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**BLOTTING OUT AND BREAKING UP:
MISCELLANEOUS HEBREW STUDIES IN GEOCATASTROPHISM**

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KEY WORDS

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ABSTRACT

The "blotting out" of Gen. 6:7, 7:4, and 7:23 and the "bursting open" of the "fountains of the great deep" were examined to determine what constraints these passages place on Flood models. The use of *māhā* (translated "blot out") throughout Scripture, and the theology of the blotting out of sin argue rather strongly against *māhā* meaning the complete obliteration of something without evidence. The bulk of evidence in both theological and non-theological occurrences of the word favors a removal of something or someone, many times with evidence remaining. This suggests that Flood models that argue for the complete obliteration of pre-Flood terrestrial organisms (even of their fossils) should be appropriately revised.

bāqa' (translated "break up" in Gen. 7:11) is best translated "burst open" and implies that a catastrophic bursting initiated the Flood. *ma'yān* (translated "fountain") means "place of the spring". Biblical usage indicates it refers to both terrestrial and oceanic springs. *t'hôm* (translated "deep") and *t'hôm rabbā* (translated "great deep") each may refer to both oceanic and terrestrial waters. Since all the fountains of the great deep were involved, the Flood was initiated by the bursting open of both terrestrial and oceanic springs. Flood models which argue for the bursting of either only terrestrial or only oceanic springs should be appropriately revised.

INTRODUCTION

A number of Flood models have been proposed by creationists. Each one is critically based upon a particular understanding or narrow range of understandings of particular passages in Scripture. If a careful study of the passages reveals that a particular Flood model or models is(are) based upon incorrect understandings of those passages, then the priority of Scripture in creation studies requires the modification or rejection of that model or models. A host of Hebrew passages should be examined. It is hoped that this will be done in time. This paper has space only to begin such a study by examining in an introductory fashion two Biblical passages which impact creationist Flood models.

BLOTTED OUT (GENESIS 6:7, 7:4, 7:23)

In Gen. 6:7, 7:4, and 7:23 land creatures are said to be "blotted out" by the flood. What is the degree of the blotting? Is it just their removal from this life? Or, is it their **complete** obliteration -- even to the point of leaving no fossil evidence?

***māhā* : "Blot Out" From a Book**

The root *māhā* occurs 36 times in 32 verses of the Old Testament. Five passages specifically refer to the removal of a name from a book by blotting it out (Exod. 17:14, 32:32-33; Num. 5:23; and Ps. 69:29 (69:28 Eng.)). This concept was carried into the New Testament as well (Rev. 3:5). In Biblical times blotting involved "rubbing letters off with a moist finger or sponge as in Egypt and Greece. . ." [16, 17]. Although

such a blotting process may have been intended to leave no evidence, often evidence did remain of something having been obliterated. In fact, blottings have been identified in ancient documents because such evidence was left behind. A given place in an ancient manuscript which was "blotted out" may have been replaced by another word. This is called a *palimpsest*.

***māhā* : "Blot Out" the Name or Memory**

The verb *māhā* is also used eight times to refer to the blotting out of the name or memory of a people (often qualified by the phrase "from under heaven"). Were it not for the intercession of Moses, this could have been the fate of the Israelites (Deut. 9:14; a review of Exod. 32:32-33). It was a near fate for a tribe of Israel (Judg. 21:17), was a potential fate of individual Israelites (Deut. 29:20), was the fate David prayed for his enemies (Ps. 109:13), and which some of his enemies actually suffered (Ps. 9:6 [9:5 Eng]). The opposite of this "blotting out" is deliverance or continuance (2 Kgs. 14:27), not creation as [30] claims. Since the name Amalek was to be blotted out from under heaven (Exod. 17:14; Deut. 25:19), Amalek provides a good contextual case study for this use of *māhā*. We seem to lack definite artifactual evidence for the existence of Amalek. However, it can be reasoned that some evidence probably remains of their cities (1 Sam. 15:5; cf. [9]), though they are not yet excavated. Even if artifacts don't remain, the Scriptural record provides a very powerful memorial (*i.e.* evidence) of the name of Amalek! Though the purpose of the "blotting out" was to insure a non-continuance of existence, this use of "blotting out" would seem to leave some evidence behind that someone had indeed existed before the blotting event.

***māhā* : "Blot Out" Sins**

Seven of the 36 occurrences refer to the blotting out of sins ---Pss. 51:3 (51:1 Eng.), 51:11 (51:9 Eng.), 109:14; Isa. 43:25, 44:22; Neh. 3:37 (4:5 Eng.); and Jer. 18:23. Of these passages, Ps. 109:14 and Isa. 43:25 contrast blotting out with remembering, whereas Neh. 3:37 and Jer. 18:23 equate blotting out with forgiveness. In these passages, the word *māhā* in and of itself does not speak to the issue of evidence remaining. Any inference must be made theologically or contextually. Isa. 44:22 is the most instructive contextually, because God blots out (*māhā*) Israel's transgressions like a thick cloud, and her sins like a heavy mist. It would seem that the point of comparison is that clouds and mist are transitory and quickly pass [26:142]. Once the sin was seen, now it is not. By analogy, a recently dispersed cloud or mist can at least potentially be evidenced by dampness or dew on the ground and vegetation.

