

# **AS IT WAS IN THE DAYS OF NOAH: THE PROPHETS' TYPOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF NOAH'S FLOOD**

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**B**y the time of the New Testament, a prominent interpretive tradition understood the flood of Noah (and the events associated with the flood) as a type of the eschatological dénouement. The Scriptures' account of the flood, this tradition held, was not recorded simply for historical purposes, but was actually intended to foreshadow prophetically the events of the end time. The basic typological consciousness is expressed best in 1 Cor 10:11, "These things [events in the OT] happened as an example [τυπικῶς], and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." I argue in this paper that the NT's typological understanding of the Genesis flood is not the result of novel or imaginative exegesis on the part of the NT authors, but is in fact a) shared by other Second Temple texts that predate the NT, and more importantly b) modeled on the OT's own interpretation of the flood. After briefly surveying the typological interpretation of the flood in the NT and Second Temple literature, I will devote the bulk of my discussion to exploring several passages in the OT prophets (especially Isaiah) that allude to and interpret the flood eschatologically.

## **I. ESCHATOLOGICAL-TYOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE FLOOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

The NT's typological interpretation of the flood appears in several passages. In Matthew 24,<sup>1</sup> Jesus teaches his disciples about the eschatological scenario they may expect. He explicitly compares the last days to the "days of Noah" in vv. 37–39, emphasizing that the flood was

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the parallel in Luke 17:26.

sudden and unexpected and comparing it to the coming of the Son of Man:

As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark. And they knew nothing until the flood came and took them all away. So too will be the coming of the Son of Man.

A different emphasis occurs in Second Peter, which displays a fairly developed flood typology. In 2 Pet 2:1–9, Peter predicts the rise of false teachers among his audience, but assures them that such evil men will be judged and destroyed. As evidence he appeals to several OT examples of judgment: the fallen angels, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the generation of the flood. The flood is interpreted as a type which points forward to, and guarantees, both the final judgment and the salvation of a remnant (v. 9). These same points are reiterated and expanded in 2 Pet 3:3–10, where the Apostle again predicts that evil men will come in the last days who will mock the idea of the second coming and final judgment. For Peter, however, the Genesis flood guarantees that God will destroy the “present heavens and earth” and thus judge the ungodly mockers (v. 7). What is important to notice here is that Peter’s argument depends on an assumed typological connection between the flood and the final judgment, the days of Noah and the last days. For Peter, the days of Noah were characterized by the presence of ungodly mockers alongside a persecuted remnant; the mockers were destroyed and the remnant was preserved. It is precisely because of this that Peter expects mockers to come in the last days and to persecute his readers, the remnant. The ungodly eschatological generation will be judged—this time by fire, not flood—while the remnant will again be preserved. Peter’s reading of the flood determines the shape and content of his eschatological expectations.

## II. SECOND TEMPLE LITERATURE

### 1 Enoch

The NT is not alone in its interpretation of the flood as a pointer to the eschatological judgment. It is part of a widespread interpretive tradition represented in several strands of Second Temple literature. For example, in the apocalyptic tradition that produced the Enochic corpus, a very detailed flood typology plays a prominent role. The Book of the Watchers (*1 Enoch* 1–36), one of the oldest strata of the tradition (ca. 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE), recounts how fallen angels (the Watchers, or “sons of God”) corrupted the earth prior to the flood by revealing secret knowledge to humans, transgressing sexual boundaries, and violently oppressing humanity with their superior strength. Enoch is commissioned

to announce to the Watchers that their judgment is imminent—they will be destroyed in the coming deluge. This judgment is described in 10:1–11:2, where each of the four righteous archangels is instructed to carry out his assignment in connection with the flood. Michael receives four distinct commands, but only two are clearly related to the primordial situation:<sup>2</sup> he is, first, to bind Shemihazah (a leader of the fallen angels) and, second, to destroy the spirits of the giants. The last two commands, though, make a distinct shift to eschatological matters and concern orders that Michael will carry out upon the last day, in the final judgment. First, Michael will “destroy all perversity from the face of the earth” (10:16); second, he will “cleanse the earth from all impurity and from all wrong and from all lawlessness and from all sin” (10:20). Each of these commands is followed by an eschatological description of the new world. In 10:16b–19,

The plant of righteousness and truth [will] appear and it will become a blessing, and the deeds of righteousness and truth will be planted forever with joy. . . . All the righteous will escape. . . . Then the earth will be tilled in righteousness. . . . They will plant vines on it, and every vine that will be planted on it will yield a thousand jugs of wine, and of every seed that is sown on it, each measure will yield a thousand measures, and each measure of olives will yield ten baths of oil.

Following the command of 10:20,

All the sons of men will become righteous, and all the peoples will worship me, and all will bless me and prostrate themselves, and all the earth will be cleansed from all defilement and from all uncleanness, and I shall not again send upon them any wrath or scourge for all the generations of eternity. Then I shall open the storehouses of blessing that are in heaven . . . and then truth and peace will be united together for all the days of eternity and for all the generations of humanity (10:21–11:2).

These passages clearly look beyond the receding of the flood waters and describe a new creation. They draw on passages such as Deut 28:12, Ps 85:11, Isa 65:20–23, and 66:18–23 for their imagery.<sup>3</sup> G. Nickelsburg finds that the “radical incompatibility of this description with the

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<sup>2</sup> Lars Hartman, “An Early Example of Jewish Exegesis: 1 Enoch 10:16–11:2,” *Neotestamentica* 17 (1983): 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 21; George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001) 226–28.

postdiluvian world” indicates that the intended referent is the eschaton.<sup>4</sup> This could be described as a kind of prophetic telescoping of time, in which the flood and the final judgment are described in the same breath, just as the deliverance of Noah and the salvation of the eschatological remnant are compressed into one event. The flood narrative is clearly being used as a typological springboard to jump into a description of the eschatological judgment on the final sinful generation and the attendant salvation of the end-time remnant. The author intends his audience to understand themselves as being in a situation analogous to that of Noah—a righteous remnant in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation—and thus to persevere in righteousness, fully expecting that God will deliver them through the imminent eschatological judgment. Numerous other texts could be adduced from *1 Enoch* as well as other Second Temple literature (*Jubilees*, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *pesharim* from the Dead Sea Scrolls).<sup>5</sup>

### The Two Stelae Tradition

It was not only apocalyptically oriented sects, however, that interpreted the flood as an eschatological type. This understanding also appears in Josephus’s retelling of Jewish history. According to Josephus (*Antiquities* 1.69–71), the antediluvian patriarch Seth was a learned man full of cosmological wisdom. God had revealed to Adam that he would destroy the world twice, once by fire and once by flood. Adam passed this knowledge on to Seth, who in order to preserve his scientific knowledge for his progeny, erected two stelae, one of brick and one of stone, thus guaranteeing that whatever judgment came first—fire or flood—one stela would survive. Here, then, in a work of historiography, we find a

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<sup>4</sup> Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 167.

