

Five Reasons Noah's Ark Did not Land on Mt. Ararat; Five Reasons Why It Did Land On Cudi Dagh

by

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Five Reasons Why Noah's Ark Did Not Land on Mt. Ararat

I was once was a strong advocate of Mt. Ararat/Agri Dagh as the landing place of Noah's Ark. It was the highest mountain in the area and there seemed to be a plethora of astonishing eyewitness accounts from natives and World War II soldiers. I was so convinced that I made two trips to the spectacular mountain in the 80's and climbed to it's summit. However, in the process of evaluating the evidence, I was puzzled by contradictory nature of the alleged eyewitnesses. This set me on a quest to evaluate the evidence from ancient history. These facts and other matters brought me to a complete change of mind where I had to reject the Mt. Ararat thesis for the five following reasons:

The First Reason

The Claim that Noah's Ark landed on Mt. Ararat/Agri Dagh was fairly unknown in antiquity. The earliest known reference to that geographical site is from Philostorgius who wrote a history of the church in the first part of the fifth century.¹ His twelve volume history has not survived, but Photius, a patriarch of Constantinople, summarized it in the ninth century. There

¹Philostorgius, *Epitome of the Ecclesiastical History of Philostorgius, Compiled by Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople*. trans. Edward Walford (London: Henry G. Bohn, York Street, Covent Garden, MDCCCLV). Very little is known about Philostorgius (368-439 A.D.). He was born in Cappadocia and moved to Constantinople at twenty years of age. He was a known heretic and follower of Arius. Photius, who summarized his work, is not his admirer.

can be little doubt, however, that Philostorgius was referring to the 17,000 ft. Mt. Ararat. He says:

The Euphrates, however, to all appearance, takes its rise among the Armenians; in this region stands the Mount of Ararat, so called even to the present day by Armenians,—the same mount on which the Holy Scripture says the ark rested. Many fragments of wood and nails of which the ark was composed are said to be still preserved in those localities.....²

There are several things that are cause for puzzlement and wonder about this quote: (1) He does not give us a source, and if he did, Photius does not relate it; (2) the Holy Scripture, which he invokes, does not say the ark landed on a specific mountain as he claims; (3) Armenians, at least from literature we know, have never referred to that mountain by that name in antiquity;³ (4) Faustus, the earliest Armenian historian, writing in the fourth century, in his account of Jacob of Nisibis' quest for a piece of the ark, was clearly not referring to the Mt. Ararat of today;⁴ (5) The reference to "fragments of wood," and "nails" is curious. We do not know of any reference with these details from the fifth or before the fifth century. It is also interesting that he does not refer to an intact ark.

Since there are no prior references, and none for several hundred years after Philostorgius, and given his penchant for strange ideas about geographical references, it is hard to give this fifth

² *Philostorgius*, Book III, Chapter 8.

³ Faustus, from the fourth century, refers to Ararat as *Masis*. See: Nina G. Garsoian, *The Epic Histories* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 96. Lazar P'arpec'i, writing in the late fifth century refers to Ararat as *Masis*. Robert W. Thompson, trans. *The History of Lazar P'arpec'i* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1991), 178. Also, Moses Khorenats'i, the Armenian historian, refers to Masis many times; never as "Ararat." Robert W. Thompson, trans. *Moses Khorenats'i. History of the Armenians* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978). See especially n12, p. 91.

⁴ Garsoian, *The Epic Histories*, 252-253. See n.3.

century reference much credence.⁵ After Philostorgius we have no indisputable references to Ararat/Agri Dagh as the landing place until the twelfth century. According to Lloyd Bailey: “By the twelfth century, however, it is clear that many Armenians had come to assume that Faustus’ story was about an area near Agri Dagi.”⁶ He refers to a reference from the medieval encyclopedist, Vincent of Beauvais (ca.1184-1264). In this passage, Vincent is quoting an earlier encyclopedist, Isidore of Seville (ca. 560-636), who says: “Ararat is a mountain in Armenia, where historians testify that the ark came to rest after the flood. So even to this day wood remains of it are to be seen there.”⁷ Vincent goes on then to identify the “Ararat” of Isidore with Mt. Ararat/Agri Dagh and the traditions noted earlier by Faustus. This I think, is an unwarranted projection as Cudi Dagh has also been referred to as “Mt. Ararat.”⁸ However, it is safe to say that by this time, the twelfth to the thirteenth centuries, the traditions surrounding the landing of Noah’s Ark have traveled north to Mt. Ararat/Agri Dagh. When Marco Polo traveled past Mt. Ararat on his way to China in the thirteenth century he wrote in his account of his travels:

In the heart of Greater Armenia is a very high mountain, shaped like a cube, on which Noah’s ark is said to have rested, whence it is called the Mountain of Noah’s Ark. It is so broad and long that it takes more than two days to go around it. On the summit the snow lies so deep all the year round that no one can ever climb it; this snow never entirely

⁵ In the biographical notice of Philostorgius his translator says : “ (H)e has inserted in his narrative many curious geographical and other details about remote and unknown countries.... He was rather inclined to credulity...” Edward Walford.

⁶ Lloyd R. Bailey, *Noah* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989) , 77-78. We do not agree with Bailey’s conclusion that Vincent was referring to Mt. Aragats. While it is a mountain in Armenia, it is to the north of Ararat and not on the Araxis River.

⁷ John Warwick Montgomery, *The Quest of Noah’s Ark* 2nd ed, revised and enlarged (Minneapolis, MN: Dimension Books, 1974), 79-80.