Theologically, although provision for sin itself has been made by atonement (a covering over), by forgiveness, by propitiation, by removal, and by blotting out, evidences of that sin usually do persist. Some forgiven sins are recorded in the everlasting Word of God (*e.g.* David's sin with Bathsheba) and many more are remembered in our minds. Furthermore, they are often evidenced in consequences (*e.g.* the death of David and Bathsheba's first son), in our scars, sin nature, and death, and even in the scars found in the hands and feet of our Savior. The blotting out of sin appears to remove sin completely out of a book of judgment, but not necessarily out of memory. Many times the evidence of sin remains, reminding us of our fallibility, our need for a Savior, as well as for a warning to others.

***māhā* : "Wipe" as a Dish or Face**

In four passages (twice in 2 Kgs. 21:13; Prov. 30:20; Isa. 25:8), *māhā* is used to refer to wiping something clean. In Proverbs the wiping of the mouth after eating is used as a euphemism for the vain attempt of an adulterous woman to cover her sin [33:1124]. Whether something was left or not in this case we would not venture to say! Isaiah 25:8 speaks of that glorious day when He will wipe away the tears from our eyes (*cf.* Rev. 21:4). In 2 Kings, however, the wiping of a dish is used as a simile for the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. Evidence for this destruction has been archaeologically verified on numerous occasions. Again, the "blotting out" terminates the continuing existence of Jerusalem as a viable city at that time, but does not destroy evidence of the blotting action itself.

***māhā* : "Blot Out" as in to Destroy**

Though [38:9] cites only two examples of *māhā* as meaning "to destroy" (Gen. 6:7, 7:4), one might argue for this meaning in Neh. 13:14, Ezek. 6:6, Prov. 6:33, and Prov. 31:3 as well. The Nehemiah passage offers the hope that God will not destroy the memory of his good deeds. The Ezekiel passage recounts the destruction of all accoutrements of idol-worship. Though the idolatry itself was blotted out by God, evidence of this former idolatrous worship still exists (DMF: I found evidence of Israeli idol worship while excavating in Jerusalem in 1996 just downhill from David's palace). Whether kept from being blotted out as in Nehemiah's case or in being blotted out as in the Ezekiel passage, evidence still remains. In Proverbs 6:33 the reproach of the adulterer will never be blotted out. The Proverbs 31:3 passage seems to refer to the loss of royal position because of drunkenness. [30], however, appeals to 2 Kings 9:8f to

support his belief that it refers to an extermination of the royal family line. Unfortunately for [30]'s interpretation, the 2 Kings passage does not include *māhā*. Rather, it uses *ʾābad*, to "destroy". There is otherwise very little to link these two passages, leaving no good reason to disregard the contextually-determined meaning of the Proverbs passage. If so, then the drunken rulers themselves and records of their unjust decisions remain as evidence of the destruction of justice or loss of position which came about through their drunkenness.

"From the Earth" or "From the Face of the Ground"

An examination of the usages of *māhā* reveals that in almost every case something is removed from something or from someone else by the blotting (e.g. words from a book, names from memory, sins from records of condemnation, dirt from a dish, etc., cf. [10:304-305]). One would understand therefore that "from the earth" and "from the face of the ground" in Gen. 6:7, 7:4, and 7:23 are expected qualifiers of the verb in Hebrew. This phrase merely specifies exactly what was to be blotted out (e.g. land animals as opposed to sea creatures or all life). The word translated "from" is the preposition *min* in Hebrew. In this case, it is understood to be a partitive *min* simply expressing removal from one point to another -- from one status to another, if you wish (e.g. from living to dead). In the case of "face of the earth" the surface of the earth might be all that is referred to -- suggesting perhaps that organisms living on the earth's surface were "blotted out" of both the living world and the surface world and moved to the dead and buried world. Add to this the very real possibility that the expressions "from the earth" and "from the face of the ground" might be idiomatic in Genesis. They might simply be indicating that all land-dwelling air-breathers were killed.

[29:41-2] suggests that "the totality of the destruction is stressed by adding the phrases 'from the face of the ground' and 'from the earth' after the verb. In much the same way as it is reiterated that 'all flesh under the whole heaven' was destroyed...", his claim is not justified from Scripture. The phrase "from under heaven" does not even appear with *māhā* in Genesis. These phrases should be understood to restrict the range of objects affected by the blotting out, not modify the type of blotting out that was done.

Discussion of *māhā*

The European Flood modelers [15; 29; 30; 37; 38] argue that all terrestrial life was **completely** obliterated in the Flood (even to the obliteration of their fossils) since God uses the same term "blot out" in Gen. 6:7, 7:4, and 7:23 which He uses for the blotting out of our sins. In making an argument for complete obliteration with no evidence, [38] appeals to two passages not already dealt with above. First, [38:9] cites Ezek. 31:15-18. This is an obscure passage at best. Most commentaries see the reference to Eden as either symbolic of Assyria [13:180; 43:1558] or mytho-poetic language ("The confusion is particularly noticeable in verses 16 and 18" [42:207]). Since *māhā* is not present in this passage, and since the passage probably uses Eden as a symbol, it is best not to use the passage to support one's view of Gen. 6:7 and 7:4. Second, [38] appeals to Matt. 24:39, where Jesus refers to the flood which "took them all **away**" ([38:9], emphasis his). The Greek verb is the 3ms aorist indicative active from *airō* which means to "take", "take away", "take up", or "remove". As such, it does not speak to the issue of whether or not remains should be expected from the flood of Noah and should not be used in support of a position one way or another. The word was also not stressed in the passage. If "away" had been stressed in the original Greek, *aphairō* probably would have been used.