<sup>5</sup> David W. Suter, *Tradition and Composition in the Parables of Enoch*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 47 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979) 45, has examined eschatological midrash on the Flood narrative in the *Similitudes* (*1 En.* 54:1–56:4 and 64:1–68:1). See also Moshe J. Bernstein, “Noah and the Flood at Qumran,” in *Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 1999): 199–231; Devorah Dimant, “Noah in Early Jewish Literature,” in *Biblical Figures Outside the Bible*, ed. Michael E. Stone and Theodore A. Bergren (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1998) 123–50; Florentino García Martínez, “Interpretations of the Flood in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Interpretations of the Flood*, ed. Florentino García Martínez and Gerard P. Luttikhuisen (Leiden: Brill, 1998) 86–108; Carol A. Newsom, “4Q370: An Admonition Based on the Flood,” *Revue de Qumran* 13 (1988):23–43; J. T. A. G. M. van Ruiten, “The Interpretation of the Flood Story in the Book of Jubilees,” in *Interpretations of the Flood*, ed. Florentino García Martínez and Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, *Themes in Biblical Narrative* 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1998) 66–85.

typological and prophetic connection between the flood and the final judgment.<sup>6</sup>

### III. INTERPRETATION OF THE FLOOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In light of how widespread a typological-eschatological interpretation of the flood was in the post-biblical period, it makes sense to ask if the various traditions of interpretation discussed above might have a common source. The most obvious place to begin would be the OT itself. In recent years, there has been increased interest in how later OT writers reflect upon, interpret, and even exegete earlier OT texts and traditions.<sup>7</sup> For example, the prophets reflect on the Exodus and interpret it as a type of Israel's future salvation from exile (cf. Hosea 11, Isaiah 40–55). If the prophets interpret the Genesis flood in a similar fashion, it seems plausible to think that the Second Temple sources and the NT are following their lead when they do likewise.

To demonstrate that this is in fact the case, I will explore several OT prophetic texts where the author alludes to the Genesis flood or motifs connected to it. In each of these cases I will try to show that the allusions are intentional and meaningful. That is, they encourage the reader to think back upon the Genesis flood narrative and to understand the present situation in light of past revelation.

#### The Flood Account in Genesis

It is first necessary to outline briefly the major contours and emphases of the Genesis flood narrative itself:

1. Universality: The flood comes on "all flesh."
2. Remnant: Only a righteous remnant is preserved from destruction in the ark.
3. Reversal of creation: The earth is returned to its watery chaos as the waters above are reunited with the waters below and cover the dry land. All life is blotted out.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Andrei A. Orlov, "Overshadowed by Enoch's Greatness: 'Two Tablets' Traditions from the Book of Giants to Palaea Historica," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 32 (2001): 137–58; Louis H. Feldman, "Questions About the Great Flood, as Viewed by Philo, Pseudo-Philo, Josephus, and the Rabbis," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 115 (2003): 401–22.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g. Michael A. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984); Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1987).

<sup>8</sup> It is widely recognized that in its final form, the Pentateuch portrays the flood as paralleling the creation account in many ways. See Mark F. Rooker, "The Genesis Flood," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 5 (2001): 67–68; Nahum

4. The Cause of the Flood: God brings the flood because humanity is overwhelmingly wicked (Gen 6:5). This wickedness is expressed most prominently in terms of “corruption” (וַתִּשְׁחָד הָאָרֶץ) and “violence” (מִלֵּאָה הָאָרֶץ חֲמוֹס) (Gen 6:11, 13). God responds in kind: just as man has corrupted/destroyed the earth, so God will corrupt/destroy man (מִשְׁחַתֵּם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ; 6:13).<sup>9</sup>
5. New Creation: When God brings an end to the flood, there are several parallels to the original creation account: a) God sends a wind to push back the waters and uncover the dry land (8:1, cf. 1:2), b) God tells Noah to come out of the ark along with the animals so that they may “be fruitful and multiply”(8:17; 9:1; cf. 1:17, 28), c) God gives commandments to Noah concerning what he may eat (9:3, cf. 1:29–30; 2:16–17), d) Noah plants a vineyard (9:20; this may recall the garden in Gen 2:8, which God plants). The effect of these parallels is to indicate that Noah is a kind of new Adam and the flood is a means of bringing about a new creation.<sup>10</sup>
6. New Covenant: After Noah emerges from the ark, God makes a new covenant, an “everlasting covenant” (בְּרִית עוֹלָם, 9:16), with Noah, promising never again to destroy all flesh with a flood. This new covenant is preceded by commandments meant to prevent the kind of behavior that caused the flood, namely violence and bloodshed (9:1–7).

From this discussion it is clear that the Pentateuch itself already interprets the flood typologically. The flood reverses creation and brings about a new beginning. The flood is, so to speak, the “end of the world.”<sup>11</sup>

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M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with New JPS Translation*, JPS Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989) 49–50; Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996) 189; J. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. F. Gaebelin, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990) 80. H. A. J. Krüger, “Creation-Uncreation Reflection of Reversal Motifs in Genesis 9:18–24 (25–29),” in *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, ed. Ron Margolin (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1999), states, “The flood replays the creation account in reverse.” (129).

