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## Chronology in the Flood Narrative (Gen 6-9)

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## CHRONOLOGY IN THE FLOOD NARRATIVE (GEN 6-9)

The issue of time is one of the most fascinating riddles in the Flood narrative. Not only accuracy of the chronological data, but also their accumulation (quite unusual in the Story of Primeval Event in Gen 1-11), and above all the evident tensions between individual chronological notes have raised many questions and provoked heated debates of biblical scholars. In our essay we would like to briefly present the chronology of events in the Flood narrative taking into consideration the divergences between the MT and ancient translations (1). Then, we will discuss some classical (2) and alternative solutions (3) of the chronological riddle of Gen 6-9. Finally, we will formulate some conclusions concerning temporal dimension of the Flood narrative.

### 1. Time in the Flood narrative

Apart from the limited space of Noah's ark there is one more reality that escapes obliteration by the Flood waters: the reality of *time*. As regards the question of time, dating, and chronology the Flood narrative appears exceptional in some way when viewed against the background

of the Story of Primeval Events (Gen. 1-11). The penchant for precise dates and numbers were traditionally acknowledged as a characteristic feature of the priestly writer. In McEvenue's view:

The priestly writer uses dates throughout his document, to begin or end a unit, to form an inclusion, to sound an echo, etc., with structural significance predominating over a real concern for time. He has thus given a peculiar tone of order, fixedness, and legality to his text. History is run like a liturgical calendar. This must have had a peculiar attraction for the exiles, living in a period of chaos, with every object of faith and certainty removed, apparently excluded from the benefits of the Mosaic covenant<sup>1</sup>.

Interestingly, in the flood narrative references to dates and periods can be found in the parts of the narrative traditionally ascribed both to P and non-P layers of the text.<sup>2</sup> As Wenham notes, "the fullness and precision of the dates in the flood narrative are astonishing (7:12, 17, 24; 8:3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 12, 13, 14); only Ezekiel in dating his prophecies (e.g., 1:1; 3:16, etc.) approaches Gen. 7-8 in this regard"<sup>3</sup>.

This fullness and precision in the dating of the events cannot be considered equal to explicitness and does not constitute absolute clarity on the whole chronological matter. Scrupulous summing up of the dates and periods mentioned in the Flood narrative hardly leads to any rewarding conclusions. The difficulties become even more complex if we take into consideration the remarkable divergences between the MT and ancient translations of the biblical text (LXX, Vulg.), as well as the texts related to the biblical accounts (e.g. Jub.; 4Q252; *AntJ* 1.80-81).

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<sup>1</sup> S. E. MCEVENEUE, *The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer*, AnBib 50, Roma 1971, 59.

<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, in his analysis of the chronology in the Flood narrative, Barré comes to the conclusion that J's account, like P, contained a complete chronological system. Thus, Barré continues, "the working assumption that priestly tradition alone had an interest in chronological matters must be called into question". L. M. BARRÉ, *The Riddle of the Flood Chronology*, JSOT 41 (1988), 16.

<sup>3</sup> G. J. WENHAM, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC 1, Waco, TX 1987, 179.

The table below presents the synopsis of Flood chronologies as presented in different texts<sup>4</sup>.

Gen.	MT	LXX	Jubilees	4Q252	Ant.J	Vulg.
7.11 Beginning of the Flood	17 II	27 II	17 II	17 II	27 II	17 II
8.4 Ark lands on Ararat	17 VII	27 VII	–	17 VII	–	27 VII
8.5 Tops of mountains visible	1 X	1 XI	1 X	+ 40 days	–	1 X
8.13 Waters dried from the earth	1 I	1 I	1 I	1 I	–	1 I
8.14 Earth is dry	27 II	27 II	17 II 27 II <sup>5</sup> 1 III	17 II	–	27 II

As we can see the most striking divergence concerns the date of the onset of the cataclysm. According to the MT the Flood began on the seventeenth day of the second month. The LXX has the twenty-seventh day instead. Thus, according to the LXX, the Flood lasted exactly one year, whereas in the MT the duration of the Flood is one year and ten (or eleven, if counted in an inclusive manner) days. The attempts proposed by Hendel to solve the problem from the perspective of textual criticism

<sup>4</sup> See P. GUILLAUME, *Land and Calendar: The Priestly Document from Genesis 1 to Joshua 18*, OTSt 391, New York 2008, 72; R. S. HENDEL, *4Q252 and the Flood Chronology of Genesis 7-8: A Text-Critical Solution*, DSD 2 (1995), 73; cf. T. H. LIM, *The Chronology of the Flood Story in a Qumran Text (4Q252)*, JJS 43 (1992), 296.