Although *māhā* is properly translated "blot out", "wipe", or even "destroy", it is not to be understood to refer to the complete obliteration of something without any evidence remaining. In every Biblical use of *māhā* where it is possible to determine the fate of the blotted, wiped, or destroyed, the continued existence of something is terminated, but evidence may indeed remain of the previous existence and/or the blotting event itself. Even a theological consideration of the "blotting out" of sin suggests that evidence usually remains (e.g. consequences, scars, sin nature, etc.). At the very least it must be admitted that the bulk of the theological and non-theological contexts suggest *māhā* refers to the termination of continued existence with a chance of some evidence remaining. It may even be argued that in some cases at least (especially in judgment contexts), *māhā* may be used with the **intent** of leaving evidence (as a warning, as a reminder). In order to determine if that is a reasonable meaning of *māhā* in any particular instance, the immediate context of the word in a given passage should be considered. In Gen. 6:7, 7:4, and 7:23, *māhā* is used in the context of judgment and refers to the termination of the continued existence (i.e., the killing) of living, earth-dwelling, air-breathing animals from off the surface of the earth. Especially given the judgment context, it is likely that it was God's intention to remove animals from the living and terrestrial world and place them as evidence of His holiness, etc. in the dead and buried world. Proper exegesis of these passages does not permit the interpretation of complete obliteration of terrestrial organisms without

a trace as has been argued by various European Flood modelers. Their models should be modified accordingly.

THE "FOUNTAINS OF THE GREAT DEEP" (GENESIS 7:11, 8:2)

Since the "fountains of the great deep" figure prominently at the initiation (Gen. 7:11) and at a midpoint (Gen. 8:2) of the Flood, creationist Flood models must be based upon a proper exegesis of the Hebrew phrase so translated.

"Burst Open" (*bāqa'*)

Although the Hebrew word *bāqa'* is translated "broken up" in KJV (implying the shattering of some solid object: [34:21]), a better translation in this passage would be "burst open" [3:132; 21:143]. The Niphal stem of *bāqa'* is at times understood as a passive voice of the Qal stem. In other words, it is sometimes translated simply as "be divided" (Exod. 14: 21, Zech. 14:4). Genesis 7:11 however may be understood in an active rather than passive sense ([44] call this a middle voice Niphal [as opposed to an expected passive voice] at this verse, with the translation "burst open" [44:381]). As examples of this use of the Niphal of *bāqa'* in other passages, the word is used of wine-skins which burst open (Job 32:19) and of men hurled down from a rock (2 Chron. 25:12) who burst open upon impact. "Burst open" also functions as a better antonym of "closed" or "stopped up" (cf. Gen. 8:2; 2 Kgs. 3:19; 2 Chron. 32:4). If the Niphal of *bāqa'* is used with the meaning of "burst open" in Gen. 7:11 and 8:2, its use would suggest that a sudden, catastrophic eruption of waters probably occurred at the location of the "fountains of the great deep" on the first day of the Flood.

"Fountains" (*ma'yānôt*)

The term translated "fountains" in Gen. 7:11 and 8:2 of the KJV, NASV, and RSV (NIV, "springs") is the plural form of the Hebrew word *ma'yān*. The singular *ma'yān* or its plural occurs 23 times in Scripture. The root from which this noun is derived is unknown, but may have been a Proto-Semitic bilateral **n* which also yielded a synonym *'ayin* which means "spring." There is also a homonym *'ayin*, meaning "eye." Whereas the word *'ayin* with the meaning of "spring" is seen commonly in other Semitic languages, *ma'yān* seems to be uniquely Northwest Semitic – limited to Hebrew, Jewish Aramaic and Syriac [21:547]. The form *ma'yān* is simply *'ayin* with a preformative letter *mēm*, which, depending upon the root, indicates instrument, location, time or abstraction [24:80]. Instrument and time do not seem to be in view with *ma'yān*, leaving us with the possibilities of location and abstraction. Since *ma'yān* often serves as a synonym of *'ayin* (e.g. in Josh. 15, in Josh. 18; Prov. 8:24,28; 2 Chron. 32:3-4), location rather than an abstract concept is probably in view. In this case then, one may understand the term *ma'yān* as the "place of the *'ayin*". Whether this means the source-basin for the waters of the spring, the outlet of the spring itself, or the catch-basin for the waters of the spring is not clear in the word itself. It could be that one or two or even all three aspects of a spring are in view in a given instance of the word. [34:21] argues that the "breakup" of the *ma'yān* suggests they are solid objects (i.e. it is likely to be the closed source-basin of the water rather than the spring's aperture itself). Yet, if the *ma'yān* "burst open" rather than "broke up" (as argued above), the spring's source-basin, catch-basin, or even aperture could be considered equally likely. Although [34]'s translation of *ma'yān* as "reservoir" can be so translated into most of its 23 occurrences, it is not a comfortable translation in all of the occurrences. The juxtaposition of the "opening of the windows of heaven" (Gen. 7:11) and the "closing" or "stopping up" of both the "windows of heaven" and the "fountains of the deep" (Gen. 8:2) would suggest that the actual opening of the spring is preferred as the "location of the spring" rather than either the effluent or affluent basin. The closing of the *ma'yān* in 2 Kings 3:19, 25; 2 Chron. 32:4; Cant. 4:12 would seem to favor the aperture interpretation as well.