<sup>9</sup> See a similar instance of divine *lex talionis* in 1 Cor 3:17, with the use of φθείρω (corrupt); cf. also Rev 11:18, “The time came . . . to destroy (διαφθεῖραι) those who destroy (τοὺς διαφθείροντας) the earth.” One might conclude that John has also read the flood typologically.

<sup>10</sup> Rooker, “Genesis Flood,” 65.

<sup>11</sup> It is significant to note that Gen 6:13 portrays the flood as the destruction not simply of humanity but of the earth as well: “Behold, I will destroy both them and the earth” (וַהֲנִי מִשְׁחַתֵּם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ).

Indeed, one could argue that the flood is intentionally described in eschatological terms: “the end of all flesh has come” (6:13). Likewise, God’s promise to preserve nature’s regularity could also be eschatologically oriented: “As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease” (8:22). This could be understood as looking forward and indicating that it will not be until the final consummation that the natural order is again disrupted and the earth is destroyed. At the very least, the Pentateuch contains an openness that allows, even invites, eschatological interpretation of its narratives.

### The Prophets

#### *Isaiah 24–27*

Whether or not the Pentateuchal narrative of the flood was itself composed with the final judgment in mind, there is ample evidence in the OT prophets that the flood eventually came to be understood as a type of the judgment to come. Nowhere is this clearer than in Isaiah.

Flood typology is most prominent in the so-called Isaianic Apocalypse (Isaiah 24–27). These chapters, serving as a finale to chs. 13–23 (the oracles against the nations), offer a poetic portrait of the eschatological climax. Blenkinsopp states, “What happens to the nations mentioned by names in chs. 13–23 instantiates and prefigures the general doom” of chs. 24–27.<sup>12</sup> Oswalt calls these chapters a “cosmic expansion” of chs. 13–23.<sup>13</sup>

Several notable elements constitute the eschatological scenario. The entire earth will languish under the wrath of God. In effect, creation will be reversed as the cosmos breaks down in massive earthquakes and returns to chaos. This worldwide destruction is portrayed as the judgment of God on a corrupt creation and an unrighteous humanity. Epitomizing this anti-God humanity is the city of chaos (קריית־חור; 24:10). The prophet “zooms in” on this city and finds in its fall a microcosm of the wider desolation decreed for the whole world. The judgment is not limited to humanity, however. The host of heaven and the primordial opponents (Leviathan and the sea dragon) will both meet with punishment as well (24:21; 27:1). It is through this large-scale defeat of God’s enemies that God saves his own people. They are preserved during the time of God’s wrath (26:20) and are ultimately restored to a rebuilt city, renewed life, and prosperous security.

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000) 347.

<sup>13</sup> John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 441.

*Cosmic Corruption and the Everlasting Covenant (24:5–6)*. At three key junctures, Isaiah describes this consummation by drawing on the language and imagery of the flood narrative. First, in Isa 24:5–6, Isaiah tells why the eschatological destruction has come upon the earth: “The earth is polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty.”<sup>14</sup> The interpretive crux of the verse is the phrase “eternal covenant” (ברית עולם). Three views have been proposed. 1) The “eternal covenant” is a covenant made at creation.<sup>15</sup> The covenant stipulations are the equivalent of what is commonly known as “natural law.” This natural law was given to Adam and required him to glorify and to worship God. This view certainly accounts for the universality of the covenant; all nations and people would be held accountable. It also explains how one could break an *eternal* covenant. If ברית עולם refers to an Adamic covenant, עולם could be taken to refer not to its perpetuity or eternal continuance, but to its antiquity; i.e. this is a covenant which has been in effect since creation—it is “age-old.” Against this view, however, is the lack of any reference in later Scripture to such a covenant or to its contents.<sup>16</sup> There are other views which account for the evidence without recourse to speculation about an implicit covenant.

2) The second view holds that the author has in mind a more specific covenant, namely the Sinai Covenant made with the children of Israel.<sup>17</sup> Evidence for this view includes: a) The use of חק and חורה in 24:5. These terms are almost exclusively tied to the Mosaic Law elsewhere in the OT. b) While the Mosaic covenant itself is never called a ברית עולם, certain elements of it are. Exodus 31:16, for example, describes the Sabbath commandment in this way. Other texts speak of the Mosaic covenant as enduring לעולם (Ps 111:5, 9; Judg 2:1). c) The curse (אלה) which devours the ארץ in 24:6 is best understood against a Deuteronomic backdrop (Deut 29:20–21). The ארץ is thus the land of Israel and not the earth. Much of the destruction described in Isaiah 24–27 resembles the

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<sup>14</sup> Donald C. Polaski, *Authorizing an End: The Isaiah Apocalypse and Intertextuality*, Biblical Interpretation Series 50 (Leiden: Brill, 2001) 94, sees 24:5–6 as providing the reason for the entire apocalypse of chs. 24–27.

<sup>15</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*. 3 vols., NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 2:157–58. Cf. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 446.

<sup>16</sup> Hos 6:7 is a possible, though unlikely, exception: והמה באדם עברו ברית. באדם could be understood as a specific reference to Adam as opposed to general humanity.

<sup>17</sup> Among the main proponents of this view are Dan G. Johnson, *From Chaos to Restoration: An Integrative Reading of Isaiah 24–27*, JSOTSup 61 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988) 27–29; Edward J. Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1941) 279–80. Cf. the discussion in Polaski, *Authorizing*, 96–101; Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah*, 3 vols., CC (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 1:466, 479–80.

calamities promised in Deuteronomy for violation of the covenant (Deut 31:16):<sup>18</sup>

