Cornuke's argument with regards the identity of Mount Takht-e Suleyman with the place of Ark's descent are as follows.

1. The territory of Urartu kingdom was stretched to the Alborz Mountains, and according to the Bible, Ararat on which the Ark settled coincides with Mount Takht-e Suleyman.
2. According to an interpretation of Genesis 11:2, the Ark descended in Persia and east of Shinar, which is located today in south of Iraq.
3. In ancient sources, e.g., Josephus, the eastern extension of Ararat to Persia is considered as such.

4. The outcrops discovered by them consist of fossilized pieces of wood which are considered by them as evidence for the Ark's presence on site.
5. The testimony of a soldier by the name of Davis who claimed to have observed the remains of the Ark in 1943.
6. The only known mountain outside Israel that has a Hebraic name.

Unlike Cornuke's claims, historical sources and archaeological data confirm that the Urartu border extended in most of its expanse to Urmia Lake in Iran (Zimansky, 1985, 10) and did not extend to Mount Takht-e Suleyman. Thus, the first and the third arguments are rejected. The fourth argument is not trustworthy since fossilized wood was found in hundred points of the world and no experiment was conducted on samples of this mount. In addition, Mount Takht-e Suleyman is a natural basaltic formation (Habermehl, 2008, 492). The sixth argument is also baseless because there are names combining with Solomon in other regions of Iran such as Mount of Solomon's Mother in West Azerbaijan. Cornuke's claim faced with negative reaction from Franz et al. (2008), and Habermehl (2008, 492) for the abovementioned reasons.

Despite archaeological excavations and surveys in the region have not confirmed the possible traces of the Flood, the mount of Sarkeshti in Delfan, Lorestan, has been introduced on internet websites as the place of descent of Noah's Ark. In 1838, while traveling from Zahab to Khuzestan, Rawlinson (1983) referred to Lurs' belief in descending the Ark on the mountain.

The oddest claim about the place of descent was made by Groebli that introduced Dasht-e Kavir and a mountain buried under the sand, but he has not provided a well-founded argument to prove it (Groebli, 1999, 313).

## *6. Noah's Flood: Universal or Local?*

Has Noah's Flood been universal or local? There has been no agreement on this issue for centuries. Some believe that since the story of the Flood is narrated in various forms all over the world, it is a universal matter; on the other hand, some have attempted to respond to it through sciences and academic disciplines such as geology and archeology. Has any trace of this great Flood existed to prove its universality or locality? In this regard, in the Sumerian text about the Flood, the names of the five cities including Eridu, Bad-Tibira, Larak, Sippar, and Shourouppak have been mentioned. Ziusudra also settled in the land of Dilmun and established the cities of Lagash, Kish, Nippour, Urouk and Oumma after the Flood.



Dilmun was located in different places like Bahrain, east coast of the Persian Gulf, plains southwest of Babylon, Indus valley or the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula (Bayyūmī Mihrān, 2004, 27). Based on the Mesopotamian texts, Dilmun had some terrific flood such as Shourbak Flood, Kish Flood and Ur Flood (loc. cit.).

Archaeologists, having studied the story of Gilgamesh, began to find evidence about a tremendous Mesopotamian Flood. Woolley encountered a thick layer of river sand 2.70 m to 3.35 m high between the ancient layers of Ur, in which there was no trace of ancient proofs. However, there was clay related to Obeid period in the layers before and after it. He dug in the courtyard of the Nanna Temple and rediscovered an alluvium layer during excavation. The alluvium layer in this amount represented the existence of a flood with a height of 7.5 meters (Fig. 11&12). Woolley estimated that such a flood in the low and flat land of Mesopotamia is the same as Noah's Flood (Woolley, 1930; Woolley, 1938). Two enormous floods occurred in Ur. Malycheff dated the oldest flood to 3500 BC. Based on microscopic experiments, the flood had a fluvial alluvium. The second flood occurred in 2700 BC and its origin was marine alluvium. Therefore, these two floods were not related to each other (Raikes, 1966, 52-63).