Fountains (*ma'yānôt*) are often qualified in Scripture by the immediate syntactical context. In Gen. 7:11 and 8:2 one finds that the fountains are qualified by the phrase translated "of the great deep" and "of the deep" respectively. The construct relationship designates a syntactical function of the genitive case. One must therefore determine what that function is. Possibilities here would include appositional, which would equate the fountains with the deep; association, which makes the fountains part of the deep; source, which says the fountains originate in the deep; and location, in which the deep is where the fountains are located. Though any are possible and it is hard to be dogmatic here, the genitive of location seems to be the best choice when one considers all sides of the issue.

In the historical books of the Old Testament, occurrences of *ma'yān* refer to terrestrial springs. In Josh. 15:9 and 18:15, they are the springs of water located at Neptoh. In 1 Kings, they are various springs of water. In 2 Kgs. 3:19, 25, orders were given that the springs located within enemy territory should be

stopped up; and 2 Chron. 32:4, the Israelites stopped up their own springs to keep from giving water to the invading Assyrians.

In the prophetic books, the tendency is to use *ma'yān* metaphorically, but the occurrences may refer to actual terrestrial springs. In Hos. 13:15, Israel's springs will be dried up when Assyria invades. In Isa. 41:18, they are springs of a valley which God will provide when He restores Israel to the land after Babylonian captivity. In Isa. 12:3, they are the springs of salvation; in Joel 4:18 (3:18 Eng.), they are the eschatological springs issuing from the temple of YHWH (cf. Rev. 22:1-2).

In poetic literature, the springs can reflect the blessings of God (Ps. 8:4:7 (84:6 Eng.); 87:7, 104:10) or the power of God in catastrophic times (Ps. 74:15) or in time of great need (Ps. 114:8, which commemorates Exod. 17:6 and Num. 20:11). A polluted spring is compared to a righteous man who yields before wickedness (Prov. 25:26). The open spring can also speak metaphorically of a man's seminal stream (or its product of children); the closed spring as a woman's virginity (Prov. 5:16 and Cant. 4:12).

Are we therefore to conclude that all springs listed in Scripture are to be understood as terrestrial (or subterranean) rather than oceanic (as [29], [30] and [18] argue)? This could be true, and probably would be were it not for the presently debated context of Gen. 7:11 and 8:2 and its amazing parallel in Proverbs 8. In Proverbs 8, Wisdom personified speaks, claiming her presence with God at creation. In verse 24, she suggests that she was present at the beginning of creation, before the creation of the deeps (*t'hōmot*) and the springs (*ma'y'nōt*) -- apparently Day 1 of the Creation Week (Gen. 1:2). The following verses (Prov. 8:25-30) would seem to refer to Day 2 of the Creation Week. All this would seem to place the existence of these *ma'y'nōt* well before even the creation of land on Day 3 of the Creation Week.

In Job 38:16, with synonymous parallelism God asks Job whether he has personally visited the "springs of the sea" (*nibkē-yam*) or the "recesses of the deep" (*ūb'hēqer t'hōm*). *nibkē* is derived from *nēbek*. The term *nēbek* may or may not be a *hapax-legomenon*. It has an attractive cognate in the Ugaritic *npk*, meaning "source" [21:589; 24:25] and it is an attractive textual variant reading (with *ma'yān* also present) in Prov. 8:24 and may be preferred as the original reading there [14:13]. [3:614] cites "sources of the ocean" as a potential meaning. According to Scripture, then, springs (including *ma'yān*) can be either terrestrial or oceanic.

"The Deep" (*t'hōm*)

The Hebrew word used for "deeps" in Gen. 7:11 and 8:2 is *t'hōm*. The word has a Ugaritic cognate *thmt* which means "ocean" or "deep" [40:203; 45:9] and an Akkadian cognate *ti'amat* [21:1019], which means "salty sea" [19:98-101, cited by [32:722]]. The latter is significant in Babylonian mythology as the goddess defeated by Marduk and out of which he made the world. This was most probably a Babylonian deification (*a la Rom.* 1:23-25) of the *t'hōm* of Gen. 1:2 which God formed and filled in the Creation Week. It must be noted here that one should not therefore see Genesis as one of many ancient Near Eastern creation accounts, but rather as a polemic against the others [32:722].