<sup>5</sup> According to Jub. 5.32, in the twenty-seventh day of the second month Noah opened the doors and led the animals out of the ark. On the first day of the third month he offered the sacrifice to God (see Jub. 6.1).

(scribal error consisting in the word misdivision that changed עֶשֶׂר יוֹם (עשרים) do not appear to stand up to criticism<sup>6</sup>.

## 2. Classical solution – composite character of the narrative

The lack of cohesion in the chronological system of the Flood narrative became for some exegetes a deciding argument for the composite character of the text. Consequently, the penchant for the use of a specific type of chronological data became one of the criteria in the process of identifying of the sources in the text. Accordingly, the following numbers were identified as part of J's chronological system:

Gen. 7.4	“For in seven days I will send rain upon the earth...”	7 days
Gen. 7.4, 12	“I will send rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights...” “And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights.”	40 days
Gen. 8.10	“He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark.”	7 days
Gen. 8.12	“Then he waited another seven days...”	7 days

<sup>6</sup> See R. S. Hendel, *4Q252...*, *op. cit.*, 76-78; E. VOGT, *Note sur le calendrier du déluge*, Bib 43 (1962), 215; cf. M. A. ZIPOR, *The Flood Chronology: Too Many an Accident*, DSD 4 (1997), 208-09; M. RÖSEL, *Die Chronologie der Flut in Gen 7-8: keine neuen textkritischen Lösungen*, ZAW 110 (1998), 591-92. As regards the discrepancies between the chronologies in the individual traditions, Larsson notes that corruption of the text can explain only a very limited number of cases. As he writes, “the differences are far too systematic to be the result of isolated misreadings but must be products of different chronological calculations” (401). Apart from tracing a different logic behind the diverse systems, it also raises the question of the primacy of the different chronologies. In the case of the onset of the Flood, and in Larsson’s view, the LXX is “more schematic and more symmetrical.” As a result, it is less likely to be the original. See G. LARSSON, *The Chronology of the Pentateuch: A Comparison of the MT and LXX*, JBL 102 (1983), 405.

These time-spans, supplemented by the additional data inferred from the narrative<sup>7</sup>, formed the basis for the reconstruction of the full J chronology of the Flood<sup>8</sup>.

40 days	for constructing the ark
7 days	to the coming of the Flood
40 days	of raining
40 days	to the opening of the trap-door
7 days	from the opening of the trap-door to the first sending of the dove
7 days	from the first to the second sending out
7 days	from the second to the third sending out; Noah leaves the ark; the end of the Flood

Thus, according to the reconstructed J chronology of the events, from the first speech of God to Noah until the exit from the ark, the Flood lasted for 148 days.

Apart from this, we find an alternative system in the parts of the Flood narrative traditionally identified as P's layer, which, as Lemche notes, "presents a totally different view of the chronology from the one preserved in J"<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> See U. CASSUTO, *La Questione della Genesi*, Firenze, Milano 1934, 351; E. NIELSEN, *Oral Tradition: A Modern Problem in Old Testament Introduction*, Studies in Biblical Theology 11, Edinburgh 1954, 93-100.

<sup>8</sup> See N. P. LEMCHE, *The Chronology in the Story of the Flood*, JSOT 18 (1980), 53-54.

<sup>9</sup> N. P. LEMCHE, *The Chronology...*, *op. cit.*, 54.

Gen. 7.6	“Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came upon the earth.”	1 I (?)
Gen. 7.11	“In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened”	17 II
Gen. 7.24	“And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days.”	150 days
Gen. 8.4	“In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest upon the mountains of Ararat.”	17 VII
Gen. 8.5	“And the waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.”	1 X
Gen. 8.13	“In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth...”	1 I
Gen. 8.14	“In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.”	27 II

As we can see, it seems to be important for P to associate individual events of the narrative with fixed dates in the year. In contrast with the J system, the P system only mentions one time-span in the whole narrative, namely 150 days in Gen. 7.24.

