Robert Alter’s Genesis 6-9

Yahweh (J), **Elohist (E)**, Priestly (P), **Editor/Redactor** **(R),** *Other*

**6.** And it happened as human kind began to multiply over the earth and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were comely, and they took themselves wives howsoever they chose. And the LORD said, “My breath shall not abide in the human forever, for he is but flesh. Let his days be a hundred and twenty years.” The Nephilim were then on the earth, and afterward as well, the sons of God having come to bed with the daughters of man who bore them children: they are the heroes of yore, the men of renown. And the LORD saw that the evil of the human creature was great on the earth and that every scheme of his heart’s devising was only perpetually evil. And the LORD regretted having made the human on earth and was grieved to the heart. And the LORD said, “I will wipe out the human race I created from the face of the earth, from human to cattle to crawling thing to the fowl of the heavens, for I regret that I have made them.” But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. **This is the lineage of Noah**—Noah was a righteous man, he was blameless in his time, Noah walked with God—and Noah begot three sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth. And the earth was corrupt before God and the earth was filled with outrage. And God saw the earth and, look, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its ways on the earth. And God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with outrage by them, and I am now about to destroy them, with the earth. Make yourself an ark of cypress wood, with cells you shall make the ark, and caulk it inside and out with pitch. This is how you shall make it: three hundred cubits, the ark’s length; fifty cubits, its width; thirty cubits, its height. Make a skylight in the ark, within a cubit of the top you shall finish it, and put an entrance in the ark on one side. With lower and middle and upper decks you shall make it. As for me, I am about to bring the Flood, water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh that has within it the breath of life from under the heavens, everything on the earth shall perish. And I will set up my covenant with you, and you shall enter the ark, you and your sons and your wife and the wives of your sons, with you. And from all that lives, from all flesh, two of each thing you shall bring to the ark to keep alive with you, male and female they shall be. From the fowl of each kind and from the cattle of each kind and from all that crawls on the earth of each kind, two of each thing shall come to you to be kept alive. As for you, take you from every food that is eaten and store it by you, to serve for you and for them as food.” And this Noah did; as all that God commanded him, so he did.

7. And the LORD said to Noah, “Come into the ark, you and all your house-hold, for it is you I have seen righteous before me in this generation. Of every clean animal take you seven pairs, each with its mate, and of every animal that is not clean, one pair, each with its mate. Of the fowl of the heavens as well seven pairs, male and female, to keep seed alive over all the earth. For in seven days’ time I will make it rain on the earth forty days and forty nights and I will wipe out from the face of the earth all existing things that I have made.” And Noah did all that the LORD commanded him. *Noah was six hundred years old when the Flood came, water over the earth.* And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives came into the ark because of the waters of the Flood. Of the clean animals and of the animals that were not clean and of the fowl and of all that crawls upon the ground two each came to Noah into the ark, male and female, as God had commanded Noah. And it happened after seven days, that the waters of the Flood were over the earth. 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 wellsprings of the great deep burst and the casements of the heavens were opened. And the rain was over the earth forty days and forty nights. That very day, Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah’s wife, and the three wives of his sons together with them, came into the ark, they as well as beasts of each kind and cattle of each kind and each kind of crawling thing that crawls on the earth and each kind of bird, each winged thing. They came to Noah into the ark, two by two of all flesh that has the breath of life within it. And those that came in, male and female of all flesh they came, as God had commanded him, and the LORD shut him in. And the Flood was forty days over the earth, and the waters multiplied and bore the ark upward and it rose above the earth. And the waters surged and multiplied mightily over the earth, and the ark went on the surface of the water. And the waters surged most mightily over the earth, and all the high mountains under the heavens were covered. Fifteen cubits above them the waters surged as the mountains were covered. And all flesh that stirs on the earth perished, the fowl and the cattle and the beasts and all swarming things that swarm upon the earth, and all humankind. All that had the quickening breath of life in its nostrils, of all that was on dry land, died. And He wiped out all existing things from the face of the earth, from humans to cattle to crawling things to the fowl of the heavens, they were wiped out from the earth. And Noah alone remained, and those with him in the ark. And the waters surged over the earth one hundred and fifty days.