The Hebrew noun employed in this expression is *t'hōm*. *t'hōm* occurs 36 times in the Hebrew Bible; in 14 of those, it appears with water (*mayim*) in the same verse. Oftentimes, the two terms are synonymously parallel (Ezek. 26:19: the destruction of Tyre, a coastal city; Ps. 33:7: creation; Ps. 77:17 (16): the Red Sea; Job 38:30: creation; Prov. 8:24: creation), relating *t'hōm* to oceanic waters, as opposed to subterranean spring water. In seven verses, *t'hōm* appears with the sea (*yam*), either as synonymously parallel with, or as explanatory of, that term (Pss. 106:9; 135:6; Job 28:14; 38:16). In three cases, *t'hōm* appears with both *mayim* and *yam* in the same verse (Exod. 15:8, Isa. 51:10; and Ps. 33:7). In each of these, the waters of the sea are to be equated with the depths (*t'hōm*). Though not technically synonymously parallel in Gen. 1:2, the terms must be closely related there as well. The close relationship between the *t'hōm* of 1:2 and that of 7:11, 8:2 noted by [45:9] may be justifiable by the principle of antecedent reference.

Other verses with *t'hōm* lack *mayim* or *yam* in the same verse, but nonetheless refer to ocean waters. Pss. 104:6; 148:7; Job 41:24 (32); Prov. 3:20; and 8:27-28 are in the immediate context of the waters and seas of creation. Isa. 63:13 and Exo. 15:5 refer to the division of the Red Sea. Ps. 107:26 depicts the plight of sailors during a storm at sea. Jonah 2:6 is a reference to the Mediterranean sea.

Thus, in the **majority** of Biblical usages, *t^ohôm* refers to oceanic depths. [29:37] claim that "...after the separation of the waters on Days 2 and 3 of Creation Week, when the waters around the land are called seas, the 'deep' seems to signify the water which lay under the land" is incorrect.

On the other hand, in some passages *t^ohôm* does seem to refer to underground sources of water (Deut. 8:7; Amos 7:4; Ps. 78:15: the rock of Massah and Meribah (cf. Exod. 17)), or to land-based rivers (Ezek. 31:4, 15: the Euphrates [or the Nile?]; Ps. 42:8(7): the Jordan). Gen. 49:25 and the parallel Deut. 33:13, though used metaphorically, seem to refer to subterranean sources for springs which provide blessings. In the remaining occurrences of *t^ohôm*, the word is used metaphorically. In Ps. 71:20, for example, *t^ohôm* seems to be synonymous with a grave or distressful situation. Hab. 3:10 seems to demonstrate God's power generally. In neither of these last two occurrences can oceanic or subterranean provenance be determined.

In addition to the passages mentioned above, [30] appeals to Isa. 44:27 to argue that *t^ohôm* is the source of terrestrial rivers. In that passage God says to the deep "Be dry, I will dry up your rivers." Two major problems exist with this interpretation. The first is that the term for "deep" in Isa. 44:27 is not the word under consideration (*t^ohôm*) but rather a probable synonym, *sûlâ* (cf. the *m^osûlâ* in Jonah 2:4 which synonymously parallels ocean currents). The second problem is that Isa. 44:27 occurs in a salvation oracle which predicts God's ultimate restoration of Israel to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. The verse employs at least two cognate terms out of Exodus 15, the Song of Moses [26:147]. This has led many interpreters to understand the verse as an allusion to the Exodus, up to that point the greatest act of deliverance by God for His people. The power He displayed by drying up the Red Sea and the Jordan river, He will again do for His people when He delivers them from Exile. Even if *sûlâ* were understood to be a virtual synonym of *t^ohôm*, this verse would seem to support instead the concept expressed above that "deep" (*t^ohôm*) is both oceanic and terrestrial, since both the Red Sea and the Jordan river are alluded to.

"Great Deep" (*t^ohôm rabbâ*)

In five passages, *t^ohôm* is qualified by the adjective "great" or "abundant" (*rabbâ*). Outside of Gen. 7:11, *t^ohôm rabbâ* occurs in Isa. 51:10, Amos 7:4, Ps. 36:7(6), and Ps. 78:15. Isaiah 51:10 must refer to oceanic waters, since it synonymously parallels the sea (*yam*), here a reference to the division of the Red Sea. Amos 7:4 is actually inconclusive, since it is part of a vision, though admittedly it seems to be the drying up of terrestrial springs. However, because several Biblical passages (e.g. Jonah 2:5-6; Ps. 18:16; Prov. 8:29) seem to associate the foundations of the mountains and the world with the oceans, [22], [25] and [41] have all recently argued for an oceanic interpretation of *t^ohôm rabbâ* at Amos 7:4. Ps. 36:7(6) illustrates God's justice which parallels His righteousness. As high as the mountains is His righteousness, so are His judgments as deep as the *t^ohôm rabbâ*. One commentator [2:289] translates this as "the deepest depths." Extreme opposites are in view, and may indicate depths – oceanic ([1:158] sees Ps. 36:7 as such) and/or subterranean. Ps. 78:15 references the events of Exodus 17 (and possibly Num. 20) wherein God provided water for the people from the rock which Moses struck. At first appearance, it seems obvious that this usage of *t^ohôm rabbâ* must refer to subterranean depths. However, one must note that, although the source of the supply was subterranean, the flow is stated to be **like** (Heb. *k^o*) the *t^ohôm rabbâ*. In other words, it is described as an abundant supply. Hence, though it may seem to be a reference to subterranean sources, it may not actually be. Of the four usages of *t^ohôm rabbâ* outside of Gen. 7:11, Isa. 51:10 seems to be the most conclusive, referring to oceanic sources. The inconclusiveness of the other three passages might indicate that *t^ohôm rabbâ* is broad enough to mean both terrestrial and oceanic sources. Furthermore, the fact that *t^ohôm rabbâ* and *t^ohôm* are used in the parallel passages of Gen. 7:11 and Gen. 8:2 respectively suggests that the two terms may in fact be synonymous. The fact that *t^ohôm* alone refers to both terrestrial and oceanic sources [3:1062; 21:1019], would then reinforce the suggestion that *t^ohôm rabbâ* also refers to both terrestrial and oceanic sources.