The insufficiency of this solution based on two layers alone has been pointed out by Lemche. In his view, the relationships between the systems presented above and, at the same time, certain inconsistencies in P’s system, lead to the conclusion that apart from J’s and P’s data, the text of the narrative also bears the traces of the editorial activity of a later redactor (R<sup>JP</sup>). This activity, in regard to chronological data, consisted, on the one hand, of preserving the chronological data transmitted by the individual sources (J and P). On the other hand, the R<sup>JP</sup> tried to harmonize both systems by introducing his own elements, inferred from join-

ing both J's and P's systems<sup>10</sup>. The anomalies still presented in the Flood narrative forced Lemche to acknowledge that the harmonization attempt of R<sup>JP</sup> ended "without real success"<sup>11</sup>.

Kratz also mentions that at least three systems overlap in "the pedantic chronology" of the Flood narrative:

1. the dating from the 600<sup>th</sup> year of Noah through 1.X.600 up to 1.I.601 in 7.6; 8.5 and 8.13;
2. the dating from 17.II.600 through 17.VII.600 to 27.II.601 in 7.11; 8.4; 8.14;
3. the calculation by days in 7.24; 8.3b, as in 7.4, 10, 12, 17, 8.6-12, the chronology of the non-Priestly text<sup>12</sup>.

Kratz points out the fact that the second system can be explained as deriving from the other two. Also in regard to systems 1 and 3, he notes that they "can hardly have come into being independently of each other." In this case, however, the direction of their interdependence is not self-evident<sup>13</sup>.

It should be noted, however, that the simple isolation of the individual dating systems in the narrative does not automatically provide a satisfactory answer for the riddle of the Flood chronology. Instead of assuming the simple accumulation of the material by the final redactor of the Flood narrative, the presence of a principle organizing various chronological systems is worth considering.

### 3. Alternative solutions of the *enigma*

Sometimes it is maintained that the *enigma* of the chronology in the Flood narrative can be solved when one presupposes the use of the calen-

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<sup>10</sup> See N. P. LEMCHE, *The Chronology...*, *op. cit.*, 57-60.

<sup>11</sup> N. P. LEMCHE, *The Chronology...*, *op. cit.*, 59.

<sup>12</sup> R. G. KRATZ, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament*, Edinburgh 2005, 235; see also F. H. CRYER, *The Interrelationships of Gen 5,32; 11,10-11 and the Chronology of the Flood (Gen 6-9)*, Bib 66 (1985), 253-54.

<sup>13</sup> R. G. Kratz, *The Composition...*, *op. cit.*, 236.

dar described in the book of Jubilees. In Jaubert’s view, the unique character of this *Jubilee* or *Sabbatical* calendar can be summarized in a few points: the year consists of 364 days, which gives 52 weeks even; the year is divided into four trimesters of 91 days each (13 weeks); the months normally have 30 days, except for the third month of each trimester, which consists of 31 days<sup>14</sup>. Due to the fact that the number 364 can be divided by 7, the relationship between the individual days of the month or year and the days of the week is fixed: “every year, the Sabbath falls on the same day of the month”<sup>15</sup>. This can be tabulated in the following way:

Months I, IV, VII, X					Months II, V, VIII, XI					Months III, VI, IX, XII					Weekday
1	8	15	22	29		6	13	20	27		4	11	18	25	Wednesday
2	9	16	23	30		7	14	21	28		5	12	19	26	Thursday
3	10	17	24		1	8	15	22	29		6	13	20	27	Friday
4	11	18	25		2	9	16	24	30		7	14	21	28	Sabbath
5	12	19	26		3	10	17	24		1	8	15	22	29	Sunday
6	13	20	27		4	11	18	25		2	9	16	23	30	Monday
7	14	21	28		5	12	19	26		3	10	17	24	31	Tuesday

Jaubert, who applied this calendar to the Flood narrative as well as to various great events in the Hebrew Bible, noted certain prominence given to particular days of the week. The special religious significance that they carried resulted from their place in the sabbatical week. As VanderKam notes,

Sunday, the first day, directly follows the sabbath and is the time for beginning substantial endeavors; Wednesday falls midway between sabbaths and is the time at which one runs the least risk of profaning

<sup>14</sup> See A. JAUBERT, *Le calendrier des Jubilés et les jours liturgiques de la semaine*, VT 7 (1957), 35.