- Isa 24:6/Deut 29:20–21 - אלה
- Isa 24:5/Deut 31:16 והפר את־ברית־הפרו ברית
- Isa 24:6/Deut 32:22 (a fire that devours earth)
- Isa 24:1/Deut 28:36, 63–64, 68 (scattering)
- Lending (Isa 24:2; cf. Deut 28:44)
- Drought (Isa 24:4, 7; cf. Deut 28:22–24)
- Only a remnant survives (Isa 24:6, 13; cf. Deut 28:62)
- Wine is destroyed (Isa 24:7, 9, 11; cf. Deut 28:39, 51)
- City is destroyed (Isa 24:10,12; cf. Deut 28:52)
- Empty houses (Isa 24:10; cf. Deut 28:30)
- Oppression, treachery (Isa 24:16; Deut. 28:24)
- Destruction from heaven (Isa 24:17; cf. Deut 28:12)

d) The city destroyed in Isa 24:10–12, 25:2, and 26:5 refers to Jerusalem, razed in 587.<sup>19</sup> On this view, then, Isaiah 24–27 is focused on Judea and its judgment for violating the Sinai covenant. Because of its sin, Jerusalem will fall and the nation will be led into captivity. Cosmic language is used synecdochally; it is not the end of the world that is in view, but the end of Judah’s world.<sup>20</sup>

Against this view, the following should be noted: a) The references to the Mosaic covenant as an “eternal covenant” are actually more likely to be speaking of the covenant with Abraham.<sup>21</sup> For example in Judg 2:1, the promise is to “the fathers,” i.e. the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Exodus 31:16 refers to the Sabbath, which was instituted prior to Sinai (Exodus 16). b) It is unlikely that the prophet would rejoice over the destruction of the city of chaos (25:1–2) if that city were Jerusalem. The typical prophetic response is to mourn Jerusalem’s downfall. c) The use of חק and תורה does not establish a reference to the law of Moses. The same terms appear in Gen 26:5, where Abraham is said to have kept God’s חקות ותורה. This implies that certain statutes and laws existed before Yahweh instituted the Sinai covenant. d) It is difficult to limit the scope of Isaiah 24–27 to the land of Judah alone. In Isa 24:4, ארץ is parallel with תבל, which indicates that ארץ has in view the entire earth, not just the land of Israel. Again, in 24:18, cosmological language is used (e.g. “foundations of the earth”) which cannot have only Israel in mind. Indeed, 24:21 includes the heavenly hosts in the judgment. This does not

<sup>18</sup> The following list is drawn from Polaski, *Authorizing*, 102–03.

<sup>19</sup> Johnson, *From Chaos to Restoration*, 25.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., “The ‘Everlasting Covenant’ and the ‘City of Chaos’: Intentional Ambiguity and Irony in Isaiah 24,” *CTR* 6 (1993): 240. See Gen 17:7, 19, where the promise of the land is an “everlasting covenant.”

sound like a localized calamity. The Sinai covenant, made with Israel alone, cannot be the source of the judgment described in these chapters.

3) The third view, and the one with the most explanatory power, is that Isaiah's "eternal covenant" is the covenant with Noah.<sup>22</sup> Evidence for this view includes: a) The Noachic covenant is expressly called a *ברית עולם* (Gen 9:16). b) The covenant with Noah is universal in its scope; it is made with all humanity. c) Isaiah 24:5 states that the world is being judged because its inhabitants have polluted or corrupted the earth. This is conceptually parallel to the way the flood generation corrupted the earth (Gen 6:11).<sup>23</sup> The antediluvian corruption came about because of the violence (*חמס*) wrought by that evil generation (continuing the trend begun by Cain, the first murderer). Likewise, Isa 26:21 indicates that the world is once again being polluted by bloodshed.<sup>24</sup> d) The use of *חוק* and *חורר* in Isa 24:5 may refer to the stipulations laid down in the Noachic covenant. Genesis 9:1–7, which enumerates these commandments, features prominently the prohibition of murder or bloodshed. As mentioned above, Gen 26:5 states that Abraham kept God's laws and statutes; this could refer to the commandments given to Noah.<sup>25</sup> e) The curse which devours the earth in Isaiah 24:5 may refer to the curse upon those who violate the Noachic covenant. The Noachic commandments seem to have been aimed at preventing the kinds of sins which brought about the flood, especially violence or bloodshed. According to Num 35:33–34, murder or bloodshed pollutes the land and brings a curse upon

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<sup>22</sup> Those scholars favoring this view include Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 347; George Buchanan Gray and Arthur S. Peake, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah, 2 Vols.*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1949) 1:411; Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974) 183; J. Vermeylen, *Du Prophète Isaïe à L'apocalyptique: Isaïe, I–XXXV, Miroir d'un Demi-Millénaire d'expérience Religieuse en Israël*, 2 vols., Études Biblique (Paris: Gabalda, 1977) 1:353, ("sans doute"); John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1985) 318; Walter Vogels, *God's Universal Covenant: A Biblical Study* (Ottawa: Saint Paul University, 1979) 32; John H. Hayes and Stuart A. Irvine, *Isaiah, the Eighth Century Prophet: His Times and His Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987) 300–01; Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39: With an Introduction to Prophetic Literature*, FOTL 16 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 328–29; Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1993) 179–83; Arthur Sumner Herbert, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah Chapters 1–39*, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973) 148; William L. Holladay, *Isaiah: Scroll of Prophetic Heritage* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 196; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 446; C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, Updated ed., Commentary on the Old Testament 8 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996 [1891]) 278.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 183; Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 179–80, agrees: Isaiah 24 is "a return to the days of Noah"—the nations are violently shedding blood.

<sup>24</sup> Chisholm, "Everlasting Covenant," 246.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

it. The means of expiation in Num 35:33 echoes the “blood-for-blood” Noachic stipulation in Gen 9:6: “No expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.”<sup>26</sup> The flood, then, is God’s talionic punishment that purges a world of bloodshed. f) Finally, it will be shown below that Isaiah 24–27 contains other allusions to the flood narrative which strengthen the likelihood of an allusion in 24:5’s בריית עולם.

The prophet has made a very significant theological move by basing the entire judgment sequence of Isaiah 24–27 on the charges in Isa 24:5. According to the prophet, the Lord is in a general covenant relationship with all nations. This covenant, instituted at the time of Noah, binds humans to a basic set of moral injunctions necessary for the survival of the race. It is on these grounds that Isaiah can deliver his oracles against the nations (chs. 13–23). One might note a parallel in Amos 1–2, which similarly indicts the pagan nations surrounding Israel for their transgression of a basic moral code through violent aggression. The violence of the nations corrupts the earth and brings God’s judgment.