**8.** And God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark. And God sent a wind over the earth and the waters subsided. And the wellsprings of the deep were dammed up, and the casements of the heavens, the rain from the heavens held back. And the waters receded from the earth little by little, and the waters ebbed. At the end of a hundred and fifty days the ark came to rest, on the seventeenth day of the seventh month, on the mountains of Ararat. The waters continued to ebb, until the tenth month, on the first day of the tenth month, the mountaintops appeared. And it happened, at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark he had made. And he let out the raven and it went forth to and fro until the waters should dry up from the earth. And he let out the dove to see whether the waters had abated from the surface of the ground. But the dove found no resting place for its foot and it returned to him to the ark, for the waters were over all the earth. And he reached out and took it and brought it back to him into the ark. Then he waited another seven days and again let the dove out of the ark. And the dove came back to him at eventide and, look, a plucked olive leaf was in its bill, and Noah knew that the waters had abated from the earth. Then he waited still another seven days and let out the dove, and it did not return to him again. And it happened in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the waters dried up from the earth, and Noah took off the covering of the ark and he saw and, look, the surface of the ground was dry. And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was completely dry. And God spoke to Noah, saying, “Go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons’ wives, with you. All the animals that are with you of all flesh, fowl and cattle and every crawling thing that crawls on the earth, take out with you, and let them swarm through the earth and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.” And Noah went out, his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him. Every beast, every crawling thing, and every fowl, everything that stirs on the earth, by families, came out of the ark. And Noah built an altar to the LORD and he took from every clean cattle and every clean fowl and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled the fragrant odor and the LORD said in His heart, “I will not again damn the soil on humankind’s score. For the devisings of the human heart are evil from youth. And I will not again strike down all living things as I did. As long as all the days of the earth— seedtime and harvest and cold and heat and summer and winter and day and night shall not cease.”

**9.** And God blessed Noah and his sons and He said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. And the dread and fear of you shall be upon all the beasts of the field and all the fowl of the heavens, in all that crawls on the ground and in all the fish of the sea. In your hand they are given. All stirring things that are alive, yours shall be for food, like the green plants, I have given all to you. But flesh with its lifeblood still in it you shall not eat. And just so, your lifeblood I will requite, from every beast I will requite it, and from humankind, from every man’s brother, I will requite human life. He who sheds human blood by humans his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made humankind. As for you, be fruitful and multiply, swarm through the earth, and hold sway over it.” And God said to Noah and to his sons with him, “And I, I am about to establish My covenant with you and with your seed after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the fowl and the cattle and every beast of the earth with you, all that have come out of the ark, every beast of the earth. And I will establish My covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the Flood, and never again shall there be a Flood to destroy the earth.” And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I set between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for everlasting generations: My bow I have set in the clouds to be a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth, and so, when I send clouds over the earth, the bow will appear in the cloud. Then I will remember My covenant, between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters will no more become a Flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud and I will see it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures, all flesh that is on the earth.” And God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.” And the sons of Noah who came out from the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Ham was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth spread out. And Noah, a man of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard. And he drank of the wine and became drunk, and exposed himself within his tent. And Ham the father of Canaan saw his father’s nakedness and told his two brothers outside. And Shem and Japheth took a cloak and put it over both their shoulders and walked backward and covered their father’s nakedness, their faces turned backward so they did not see their father’s nakedness. And Noah woke from his wine and he knew what his youngest son had done to him. And he said, “Cursed be Canaan, the lowliest slave shall he be to his brothers.” And he said, “Blessed be the LORD the God of Shem, unto them shall Canaan be slave. May God enlarge Japheth, may he dwell in the tents of Shem, unto them shall Canaan be slave.” *And Noah lived after the Flood three hundred and fifty years. And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years. Then he died.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Verses** | **Yahwist (or non-Priestly)** | **Priestly** |
| 6:5-8 | Introduction: humanity's wickedness, God regrets creating, announces decision to destroy; Noah's righteousness. |  |
| 6:9-22 |  | Introduction: Noah's righteousness, humanity's wickedness, God's decision to destroy; Ark described, Covenant described, 1 pair of all animals, Noah does as God commands. |
| 7:1-5 | 7 pairs of clean animals, 1 pair unclean; 7 days to gather animals; Noah does as God commands. |  |
| 7:6 |  | Noah's age: 600 years |
| 7:7-10 | Noah enters Ark with animals after 7 days |  |
| 7:11 |  | Year 600, month 2, day 17: firmament breaks, waters fall from above and rise from below. |
| 7:12 | Rains 40 days and 40 nights. |  |
| 7:13-16a |  | Noah and family and animals enter Ark on same day as flood begins. |
| 7:16b-7:17a | Flood lasts 40 days and nights. |  |
| 7:18-21 |  | Waters rise, all creatures destroyed. |
| 7:22-23 | All creatures destroyed. |  |
| 7:24-8:5 |  | Flood lasts 150 days; God remembers Noah, fountains and floodgates closed, waters recede; Month 7 day 17, Ark grounds on mountains of Ararat. |
| 8:6-12 | After 7 days Noah opens window, sends out raven, dove, dove, 7 days between flights |  |
| 8:13-19 |  | Year 601, month 1, day 1: Noah opens cover; ground begins to dry; Month 2, day 27, dry land appears, Noah and family and animals exit, animals begin to multiply |
| 8:20-22 | Noah builds altar, sacrifices clean animals, God smells sweet aroma, promises not to destroy again. |  |
| 9:1-17 |  | Noah and family told to multiply, given animals to eat; Covenant established, rainbow as sign, God promises not to flood again. |