<sup>15</sup> P. GUILLAUME, *Land and Calendar...*, *op. cit.*, 42.

the sabbath; and Friday, the day before the sabbath, is the time for concluding journeys and for assemblies<sup>16</sup>.

The table below demonstrates the relationships between the dates mentioned or inferred from the Flood narrative and individual weekdays<sup>17</sup>.

Gen. 7.4	Announcement of the Flood	10.2.600	Sunday
Gen. 7.11	Onset of the Flood	17.2.600	Sunday
Gen. 7.12	Rain lasts for forty days	27.3.600	Friday
Gen. 8.4	Waters triumph and abate	17.7.600	Friday
Gen. 8.5	Mount tops visible	1.10.600	Wednesday
Gen. 8.6	Raven sent out	10.11.600	Sunday
Gen. 8.10	Dove's second flight	24.11.600	Sunday
Gen. 8.12	Dove's third flight	1.12.600	Sunday
Gen. 8.13	Waters dry up	1.1.601	Wednesday
Gen. 8.14	Noah leaves the ark	27.2.601	Wednesday

Thus, most of the dates mentioned in the Flood narrative “are seen to be highly significant”<sup>18</sup>. They all indicate the convergence between the Flood narrative and the Priestly Creation Story (Gen. 1). As the creation process begins on the first day of the week, *de-creation* according to Gen. 7.11 also has its beginning on Sunday. On Sunday Noah, like God in Gen. 1, begins new phases of his activity (Gen. 8.6,10,12). This may also indirectly indicate the observance of the Sabbath. The creation

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<sup>16</sup> J. C. VANDERKAM, *The Origin, Character, and Early History of the 364-Day Calendar: A Reassessment of Jaubert's Hypotheses*, CBQ 41 (1979), 400; see also A. JAUBERT, “Le calendrier...”, *op. cit.*, 45-47.

<sup>17</sup> G. J. WENHAM, *The Coherence of the Flood Narrative*, VT 28 (1978), 343; G. J. WENHAM, *Genesis 1-15...*, *op. cit.*, 180.

<sup>18</sup> G. J. WENHAM, *Genesis 1-15...*, *op. cit.*, 180.

of all elements of the cosmos is completed on Friday<sup>19</sup>; similarly *de-creation* is also completed on Friday, after 150 days of domination of water over the earth. Finally, in a similar way, the appearance of mountains (Gen. 8.5), the drying of the waters (Gen. 8.13), and the exit from the ark (Gen. 8.14) fell on Wednesday. If we remember the particular role attributed in Gen. 1.14-19 to the fourth day of the creation week<sup>20</sup>, the connection of these events with the fourth day of the week can suggest that in a way they set up a new beginning of creation<sup>21</sup>.

Apart from the popularization of the *Sabbatical* calendar and its use in explaining some chronological riddles of the Bible, this *theological* or *liturgical* perspective in calendric analyses seems to be one of the most interesting elements of Jaubert's theory. As she states, "the principle events of the history of Israel are associated with the liturgy. In the mentality which presides over the drawing up of these accounts the history of the holy people is rendered sacred throughout. It is adapted to *the rhythm of liturgical cycle*"<sup>22</sup>. This use of chronological data as an element structuring the narrative around this precise theological idea should certainly be taken into consideration in the case of the Flood narrative.

As Wenham notes, Jaubert's hypothesis "is somewhat fragile"<sup>23</sup>. In particular, her claim to combine the chronological events with certain days of the week came under harsh criticism<sup>24</sup>. Her suggestion that the 364-day calendar underlies parts of the Hebrew Bible has not won general acceptance either. However, as VanderKam notes, it remains "an appealing possibility"<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Is the sixth day really the last day of the creation work? See Gen. 2.2.