*Cosmic Chaos (Isa 24:18).* The second major allusion to the flood narrative in Isaiah’s apocalypse occurs in 24:18. Isaiah describes the cosmic upheaval brought by God: “The windows of heaven are opened” (ארבות מנרום נפתחו; 24:18c). This explicitly echoes the description of the flood that occurs twice in the Genesis account (ארבת השמים נפתחו; Gen 7:11; 8:2 [where the windows are closed at the end of the flood]).<sup>27</sup> Clearly, the prophet wants to show that the predicted judgment will be like Noah’s flood in some way. It does not appear, however, that Isaiah expects another flood of *water*. Most of the imagery throughout the section refers to destruction by earthquake or fire. More likely, the prophet intends to evoke the image of a worldwide devastation—a catastrophe on the scale of the deluge. In the Genesis account, the opening of the heavenly windows signified that creation was being reversed as the cosmic boundaries were erased and the water above once again joined the water below, producing a return to primordial chaos.<sup>28</sup> Isaiah, likewise, envisions creation breaking up.

<sup>26</sup> Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 446. Cf. Ps 106:38.

<sup>27</sup> Noted by Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 180; Wildberger, *Isaiah*, 1:466, 500; Vermeylen, *Prophète Isaïe*, 1:350; Polaski, *Authorizing*, 90; Chisholm, “Everlasting Covenant,” 237; R. E. Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 205; Young, *The Book of Isaiah*. 3 Vols., 2:175.

<sup>28</sup> Note also that Isaiah speaks of “Chaos City” (קרית-החור). William H. Irwin, “The City of Chaos in Isa 24,10 and the Genitive of Result,” *Biblica* 75 (1994): 401–03, has convincingly argued that this is a genitive of result; i.e. it pictures a “city shattered into chaos.” Isaiah perhaps here sees a return to the primordial תהו of Gen 1:2, with the city as a microcosm. Cf. Chisholm, “Everlasting Covenant,” 242–43, for an argument that the city in view is Babylon, portrayed in terms

Minor allusions to the flood also occur in 24:1, 19. In 24:1, the Lord “makes the earth a wasteland” (בּוֹקֵק הָאָרֶץ), “devastates” it (בִּלַּק), and “twists/distorts its surface” (וַעֲוָה פְּנִיָּה). While בִּלַּק is often translated “devastate” or “desolate,” there is strong evidence from Arabic and Syriac<sup>29</sup> that it may have the connotation of “opening up” or “bursting.”<sup>30</sup> Isaiah 24:19 contains a similar image: “The earth is burst asunder; the earth is split apart; the earth is shaken violently.” These verses recall the picture of Gen 7:11. In the Genesis flood, not only do the heavenly floodgates open up, but also “the fountains of the great deep burst open.” Judgment, then, comes from both above and below.<sup>31</sup>

In light of Isaiah’s allusions to the flood and his charge that humanity has broken the everlasting Noachic covenant, one wonders just how the prophet understands the nature of the Noachic covenant. Many commentators believe that Isaiah does not have access to canonical Genesis, especially the later P material, which stresses the inviolability and unconditionality of the Noachic covenant.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, he understands the Noachic covenant in bilateral terms. There may be another explanation, however, that does not depend on a hypothetical reconstruction of the Pentateuch’s composition-history. Perhaps Isaiah understands the covenant with Noah as containing both unconditional and conditional elements. The Genesis account is certainly open to such a reading. On the one hand, God’s promise never to destroy the world by a flood is clearly unconditional—it does not depend on humanity’s actions at all. On the other hand, commandments are imposed on humanity. The very presence of these commandments (as well as their position in the narrative) implies that part of the covenant is conditional upon obedience.<sup>33</sup> God may not destroy the world again *by flood*, but he may

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reminiscent of Babel, whose end was chaos and scattering (cf. Isa 24:1; Gen 11:4, 8–9). Babel is the first example of how the Noachic commandments were violated; instead of filling the earth, they attempted to concentrate their population in a city.

<sup>29</sup> See the discussion in Wildberger, *Isaiah*, 1:469. Cf. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 444.

<sup>30</sup> בִּלַּק is a virtual hapax legomenon, since it only appears elsewhere in Nah 1:8, which is likely dependent on Isa 24:1.

<sup>31</sup> Significantly *1 En.* 65:1–5 recounts the flood, and describes how the flood was preceded by great earthquakes as the earth began to come apart. It appears that *1 En.* 54:1–56:4 and 64:1–68:1 constitute a haggadic retelling of the flood that combines elements from the Genesis account but also incorporates significant portions of Isaiah 24–27. See Suter, *Tradition*, 45. This shows that by the first century CE, the flood was read in tandem with Isaiah 24–27.

<sup>32</sup> Jon Douglas Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988) 28; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 357.

<sup>33</sup> See Chisholm, “Everlasting Covenant,” 239–47, for a similar line of argumentation.

nevertheless destroy it by some other means should humanity violate the covenant. Isaiah alludes to the flood in his prophecy of judgment not because he believes God will flood the world again, but because he finds in the deluge an appropriate model for the coming catastrophe—a universal judgment in response to humanity’s corruption which results in a reduction to primordial chaos.