"Floodgates of the Sky Were Opened" ("*rubôt hashshâmāyim niphtāhū*)

Another factor which may aid in defining the precise meaning of "the fountains of the great deep" is found in the phrase immediately following it in both Gen. 7:11 and in 8:2. This is the phrase "the floodgates of the sky" (NASV; "windows of heaven": KJV). It is unlikely that water fell only over the land or sea. Global rain is strongly implied. It is unlikely that the lower source of water was limited to either oceanic or subterranean sources when the heavens are not so limited. Water fell from the heavens above; water burst

forth from the great deep below. To restrict location may be to permit argument for a local, rather than global, flood.

Furthermore, "floodgates" is an interpretation of ⁹*rubā*, which normally means "window" [3:70], though it can mean "hole" [21:82]. Some type of aperture is in view. The analogy in this passage between "fountain" (*ma'yān*) on the one hand and "hole" (⁹*rubā*) on the other may inform our understanding of "fountain" as focusing on the aperture of the spring rather than the source- or catch-basins for the water.

OTHER CREATIONIST ARGUMENTS ON "FOUNTAINS OF THE GREAT DEEP"

Besides the above passages, various creationists have presented discussions which bear on the nature of the "fountains of the great deep". They are thus addressed as follows:

The "Firmament" (*rāqīa'*) is the Earth's Crust

[8:177] argues that the "firmament" of Gen. 1:6-7 is the earth's crust, thus making the "waters below" a vast underwater ocean beneath the crust. Though [8] is correct in his etymological study of "firmament" (Heb. *rāqīa'*), this *rāqīa'* is labeled "heaven" in Gen. 1:8. On Day 4 of the Creation Week, the sun and the moon were placed in the *rāqīa'* (Gen. 1:14,15,17), and birds fly in the *rāqīa'* (Gen. 1:20) (all appositional genitives: "the *rāqīa'* which are the heavens"). This *rāqīa'* cannot correspond to the earth's crust.

"Earth Founded Upon Water"

Several passages have been suggested to describe God creating the earth's crust over the top of large subterranean water caverns. These passages are discussed as follows:

Ps. 24:2 [5:23; 6:59; 7:84; 8:184-5]. This verse is an example of synonymous parallelism employing two commonly paralleled words, "sea" (*yam*) and "rivers" (*n^ohārōt*) [39:37ff] which [12:156] suggests refer to oceans and ocean currents. The same pairing in Jonah 2:4(3) refers in each case to ocean waters -- perhaps "rivers" meaning ocean currents. [1:110] specifically states that this phrase does not indicate "subterranean waters bearing up the land, but simply that of the habitable earth, raised above the surface of the waters which surround it."

Ps. 33:7 [5:23; 6:59; 7:84; 8:184-5]. As determined in the above discussion, this verse seems to indicate oceanic rather than subterranean waters. According to [5:23; 6:59; 7:84; 8:184-5], this verse indicates that waters of the "deep" were laid up in "storehouses" and "a storehouse is a closed container that preserves something you may draw upon later". The same pairing may be reading too much into the Hebrew *ōsār*, which according to [3:68] means "treasure", "store", "treasure-house", "storehouse", or "magazine", without discussing the attributes of the container involved. Too, one would not want to stress the physical attributes of such a storehouse (same Hebrew word) for the snow and hail (Job 38:22-23) or for the wind (Ps. 135:7; Jer. 10:13). At any rate, even if one argues for the container status of "storehouses" on the basis of "jar" (NASV) or "bottle" in parallel with it, the location of these "storehouses" seems to be oceanic when recognized to be in synonymous parallelism with "waters of the sea."

Ps. 104:3 [5:23; 6:59; 7:84; 8:184-5]. This verse probably refers to the "waters above" where God's "chambers" are founded rather than to any "waters below" [2:719; 11:337; 20:606; 28:236]. Note the parallel expressions, in the immediate context, of "heaven", "clouds", and "wind". It thus does not address the founding of continents upon storehouses of water.

Ps. 136:6 [5:23; 6:59; 7:84; 8:184-5; 29]. As in the case of (1) interpretation of Ps. 24:2 (above), this verse can be understood to be the elevation of land above sea level rather than the suspension of land directly atop supporting waters. On the other hand, a subcontinental ocean is a possible interpretation.

2 Peter 3:5 [5:23; 6:59; 7:84; 8:184-5]. Though the verse is thought relevant generally, the ambiguity of 2 Peter 3:5 prevents any clarification of the issue at hand.

Rev. 14:7 [29] does not seem to inform the issue one way or another.