<sup>20</sup> See P. BEAUCHAMP, *Création et séparation. Étude exégétique du chapitre premier de la Genèse*, Lectio Divina 201, Paris 2005, 113-14.

<sup>21</sup> See A. JAUBERT, *La date de la Cène: Calendrier biblique et liturgie chrétienne*, Études bibliques 15, Paris 1957, 33.

<sup>22</sup> A. JAUBERT, *La date...*, *op. cit.*, 30.

<sup>23</sup> Wenham *Genesis 1-15* 181.

<sup>24</sup> See J. M. BAUMGARTEN, *Some Problems of the Jubilees Calendar in Current Research*, VT 32 (1982), 485-89; J. M. BAUMGARTEN, *The Calendar of the Book of Jubilees and the Bible*, in: *Studies in Qumran Law*, SJLA 24, Leiden 1977, 105-06.108.

<sup>25</sup> J. C. VANDERKAM, *Calendars in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Measuring Time*. The Literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Edinburgh 1998, 58.

Cryer in his search for the principles of the chronological organization of the Flood narrative focuses on “P’s *dated chronology*” that corresponds to the first and the second systems mentioned by Kratz<sup>26</sup>. The analysis of the dates mentioned either in the biblical text or deducible from it leads Cryer to the conclusion that there are two complete chronologies of the Flood in the Priestly layer, “one of which runs from 600.1.1 to 601.1.1, while the other runs from 600.2.17 to 601.2.27!” This can be illustrated in the following way:

Gen. 7.6	1.1.600	Noah’s birthday, the Flood begins	
Gen. 7.11	17.2.600	the Flood begins	
Gen. 8.4	17.7.600	the ark rest on the mountains	
Gen. 8.5	10.10.600	the mountains appear	
Gen. 8.13	1.1.601	the earth is dry	
Gen. 8.14	27.2.601	the earth is dry	

Interestingly, Cryer claims that “these two chronologies do not represent two ‘systems’, but two faces of one and the same system”<sup>27</sup>. Thus, they represent the period of one year and one year plus ten days, respectively. Cryer uses a simple schematic month of thirty days and a year of twelve months as the basis for his calculations<sup>28</sup>. As he notes, there are at least two indications that it is exactly the 30-day/12-month scheme in use in the Flood narrative. First, in Gen. 7.4, God announces that after seven days the rain will be sent on the earth, and will last for forty days. These 47 days are exactly the difference between Gen. 7.11 (17.2.600) and Gen. 7.6 (in Cryer’s view 1.1.600) on the theory that one month

<sup>26</sup> See F. H. CRYER, *The Interrelationships of Gen 5,32; 11,10-11 and the Chronology of the Flood (Gen 6-9)*, Bib 66 (1985), 253.

<sup>27</sup> F. H. CRYER, *Interrelationships...*, *op. cit.*, 254.

<sup>28</sup> F. H. CRYER, *Interrelationships...*, *op. cit.*, 256; see also F. H. CRYER, *The 360-Day Calendar Year and Early Judaic Sectarianism*, SJOT 1 (1987), 118-22; O. NEUGEBAUER, *The Origin of the Egyptian Calendar*, JNES 1 (1942): 396-403.

is 30 days in length. Furthermore, in Gen. 7.24 we are informed that “the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days.” If we take into consideration some of P’s schematism, “the equivalence of 5 months with 150 days can hardly be fortuitous”<sup>29</sup>. Further support for this claim can be found in Jub. 5.27, where such an equivalence is explicitly expressed: “the water prevailed on the face of the earth five months – one hundred and fifty days.”

On the assumption of the schematic year of 360 days, the two separate chronologies distinguished in the Flood narrative assume 360 and 370 days, respectively<sup>30</sup>. Their sum is precisely 730 days, and this is, as Cryer notes, 2 x 365 days, exactly two solar years.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the data preserved in two parallel calendars hold yet another allusion, this time to the lunar calendar. When comparing the parallel events of two chronologies, Cryer points out that, on the premise of a 30-day month, the intervals between the corresponding dates are 47, 73, and 57 days, respectively. The sum of these intervals is 177, which is exactly one half of a lunar year, i.e. 354 days. An allusion to the lunar year, in Cryer’s view, is also expressed by the periods mentioned in the Flood narrative (the third system mentioned by Kratz). Their sum, on the premises worded by Cryer, gives precisely 354 days, that is a lunar year<sup>32</sup>.