*A New Ark for the Remnant’s Salvation (Isa 26:20).* The third major allusion to the flood narrative in Isaiah 24–27 occurs in Isa 26:20. Although Isaiah has prophesied worldwide destruction, he does not foresee the righteous remnant being swept away in the flood of God’s wrath. The Lord will protect his faithful through the coming tribulation. The prophet describes this safeguarding in terms intended to remind the reader of how God sheltered Noah and his family from the worldwide flood:<sup>34</sup>

לך עמי בא בחדריך וסגר דלתך בערך  
 חבי כמעט־רנע עד־יעבור־זעם:  
 Gen 7:16 וזכר ונקבה מכל־בשר באו כאשר צוה  
 אתו אלהים ויסגר יהוה בערו:

Some, however, have detected in Isa 26:20 an allusion not to the flood, but to the Passover.<sup>35</sup> A conceptual parallel is surely present. Both passages speak of how God protects his people from destruction. When Isaiah speaks of “inner rooms” (חדרים) and closed doors, he may have in mind the Passover night, when the Israelites were commanded to stay in their houses behind closed doors while the destroying angel passed by (Exod 12:22). Furthermore, there is a direct verbal parallel. In Isaiah, the people are to hide until the wrath “has passed over” (עד־יעבור־זעם). The same verb (עבר) is used in Exod 12:12 to describe how the Lord “passes over” the Land of Egypt while his people hide.<sup>36</sup>

Stronger evidence, though, points to a flood allusion. First, the same conceptual parallel holds: the theme of a remnant protected from judgment is present in both Isa 26:20 and the flood narrative. Second, Noah was told to make rooms or chambers within the ark (Gen 6:14). While Genesis does not use the term חדר the similarity is there. Third,

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<sup>34</sup> Those who see an allusion to the flood include Wildberger, *Isaiah*, 571–72; Herbert, *Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, 1:156; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 488; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 214; Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 182, 196; Keil and Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 423. Discussed by Polaski, *Authorizing*, 232–33, and Vermeulen, *Prophète Isaïe*, 1:373. Denied by Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 371.

<sup>35</sup> Gray and Peake, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 449; Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah*, 290; Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 217; Johnson, *From Chaos to Restoration*, 81–82; Young, *The Book of Isaiah. 3 Vols.*, 2:229.

<sup>36</sup> See, however, the discussion below on this verb and its connection to the flood motif.

there are several direct verbal echoes of the flood narrative. The Lord's command to his people to enter their rooms in Isa 26:20 (בא) mirrors his call to Noah and his family to enter the ark (בא; Gen 6:18, 7:1). Also, God's people are told in Isa 26:20 to close (סגר) their doors behind them (בערך) after they have entered their shelter; in Gen 7:16, after Noah has entered the ark, the Lord closes (סגר) the door behind him (בערך).<sup>37</sup> While the verb used in Isa 26:20 (עבר) to describe the judgment is never used in the Genesis flood narrative, it is used later in Isaiah to speak of the waters of Noah, which "passed over" the earth (54:9). Thus, what may have seemed to be a point in favor of a Passover allusion actually supports the flood motif.

Isaiah 24–27 contains a coherent story presented in apocalyptic form. The story is one of judgment and blessing, destruction and preservation. Humanity has corrupted the earth with its sins, broken the eternal covenant, and provoked the wrath of God (24:5–6). God has declared that he will judge the world for its iniquity and cleanse the earth of its sins, but that he will also protect his righteous remnant through this judgment (26:20–21). The city of chaos will be reduced to rubble, but in its place will be a strong city inhabited by the faithful and ruled by God himself (24:10, 23; 26:2). While the vineyard languished under the weight of the land's pollution (24:7), the Lord will plant the vineyard of Israel again and bless it so that it fills the whole world with fruit (27:2–6).<sup>38</sup> The Genesis flood narrative functions as a key element in the story's allusive substructure. It provides a perfect analogue to the cosmic and creation-reversing nature of the coming judgment, it explains the juridical basis for God's righteous wrath, and it provides hope to the remnant that they will be protected through this judgment and will emerge from it into the blessedness of a new and restored creation.

#### *The Exile and the Flood (Isaiah 54)*

One other passage that merits examination is Isa 54:8–10. Unlike Isaiah 24–27, this passage contains not merely echoes of the Genesis flood, but a direct and explicit reference to it. Throughout Deutero-Isaiah the prophet points back to figures and events in Israel's past in order to portray what he believes to be Israel's future (cf. Eden in 51:3, Rahab in

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<sup>37</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah*, 1:572, finds this to be the strongest evidence for Noachic allusion in 26:20.

<sup>38</sup> It is possible that the image of the vineyard, common in the prophets (see Hos 10:1, Jer 2:21, Amos 9, Ezekiel 15), may have some relation to the fact that Noah planted a vineyard after his emergence from the ark. It is clear from *1 En.* 10:16–19 that early Jewish exegetes made this connection.

51:9, Abraham in 41:8, 51:2, David in 55:3).<sup>39</sup> The same strategy is at work in Isaiah 54.

The chapter opens on a joyful note, announcing that although Israel has become desolate during its exile, the future holds a promise of fruitfulness, geographical expansion, political preeminence, and material prosperity (vv. 1–4). The nation is pictured as a barren and disgraced woman, abandoned<sup>40</sup> before she could produce offspring. This shame will be forgotten when the Lord, her husband, has compassion on her and calls her back to the matrimonial bond (vv. 6–8). This bond will never be broken and Israel will never again be rejected by the Lord; the Lord’s lovingkindness will be everlasting (v. 8).

The prophet expands upon the eternity of God’s oath in vv. 9–10. The situation in view, the return from exile, is comparable to the “days of Noah.”<sup>41</sup> Just as the Lord swore an eternal oath to Noah never to flood the earth again, so the Lord is now swearing an eternal oath to the nation of Israel never to reject them or to abandon them into exile again. He has made a new covenant, a “covenant of peace” (v. 10) that will never be

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<sup>39</sup> See the extensive discussion of this strategy in Patricia Tull Willey, *Remember the Former Things: The Recollection of Previous Texts in Second Isaiah*, SBL Dissertation Series 161 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1997); cf. also Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), which unfortunately does not address Isaiah 54:8–9.

<sup>40</sup> The word usually translated “widowhood,” אִלְמָנָה, likely refers instead to effective widowhood through neglect or abandon. It is clear from Isa 54:5–8 that the husband (the Lord, 54:5) has not died (thus making the nation a widow), but has instead forsaken or rejected the wife of his youth. The term, אִלְמָנָה, appears only four times in the Hebrew Bible, and in at least one of these instances it is not literal widowhood (2 Sam 20:3).