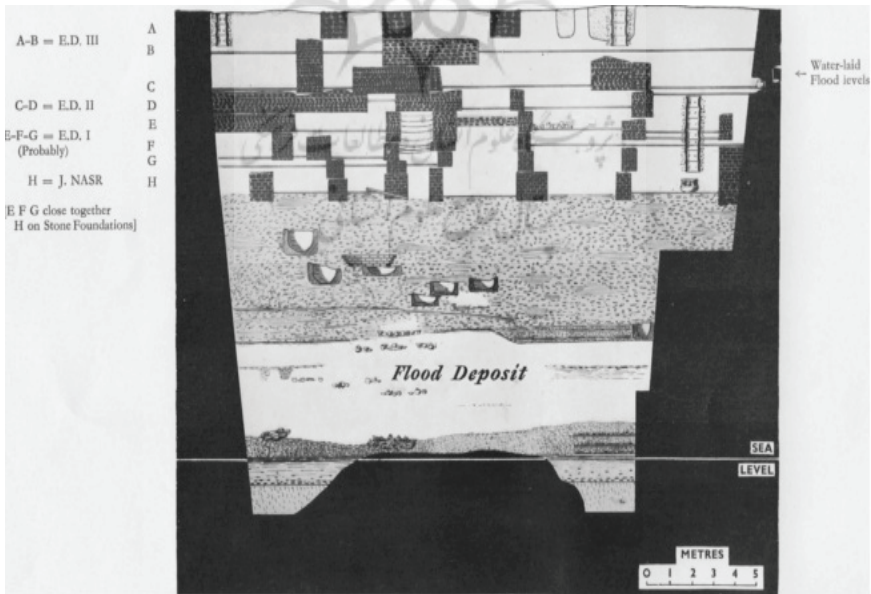
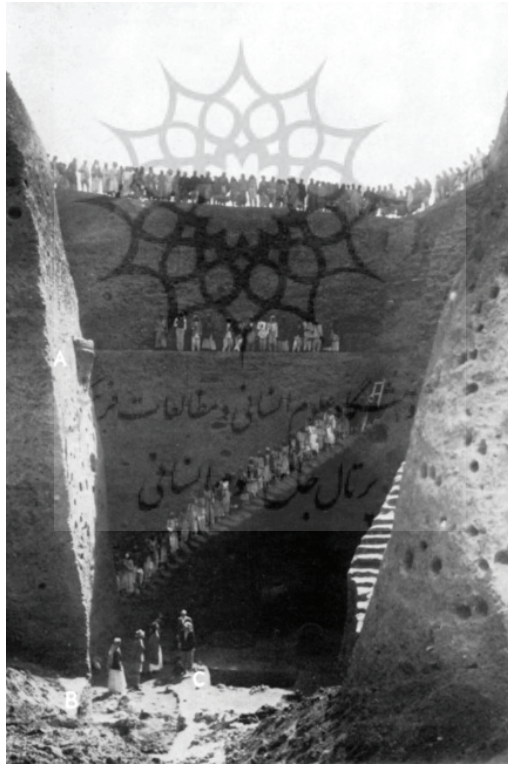


Fig 11. Floodwater layers in Ur city (Mallowan, 1971)

According to archeological excavations, three floods occurred in Kish, two of them in 2900 BC and the third one in 2600 BC, and the effects of all three are evident in the city streets. The thickness of the last alluvium, which was more severe, was estimated at 40 cm. A layer of alluvium with a thickness of 60 cm including soil and sand was discovered in shourouppak, which belongs to 2850 BC (Raikes, 1966, 52-63). Based on the report of the cuneiform tablets, the Sumerian Noah was warned of the flood that came from shourouppak. Some important cities such as Ur, Fara, Kish, and Uruk indicated that the Flood occurred in Mesopotamia and the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates (Mallowan 1971, 238). Although Mallowan believes that Noah's Flood had happened in 2900 BC or a century earlier, he states that, the Flood was not universal and was considered universal in Genesis for educational purposes.



*Fig 12. Floodwater layers in the courtyard of Nanna Temple (Mallowan, 1971)*

Raikes, after reviewing the above studies, concluded that these results were not convincing and did not indicate the occurrence of Noah's Flood in



Mesopotamia (Raikes, 1966, 52-63). In fact, there is no report about such an alluvium to implicate a universal flood on other areas contemporary with Mesopotamia.

Suons believed that marine turbulence in Persian Gulf, which had been created by submarine earthquake, caused Noah's Flood and such stormy sea turbulences have a long history. In his belief, the Flood had happened on the lower reaches of the Euphrates River so that low lands of Mesopotamia had been completely submerged (Hannink, 1975, 501-500). According to Hill, collecting all the animals in the world had been an impossibility but only animals living in Mesopotamia were collected. Archaeological data outside Mesopotamia cannot prove Noah's universal flood either. As a result, most of the available information leads us to the fact that it was a local flood. Otherwise, its proofs must be everywhere if it was a universal flood. It is a leap of logic, if it is said that there is massive alluvial accumulation accompanied with fish fossil everywhere such as Everest Mountain, the Flood would be a universal phenomenon (Hill, 2002, 170; Hill, 2001, 24-40), since dating the alluvium formation needs to be investigated and compared with the time of the Flood.

## 7. Conclusion

Numerous verses in the Holy Qur'an imply the inclusiveness of Noah's flood as *āyah*, i.e., a physical or non-physical sign indicating a divine affair (miracle). This implication can be reached through seeing or hearing the sign. Therefore, in verse (Q.54:15), being a sign and a miracle can mean both seeing a miracle (Noah's Ark and the Flood) or hearing about it. Based on a number of studies, being a sign for Noah's Ark may indicate the existence of a material trace of it, or it may be indicative of Noah's Flood.

Most of the interpreters allow considering both physical (existence of wreckage) and non-physical (the famous Flood news) aspects of the phenomenon. Given the interpretive opinions of interpreters and archaeological documents in this field, it seems that the second aspect is stronger. Owing to the fact that no conclusive evidence has been found so far to indicate the existence of the remains of Noah's Ark, the verse in question refers only to "giving notice of the unseen" and its miraculous aspect does not indicate a scientific miracle.

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