A few of Cryer’s conclusions deserve special attention (see Gardner 211-15). First, Cryer suggest that P’s chronological structures are not limited to one narrative exclusively (in this case to the Flood narrative), but they may be found in other Pentateuchal narratives as well (e.g. Exod. 40; Num. 9). Second, in Cryer’s view, the Flood narrative bears the traces of the use of different calendars (lunar, solar, 360-days calendar)<sup>33</sup>. In contrast to Jaubert’s emphasis laid on the exclusive use of the *Sabbatical* calendar, Gardner writes:

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<sup>29</sup> F. H. CRYER, *Interrelationships...*, *op. cit.*, 257.

<sup>30</sup> F. H. CRYER, *Interrelationships...*, *op. cit.*, 257.

<sup>31</sup> F. H. CRYER, *Interrelationships...*, *op. cit.*, 258. The allusions to the solar year of 365 days can be plausibly found in Gen. 5.23, where Enoch’s age is mentioned.

<sup>32</sup> F. H. CRYER, *Interrelationships...*, *op. cit.*, 257-58.

<sup>33</sup> See F. H. CRYER, *Interrelationships...*, *op. cit.*, 260.

Although P's conception of calendar and creation is that of a visionary poet, he is not just an ethereal escape-artist, but a practical ruler and religious thinker. P was attempting to consider different aspects of contemporary calendars and unite them in a workable compromise, perhaps as cultic and civil expressions of socio-religious order. Despite the analyses by Jaubert and others of the Pentateuchal evidence for a P 364-day tradition, in my view, it would be as much as of a mistake to make that calendrical scheme *an exclusive and tendentious* part of the P writing/editing as it would be to adopt a dogmatic luni-solar uniformitarianism (either by default, or through prejudice)<sup>34</sup>.

These disparate chronological systems “*are not necessarily competing but simply being compared.... to find evidence for one calendar does not exclude another if the aim of the text is to present parallel models*”<sup>35</sup>. Interestingly, Cryer finds in Gen. 1.14 the basis for a chronological diversity in the “synchronistic pattern” present in the Flood narrative<sup>36</sup>.

Finally, on the basis of the basis of chronological features, Cryer suggests a theological parallelism between separate events mentioned in the Bible: “P may have desired to hint at a parallelism between the events of the Flood, the Exodus from Egypt, and the Return”<sup>37</sup>. The presence of such a veiled structure underlying different texts has been suggested by McEvenue as “the essence of the priestly style”: “One constantly feels that structure is present, but it is so overwoven and interlaced with different systems of echo and repetition that the final effect is of a universe of thought which is completely mastered and unified, but whose pattern remains elusive”<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> B. K. GARDNER, *The Genesis Calendar: The Synchronistic Tradition in Genesis 1-11*, Lanham 2001, 62-63.

<sup>35</sup> B. K. GARDNER, *The Genesis Calendar...*, *op. cit.*, 212.

<sup>36</sup> B. K. GARDNER, *The Genesis Calendar...*, *op. cit.*, 212; see F. H. CRYER, *Interrelationships...*, *op. cit.*, 260.

<sup>37</sup> F. H. CRYER, *Interrelationships...*, *op. cit.*, 258. We could also suggest that the Priestly Creation narrative should be included in this list.

<sup>38</sup> S. E. MCEVENUE, *The Narrative Style...*, *op. cit.*, 81.

## Conclusions

To sum up, we can conclude that the chronological data are of fundamental importance in the Flood narrative. Their function, however, extends far beyond the simple elements of time measurement. They become the elements of the narrative's structural organization. As McEvenue writes:

Dates are a structural feature in the priestly document. The objective date is not of prime importance to P, since he has not tried to make the succession of years clear, or easy to follow, and has even left contradictions within his systems.... The numbers may serve to express God's mastery of history by their inner harmonies and cyclic character. Or they may be drawn from Babylonian traditions, and may form patterns of a geometric nature, with symbolic and metaphysical significance, comparable to Pythagorean tetrads or oriental mandalas. Whatever their interpretation, they are at least a stylistic procedure of great importance in the priestly document<sup>39</sup>.