<sup>41</sup> There is some question as to whether the MT of Isa 54:9a should be emended. It reads: כִּי־יָמֵי נֹחַ זֵמַר לִי, “For this is the waters of Noah to me.” This reading is partially supported by the LXX (ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος τοῦ ἐπὶ Νωε τοῦτό μοί ἐστίν), though there may have been some confusion in the *Vorlage* that is reflected in ἀπὸ, perhaps נ for כ. The translation, “waters,” is adopted by John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1987) 234–35, and the KJV. BHS proposes כַּמֵּי, “like the waters of.” The Great Isaiah Scroll from Qumran, however, reads כִּי־יָמֵי, “like the days of.” This reading is adopted by NIV, NAS (1995), NRSV; R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40–66*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 186; John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 412–13; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2002) 359. *Tg. Isa.* supports this reading. Oswalt offers a reason to think this reading is original: Isaiah would then be using a play on words between 9a (יָמֵי) and 9b (יָמֵי). Additional evidence for this reading may be found in Matt 24:37, Luke 17:26, and 1 Pet 3:20, where the phrase “days of Noah” appears.

broken.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, it might be said that the new covenant promise is even more permanent, if possible, than the promise to Noah. This may be the message of 54:10, where the Lord vows that even if the mountains and hills were removed (i.e. even if the flood were repeated), still this promise would remain.

On the surface it appears that the comparison between the oath to Noah and the new covenant of peace is one-dimensional. While the focus is surely on the lasting and indissoluble relationship God will form with his people, there are indications that the metaphor may be more extended and foundational in the prophet's mind. In v. 8, for example, Isaiah refers to the exile as a "flood of anger" (בשנף קצף). The term שנף is a hapax legomenon. Many scholars believe that the prophet has changed the spelling of שפף, ("overflow, flood") replacing ט with נ in order to produce assonance with קצף.<sup>43</sup> In a similar vein, 54:11 refers to exiled Israel as "storm-tossed" (סערה).<sup>44</sup> The effect of these metaphors is to compare the exile of Israel to Noah's flood. Just as God turned his back on his creation in the flood, so in the exile he has turned his back on his creation, Israel. But God's wrath lasts only for "a little while" (54:8). Noah's flood gave way to a new creation, a replenished earth, and a new covenant that contained an everlasting promise from God. Likewise, the exile will come to an end when God re-creates Israel, causes her to multiply, replenishes the land, and renews his covenant with her. D. Gunn writes concerning this flood-exile typology: "Deutero-Isaiah saw the exile and the imminent deliverance as being essentially of the same order as the events of the flood and what followed . . . for him the flood, like the exodus, was an event of great paradigmatic value for the people in exile."<sup>45</sup>

Gunn also points to other instances in Isaiah which compare the way God ended the chaotic destruction of the flood with the way he will restore Israel from the chaotic scattering of the exile. A prime example is Isa 44:27, where Yahweh proclaims, "It is I who says to the depth of the sea, 'Be dried up!' And I will make your rivers dry." The point is, if Yahweh can dry up the depth of the sea, he can easily restore his people from captivity and rebuild their nation. Isaiah's language of drying up the deep seems purposefully vague. There are several verbal connections to the Genesis flood narrative, as well as to the accounts of the Exodus and

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<sup>42</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 354, believes Dt-Isaiah does not have access to the Priestly version of the Genesis flood narrative and thus uses different language: ברית שלום instead of ברית עולם. It is more likely, however, that this is a play on words and that it indicates that Dt-Isaiah actually *does* have access to a version of Genesis which speaks of an "eternal covenant" with Noah.

<sup>43</sup> See, e.g. Willey, *Remember the Former Things*, 248; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, 412; Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, 234–35.

<sup>44</sup> Willey, *Remember the Former Things*, 249.

<sup>45</sup> David M. Gunn, "Deutero-Isaiah and the Flood," *JBL* 94 (1975): 493.

the creation.<sup>46</sup> Each of these is an instance of God's *Chaoskampf*, in which he conquers the forces of disorder to bring about a new creation.<sup>47</sup> By employing this language, Isaiah is proclaiming that "Yahweh will shortly deliver his people from the chaos of exile into a new order, a new creation."<sup>48</sup> This reveals an underlying flood-exile typology in Isaiah's thought. The flood is the exile writ large; Israel's exile is like the flood on a national scale.<sup>49</sup>

### Flood Typology in the Other Prophets?

There is substantial evidence that Isaiah is not alone in his understanding of the flood as a type of eschatological judgment. While space does not permit a full discussion of all the prophets, a brief discussion of some of the more likely allusions to the flood in the rest of the prophetic literature is in order.

Perhaps the strongest case can be made for Zeph 1:2–18. Zephaniah announces the imminent arrival of the Day of the Lord, which will be a day of judgment for the wicked. What is significant for our purposes is the way Zephaniah describes this judgment in terms that echo the primeval deluge.<sup>50</sup> The following allusions can be detected: a) The scope of the judgment is universal in both cases (כל; Zeph 1:2); indeed, the Day of the Lord encompasses the same categories as the flood: humans and animals (Zeph 1:3; Gen 7:23).<sup>51</sup> b) Zephaniah uses the same phrase to describe their judgment: they will be taken "from off the face of the ground" (מעל פני האדמה; Zeph 1:2; Gen 6:7, 7:4, 8:8). c) Both passages speak of God "cutting off" (כרת) humanity from the earth (Zeph 1:2; Gen 9:11). d) The reason for this purgation is specifically named as "violence"

<sup>46</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, 150; Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969) 157; Gunn, "Deutero-Isaiah," 496–99, mentions the following: הרב (Gen 8:13, cf. Ps 106:9), יבש (Gen 8:7, 14), and the concept of *Chaoskampf*.

<sup>47</sup> Johnson, *From Chaos to Restoration*, 45, writes, "Second Isaiah perceived the exile as a return to chaos."

<sup>48</sup> Gunn, "Deutero-Isaiah," 497.

<sup>49</sup> Patterns similar to that of 44:27 appear in 17:12–13, 45:18–19, 50:2, 51:10. See Gunn, "Deutero-Isaiah," 501–03.