Flood Initiated by the Breakup of Subterranean Water Caverns

Several passages have been suggested to describe the initiation of the Flood by the breakup of subterranean water caverns. These passages are discussed as follows:

Job 38:4-11 [8:185]. These verses are in a creation context of God's response to Job's challenges. Though they may provide a model for what happened at the flood (a *la* Northrup), they refer to oceanic, not subterranean waters (Job 38:8).

Prov. 3:19 [8:185]. The creation context of Prov. 3:19 suggests a creation context for 3:20 as well. On the other hand, the same verb is used as is found in Gen. 7:11, and the skies "dripping dew" might indicate rain, two facts which may place this verse into a flood context. Either way, the location of the deeps is not discussed in Prov. 3.

Ps. 18:15 [8:185]. The context of Ps. 18:15 is one of a mighty, divine deliverance for the Psalmist. It does not seem to inform the subject at hand, unless one takes the reading of the parallel passage of 2 Sam 22:16(14), which includes the word "sea". If this is the case, oceanic, rather than subterranean, waters would be in view. Otherwise, the context of the passage is probably metaphorical.

Job 12:15 [5:23; 6:59; 7:84]. This verse does not seem to be helpful either. The flood mentioned can be local or global and the context – whether it is Creation or flood or otherwise-- is not clear. This verse also uses neither *ma'yān* nor *t'hōm*.

Terrestrial Springs Would be Needed for Pre-Flood Water Cycle

It is a common creationist claim that there was no rain before the Flood -- usually based upon Gen. 2:5 (e.g. [7:97-8]; [8:180-1]; [23:84-5]; [30]; [38:8]; and [45:241-2]). If there was no rain, the earth would have to be watered in some other way (e.g. by heavy dews and/or springs, as may be indicated in Gen. 2:6). Since heavy dews would probably be insufficient to supply the needed water -- especially for the large rivers leaving Eden in Gen. 2:10ff -- terrestrial springs must have been important in the pre-Flood water cycle. [38] and [29] (the latter without elaboration) seem to maintain these arguments and then associate the terrestrial springs with the "fountains of the great deep".

Joachim Scheven penned what many creationists feel to be true about pre-Flood rain: "The statement that God had not yet caused it to rain upon the earth (Gen. 2:5) is valid until the announcement of His intention to cause it to rain (Gen. 6:4)" [38:8]. This is a logical inference certainly, which may also be supported by the use of the habitual imperfect "used to go up" (*ya'leḥ*) in Genesis 2:5, but is it a necessary conclusion? There were certainly clouds between creation and the Flood (Job 38:8-11). Could it not be that rain commenced after the creation of man (cf. Gen. 2:5), but before the Flood? The Biblical arguments for and against pre-Flood rain are too many to address in this paper. Suffice it to say at this point, that the claim of no pre-Flood rain should be considered Biblical possibility, not Biblical certainty.

[38] claims that *'ēd*, the Hebrew word translated "mist" in Gen. 2:6 can be translated "fountain". If this is so, it might lend some small amount of credibility to the association between terrestrial springs necessary for the earth's pre-Flood water cycle and the "fountains of the great deep" in Gen. 7:11 and 8:2. Unfortunately, [38] provides no Biblical justification for his translation, and is may be incorrect. Though the Septuagint translates *'ēd* here as *pēgē*, *'ēd* occurs elsewhere only in Job 36:27 and there refers to water vapor, or at least something synonymously parallel with clouds (*n.b.* The Septuagint reading in Job is corrupt.). It is not a fountain in this latter passage. *'ēd* is not thought to be derived from a root which suggests a spring or fountain (its etymology is uncertain; even the attractive Akkadian *edū* "inundation" suggested by [21] and Arabic *'ada* "be strong" suggested by [3] are dubious cognates) and it does not occur in poetic parallelism with any word which means spring or fountain. In both contexts in which it is found, it functions as a watering substitute for rain and in at least one it may be related to a mist or vapor (Job 36:27). Though it is difficult to be dogmatic, "mist" is thus just as likely a translation of *'ēd* in Gen. 2:6 as spring or fountain would be.

[36] and [38] also claims that "according to Genesis 2:10, the irrigation of the entire world was through four giant water courses which proceeded jointly from the Garden" [36:200; 38:8-9]. This, Scripture does not say. The passage does affirm that upstream of where the river parted into four, it watered the garden of Eden, but no mention is made of the watering function of the four resultant rivers. The following verses also affirm that two of the rivers created the borders of "the whole land of Havilah" and "the whole land of Ethiopia" (Gen. 2:11, 13) and that a third ran "toward the east of Assyria" (Gen. 2:14), but it nowhere claims that the rivers even reached the entire world, let alone watered it.

Scriptural evidence alone gives one very little reason to conclude that the post-Creation, pre-Flood earth lacked rain. And, even if rain was lacking, the Biblical use of the Hebrew word *'ēd* suggests that the

"mist" of Gen. 2:6 is to be understood as a mist (and not, e.g., as a spring). Too, although the head of the river which exited Eden may have been a spring, Scripture does not indicate it. Finally, even if this argument were true, and the pre-Flood earth had to be watered by means of springs, a direct association between those springs and either the *ma'yān* ("fountain") or the *t'hôm* ("deep") of Gen. 7:11 and 8:2 is never made in Scripture.