Despite the fact that our understanding of the original meaning of all the features of the Flood chronology is far from complete, there are elements of this system that are clearly understandable. Primarily, it seems that the chronology of the Flood intentionally combines different calendric systems. The eleven days between 17.02, the date of the onset of the cataclysm, and 27.02, the date of its conclusion, added to the full calendar year, strongly suggest the *epact* – the difference in days between the lunar and solar year. Apart from the solar and lunar calendars, the number 150 in Gen. 7.24 and Gen. 8.3 puts forth the idea of months consisting of 30 days, and accordingly, the year of 360 days<sup>40</sup>. Also the *Sabbatical* calendar of 364 days, advocated by Jaubert, and recently by Guillaume, should not be excluded as possibly alluded to in the Flood narrative.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> S. E. MCEVENUE, *The Narrative Style...*, *op. cit.*, 56-58.

<sup>40</sup> F. H. CRYER, *Interrelationships...*, *op. cit.*

<sup>41</sup> It is explicitly mentioned in Jub. 5.

As it was stated above, the different calendars “are not necessarily competing but simply being compared”<sup>42</sup>.

Furthermore, it seems that all of the calendric systems make reference to the same principles of the temporal organization of the cosmos that was expressed in Gen. 1.14-18. The chronology of the Flood narrative is primarily expressed with the categories of “days and nights,” “months,” and “years.” We can find three of these categories explicitly mentioned in the description of the fourth day of the creation work. In Gen. 1.14 we are informed that the lights in the firmament were created in order to “separate the day from the night (להבדיל בין היום ובין הלילה)” and to be “for signs (אתת) and for seasons (מועדים) and for days (ימים) and years (שנים).” Although the “months” present in the Flood narrative are not explicitly mentioned in the Priestly Creation narrative, the original relationship of *הדש* and “the lesser light” created “to rule the night” (Gen. 1.16) is quite obvious.

Interestingly, the text of the Flood narrative does not seemingly hint at a category of time that could correspond to the noun *מועד* mentioned in Gen. 1.14. Nevertheless, it seems to be virtually present in Gen. 8.13, where the date of the draining of the earth is provided: “In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth.” The precision of the date<sup>43</sup> clearly emphasizes the significance of the event described by this verse: the recession of the waters has now definitively reached its goal. Interestingly enough, the MT, in contrast to the LXX, fails to refer to the date of the life of Noah. In this way prominence is given to the numbers. As can be seen, particular emphasis is laid on the number *one*, repeated three times in the date mentioned in Gen. 8.13 (1.01.601)<sup>44</sup>. It seems that the feedback occurs at this point. While at first it is the form of the date (precision and repetitive

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<sup>42</sup> B. K. GARDNER, *The Genesis Calendar...*, *op. cit.*, 212.

<sup>43</sup> It can be compared with Gen. 7.11. It noticeably contrasts with Gen. 8.14, where only the day and month are mentioned.

<sup>44</sup> As Westermann notes, “this is in accordance with P’s style which emphasizes and underscores by means of repetition”. C. WESTERMANN, *Genesis 1-11, A Continental Commentary*, Minneapolis 1994, 450.

style) that points out the importance of the event concluding the Flood, in the second stage it is the event that determines the significance of the date itself. In fact, the first day of the first month in the six hundred and first year begins “the new world era,” “the post-diluvial age”<sup>45</sup>. This beginning appears to be New Year’s Day. The connection between the new beginning and New Year’s Day becomes a paradigmatic element. It is the conclusion of the flood narrative – as Westermann states – “that later, in muted and covert ways, provides the rationale for the annual cultic renewal of the cosmos at the New Year’s festival”<sup>46</sup>.