<sup>50</sup> See discussion in M. De Roche, "Zephaniah 1:2–3: The 'Sweeping' of Creation," *VT* 30 (1980): 104–09; cf. Marvin A. Sweeney and Paul D. Hanson, *Zephaniah*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003) 62–63; Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah*, Anchor Bible 25a (New York: Doubleday, 1994) 81–82; Ehud Ben Zvi, *A Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Zephaniah* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991) 56.

<sup>51</sup> Sweeney and Hanson, *Zephaniah*, 62–63, however, note that Genesis does not recount the demise of the fish of the sea, as Zephaniah does. They take this as evidence against a flood allusion. More likely, though, it is because Zephaniah expects a judgment by fire (1:18), not a literal reprise of the Genesis flood (a flood of water would not harm aquatic life, of course).

(חמס) in both cases. In Gen 6:11, the earth was *full of violence* (הארץ חמס) (והמלא); in Zeph 1:9 the wicked *fill* their masters' houses with *violence* (הממלאים בית אדניהם חמס). e) The very difficult phrase at the beginning of Zeph 1:2, אסף אסף, may allude to God's covenant promise to Noah. God promised Noah that he would never again (לא-אסף עוד) destroy the earth by flood (Gen 8:21). Zephaniah could be reversing this text for rhetorical effect: "I will again (root: יסף) sweep (root: אסף) all humanity off the face of the earth" (1:2).<sup>52</sup> Zephaniah is not necessarily abrogating the Noachic promise so much as clarifying it: the oath does not preclude universal judgment, only universal judgment by flood. If these allusions are actually present in Zephaniah 1, then the effect is to portray the Day of the Lord as an eschatological judgment modeled on the primordial flood: it is a universal reversal of creation because of humanity's overbearing violence and sin.<sup>53</sup>

An allusion to the flood may also be present in Daniel 9. The eschatological scenario in 9:26–27 has several links to the flood: a) The "anointed one" is "cut off" (כרת; 9:26; cf. Gen 9:11).<sup>54</sup> b) The people of the prince "corrupt" (שחח) the city and sanctuary (9:26; cf. the corruption of the earth in Gen 6:11–13). c) The "end" in Dan 9:26 "comes" with a flood (הבא וקצו בשטף), just as in Gen 6:13 the "end" of all flesh "comes" before God in the flood (קץ כל-בשר בא).<sup>55</sup> Admittedly, the echoes here are not as high in volume or resonance as those in Isaiah or Zephaniah. It is quite possible that we are dealing here with a common prophetic tradition that describes the last things in similar terms, without intentional reference back to the flood in every case.

A final possible instance of allusion to the Flood occurs in Amos 5:8, 9:6. These theophanic hymnic fragments both describe Yahweh as the one "who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface

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<sup>52</sup> This requires only an emendation of the Masoretic pointing. This reading is proposed by Lüdger Sabotka, *Zephanja: Versuch einer Neuübersetzung mit Philologischem Kommentar* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1972) 11, and supported by A. S. Kapelrud, "Eschatology in Micah and Zephaniah," in *De la Tôrah au Messie: Études d'exégèse et d'herméneutique Bibliques Offertes à Henri Cazelles pour ses 25 Années d'enseignement à l'institut Catholique de Paris, Octobre 1979*, ed. M. Carrez et al. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1981) 255–62; cf. the discussion in Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 72.

<sup>53</sup> On the motif of reversal of creation in Zephaniah 1, see De Roche, "Zephaniah 1:2–3," 104–09, who emphasizes the connections to Genesis 1–3, but acknowledges allusions to the flood as secondary.

<sup>54</sup> While traditional Protestant interpretation has seen a positive reference here to the Messiah, an "innertextual" interpretation of 9:26 occurs in 11:45 that views this anointed one as a hostile king who receives no aid (9:26 - ואין לו; 11:45 - ואין עורר לו).

<sup>55</sup> Of course, the word translated "flood" is not identical in both passages. Genesis is alone in using מַבּוּל. The prophets likely refrain from using this word in order to avoid implying that God is violating the Noachic covenant.

of the earth.” The most likely referent for this phrase is the Noachic deluge. While the connection to the flood narrative is mainly conceptual (the verbal links are all generic terms), these statements in Amos occur in a context that stresses Yahweh’s power over nature in both creation and judgment. In effect, this is Isaiah’s *Chaoskampf* motif in reverse. If Yahweh had the power to conquer primordial chaos at creation and the flood, how much more does he have power to unleash chaotic judgment upon his people! Although this is the primary thrust of Amos’s rhetorical strategy, there may well be an underlying typology assumed between flood and eschatological judgment that further legitimates his proclamation.<sup>56</sup>

#### IV. CONCLUSION

We have uncovered extensive evidence in several prophetic books supporting the contention that by the time of the prophets, the worldwide flood of Noah was already thought of as a type of final judgment. In several cases the focus is on the creation-reversing effects of this judgment (i.e. return to chaos). In other cases, the stress falls on the causes of the destruction (violence and corruption). Sometimes, the flood is understood as pointing to God’s power to judge (e.g. in Amos); at other times, it demonstrates his power to redeem and create anew (e.g. in Isaiah).

The evidence also demonstrates that the widespread typological interpretation of the flood in the Second Temple period and the NT literature is not a *novum*, but is actually built upon the canonical prophets’ own authoritative interpretation of the primeval events.

Finally, it may be that our examination exposes a theologico-literary strategy in the prophets that is not limited solely to the interpretation of the flood. Perhaps the prophets were not only visionaries or recipients of direct oracles from the Lord, but were also, to a large extent, creative theologians who reflected upon and interpreted the traditions of Israel, applying them to their own contexts and drawing out their significance for the future.

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<sup>56</sup> Additionally, it may be that Amos 5:24, so long interpreted as a prophetic call for social reform, actually predicts a flood-like judgment. The LXX seems to translate it in this way: κυλισθήσεται ὡς ὕδωρ κρίμα καὶ δικαιοσύνη ὡς χεμάρρους ἄβατος, “judgment will roll down like water and righteousness like a raging river that cannot be crossed.”