The Flood is an Eye-Witness Account

[29:50; 31:11] argues at length that the "fountains of the great deep" must be subterranean, inasmuch as the Flood of Noah was recorded (on tablets?) as an eyewitness event (and oceanic fountains wouldn't have been seen). Many would argue against that point, suggesting instead that the event was revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai (the Notzarim in Israel and many conservative Christians hold this view). [29:50] justifies his position by citing P. J. Wiseman. However, the views of Wiseman that these passages were eyewitness accounts passed down on tablets have not been widely accepted in the scholarly world and have been refuted by at least one Old Testament scholar ([32:71-72]; note that the Akkadian tablet colophons do not employ the Akkadian equivalent of the Hebrew *tôl' dôt* formula, ostensibly because *tôl' dôt* refers to what comes after, not what comes before). Therefore, one must also not put so much weight in that premise. Scripture is full of informative data that is known only by God's revealing it to us. The events of creation week provide a good example. God's questions to Job in chapters 38-41 suggest a lot of truth unknown to us, some of it yet unknown and perhaps some even unknowable by us. The record we have in Scripture given to us in rational language is the basis upon which we found our models of geology, catastrophism, theology, or whatever. Whether an eyewitness account or received by direct revealing, it is still God's Word. We suspect that when the observable order begins to dissolve as it would have in the deluge, one is not thinking too much about the unseen or unobservable. Whether God inspired Noah, Noah's sons, or Moses or even someone else to write the account matters not. The record still contains data which man would not know without God revealing to him (e.g. How did Noah know that everyone died?). Furthermore, as noted above, the semantic range of the Hebrew words and phrases involved is broad enough to include both oceanic and subterranean "fountains of the deep."

Summary of "Fountains of the Great Deep"

Proper exegesis of the Hebrew phrase translated "fountains of the (great) deep" in Gen. 7:11 and 8:2 would argue for a broader, rather than a narrower, interpretation. Although *ma'yān* (transl. "fountain") more often refers to terrestrial waters, *t'hôm* (transl. "deep") more often refers to oceanic waters. Too, *t'hôm rabbā* refers to either exclusively oceanic or possibly to both terrestrial and oceanic locations. Since **all** (*kol*) "the fountains of the great deep" burst open, it is very likely that **both** terrestrial and oceanic fountains are in view. Furthermore, *ma'yān* may be actually best translated "place of the spring" and may refer to either the source-basin for the spring, the catch-basin for the spring, or the actual opening through which the spring waters flow. Although the actual opening is the preferred translation, all are possible in Gen. 7:11 and 8:2.

Most probably an exclusively terrestrial interpretation of the "fountains of the great deep" in Gen. 7:11 and 8:2 is indefensible. Likewise, an exclusively oceanic interpretation of the same phrase in those passages is also indefensible. All extant Flood models should be modified to accommodate the possibility of both interpretations, in the same way as [45] included both provenances in their Flood model. Although [5], [6], [7], [8], [15], [29], [30], [31], [35], [37], and [38] seem to argue for an exclusively "terrestrial spring" interpretation, neither the European Flood model nor the hydroplate model requires an exclusively continental *t'hôm*, or an exclusively terrestrial *ma'yān*. Both models should be modified to initiate the Flood with the bursting open of both oceanic and terrestrial pre-Flood springs. Similarly, although [27:175] argues for an exclusively oceanic origin of the "fountains of the great deep", and [3] imply the same, there does not seem to be anything in either Northrup's Five Series Catastrophes Model or [3]'s Catastrophic Plate Tectonics Model which would preclude extending the "fountains of the great deep" to both terrestrial and oceanic locales [KPW: Although originally an author in [3], I would now suggest the modification of that paper as indicated here].

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Creationist claims that the Flood completely obliterated pre-Flood terrestrial life without even a fossil trace are based upon incorrect Biblical exegesis. The overwhelming weight of textual and theological evidence is that God killed all terrestrial organisms on earth and buried them in the subsurface -- most probably leaving organic (*etc.*) evidence of their former existence (including fossils). There is a need to modify any creation model which suggests that no fossils of pre-Flood terrestrial organisms are to be found in Flood sediments.

Creationist claims that the "fountains of the great deep" which burst to initiate the Flood were either exclusively terrestrial or exclusively oceanic are most probably based upon an incomplete understanding of the pertinent texts. Since "fountains", "the deep", and "the great deep" can each refer to either terrestrial or oceanic venues and Gen. 7:11 claims that **all** the "fountains of the great deep" were broken up, almost certainly both terrestrial and oceanic water sources are in view. There is a need to modify any creation model which suggests that **only** terrestrial or **only** oceanic springs burst at the beginning of the Flood.

The "fountains of the great deep" of Gen. 7:11 and 8:2 are best understood as pre-Flood springs, likely distributed about the globe's entire surface -- in both terrestrial and oceanic areas. Although the *ma'yān* (translated "spring") in Scripture is most likely referring to the actual opening of the spring, both the source-basins and the catch-basins for the spring may have also (or alternatively) been in view. On the opening day of the Flood all those springs -- both oceanic and terrestrial -- catastrophically burst open (Gen. 7:11). Later in the Flood (Gen. 8:2), those springs were closed or stopped up again.

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