In this way, as Westermann states, the subtle parallel appears between the conclusion of the Priestly Creation narrative and the conclusion of the Flood. Both these narratives conclude with special emphasis being placed on a particular day. In the case of Gen. 1 it is the seventh day, the Sabbath. In the Flood narrative, it is New Year’s Day that marks the end of the cataclysm and the beginning of the renewed cosmic order. It should be noted however that

One cannot say that the Sabbath was instituted in Gen. 2.1-3 or the New Year fest in Gen. 8-9 (P); but both these sections in the primeval event lay a foundation. When the Sabbath and the New Year are set up in the history of God’s people and become fixed institutions, they can be referred to the primeval event. So they take on a universal significance, at least potentially<sup>47</sup>.

Thus, the Story of Primordial Events once again appears to be a paradigmatic text which sets the social institutions and cultic practices of historical Israel deeply in the primeval order.

Finally, the ascertainment that the categories of time function invariably – even in the culminating point of the cataclysm – suggests that this part of the creation order is not subject to the havoc wrought by the

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<sup>45</sup> C. WESTERMANN, *Genesis 1-11...*, *op. cit.*, 450.

<sup>46</sup> C. WESTERMANN, *Genesis 1-11...*, *op. cit.*, 450.

<sup>47</sup> C. WESTERMANN, *Genesis 1-11...*, *op. cit.*, 450.

waters of the Flood.<sup>48</sup> This indicates that the structure of the luminaries created to ensure the foundation of temporal separation remains intact.<sup>49</sup> Thus it can be said that the process of separation described in Gen. 1 is only partially reversed in the Flood. While the elements of *spatial* organization of the cosmos are reduced to the primordial, undiversified chaos, the elements of *temporal* organization of the cosmos, resulting from separating function of the luminaries, resist the destructive forces of the watery element.

## Chronologia opowiadania o Potopie (Rdz 6-9)

### Streszczenie

Zagadnienie czasu stanowi jedną z największych zagadek opowiadania o Potopie (Rdz 6-9). Nie tylko zadziwiająca precyzja danych chronologicznych, ale również ich nagromadzenie – zupełnie wyjątkowe w kontekście prehistorii biblijnej (Rdz 1-11) – wreszcie wyraźne rozbieżności pomiędzy poszczególnymi elementami systemu chronologicznego opowiadania od wieków stanowiły wyzwanie dla czytelników i badaczy pochylających się nad tą perykopą biblijną. Wypracowane rozwiązania nawiązywały do skomplikowanej historii redakcji tego tekstu lub odwoływały się do rozmaitych systemów liczenia czasu, jakie występowały w starożytności. Wydaje się jednak, że rola danych chrono-

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<sup>48</sup> Guillaume instead, claims that there was a *bouleversement* of the chronological structure of the cosmos during the Flood. As he states: “The actual Flood duration is a chronological void”. P. GUILLAUME, *Land and Calendar...*, *op. cit.*, 73. He assumes the existence of “a time gap” during the cataclysm. He writes: “The use of a time gap is attested in ancient literature and reproduced in the presentation of Sinai (Ps) as a time during which there was neither birth nor death (compare Exod 38:26 and Num 1:46). The time gap within the Flood narrative is also confirmed by the ages of Noah and Shem” (Gen. 5.32; 7.6; 11.10). P. GUILLAUME, *Land and Calendar...*, *op. cit.*, 74; see also F. BAVON, *Le structuralisme français et l'exégèse biblique*, in: *Analyse structurale et exégèse biblique: Essais d'interprétation*, Eds. R. BARTHES, et al., Bibliothèque théologique. Neuchâtel 1971, 9-25)

<sup>49</sup> According to some rabbinic interpreters (*y. Pesah* 1:1), the heavenly bodies did not function during the flood. Accordingly, the precious stones (e.g. צִדְדִּים – Gen. 6.16) were needed in order to provide light for the ark (see J. P. LEWIS, *A Study of the Interpretation of Noah and the Flood in Jewish and Christian Literature*, Leiden 1968, 137.

logicznych wykracza poza ich podstawową funkcję w systemie miary czasu. Właściwie pojęte i zinterpretowane jawią się jako element strukturalnej organizacji kosmosu. Obok doskonale zorganizowanej, podzielonej i zhierarchizowanej przestrzeni, jaką jest arka Noego – mikrokosmos na falach chaosu i kapsuła ocalenia, w której zamknięte zostało ziarno życia – to właśnie czas jest bodaj jedynym elementem kosmosu, którego nie naruszyły wody potopu.

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