⁸Faustus clearly identifies Mt. Ararat as a mountain in the canton of Korduk. Garsoian, *Epic Histories*, 77.

melts, but new snow is for ever falling on the old.⁹

The modern search for Noah's Ark on Mt. Ararat/Agri Dagh began in 1948 when an American responded to accounts of a "ship-like" object high on the slopes of Ararat.¹⁰ The search for Noah's Ark on Ararat has been chronicled in several books.¹¹

In summary, the **first reason** why I reject Mt. Ararat/Agri Dagh is that it has inadequate testimony from antiquity. The name Mt. Ararat is a rather late appellation. This area south of the Araxis River in antiquity was known as the "canton of Airarat/Ararat." It seems obvious that the name of the district was at some point transferred to the spectacular mountain.¹² In recent times, many read Genesis 8:4 and incorrectly assume it refers to this singular mountain. Given that it is the highest mountain in the region adds to that conclusion.

The Second Reason

A **second reason** I reject Ararat/Agri Dagh as the landing place of the ark is for geological reasons. Ararat is a complex volcano without any definitive evidence of ever having been submerged under water. Fossiliferous rocks are nowhere to be found, though they are abundant

⁹ Robert Latham, ed and trans. *Marco Polo, The Travels* (London: The Folio Society, 1968), 34. Not sure how Marco Polo got a cube out of a cone!

¹⁰ Violet Cummings, *Has anybody Really seen Noah's Ark?* (San Diego, CA: Creation-Science Research Center, 1982), 6. See also this account: A.J. Smith, *On the Mountains of Ararat: The Quest of Noah's Ark* (Apollo, PA: West Publishing Company, 1950). Smith's account of the mysterious local named "Reshit" has all the earmarks of a tabloid story.

¹¹ Violet M. Cummings, *Noah's Ark Fact or Fable?* (San Diego, CA: Creation-Science Research Center, 1972); Tim LaHaye and John Morris, *The Ark On Ararat* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc. Publishers, 1976); John Warwick Montgomery, *The Quest for Noah's ark*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Dimension Books, 1974); Violet Cummings, *Has Anybody Really Seen Noah's Ark* (San Diego, CA: Creation-Life Publishers, 1982).

¹² Bailey, *Noah*, 78.

in the hills surrounding the mountain. All this would lead one to believe that the mountain was formed after the deluge. It is often claimed that there is sedimentation found on the mountain but it can easily be shown that this layering is the result of volcanic and not from alluvial action? Another claim is the presence of pillow lava, however, if it can be shown that it is indeed pillow lava, it need not be formed exclusively from extrusion under water, but can be formed from ice and snow. Those advocating this mountain as the landing place often cite the fact that the ark's preservation is due to it's being encased in ice for millennia. This is certainly within the realm of possibility as we know from other renown discoveries. Whole forests have been preserved and a man's body has been preserved in a glacier in Switzerland. Being made of durable wood covered with some kind of preservative and frozen in ice would certainly do the job. However, almost all of the ice fields on Ararat are in the form of moving glaciers which would have the action of crushing and pulverizing any wooden object the size of the ark. Pockets of alleged stationary ice have been searched with sub-surface radar with no current, definitive results.

The lack of evidence that Ararat was once submerged is a stubborn fact that still awaits explanation from ark hunters.

A Third Reason

A **third reason** why I reject Ararat/Agri Dagh as the landing place of the ark is for geographical reasons. Ararat and Little Ararat are volcanos that are isolated and off by themselves in a plain. They are not part of the great mountainous range known in antiquity as "the mountains of Urartu." Great care must be given to the wording of Genesis 8:4 if we have a

high view of Scripture. The text does not say “the kingdom of Urartu,” or, “the country of Urartu.” From all the evidence, geographical and historical, it would appear conclusive that the passage is referring to a geographical area. The biblical mention of “Urartu” is the earliest known mention of this geographical term (late fifteenth century BC).¹³ About two hundred years later during the reign of Shalmaneser I (1263-1234 BC), a region of “Uruatri” is mentioned in Assyrian cuneiform literature where it almost certainly refers to a geographical region.¹⁴ It is not until the ninth century BC that Urartu becomes a united kingdom and a regional power. It is Zimansky’s opinion that “Urartu” is an Assyrian word as the Urartians never refer to themselves by that designation. He writes:

Even for the Assyrians, who coined the term “Urartu” had more than one meaning. It was originally a geographical designation of a land that contained several independent political entities. Later it became the name of a unified state which covered a much larger expanse.¹⁵

Piotrovsky also believes it is an Assyrian word. He says: “it had no ethnic significance but was most probably a descriptive term (perhaps meaning ‘the mountainous country.’).¹⁶

In their own literature the Urartians refer to themselves as the “Biainili,” and “Nairi” as their designation for their kingdom. Zimansky, again argues:

The mountainous areas north of Assyria were of little consequence to the urban societies in the greater Mesopotamian sphere before the ninth century, except as a source of raw materials such as obsidian, and as the place from which various peoples migrated.

¹³For a discussion about the date Genesis was written see: Ronald F. Youngblood, *The Book of Genesis*. 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 14.

¹⁴Paul E. Zimansky, *Ecology And Empire: The Structure of the Urartian State* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1982), 4.

¹⁵ Zimansky, *Ecology and Empire*, 9.

¹⁶Boris B. Piotrovsky, *The Ancient Civilization of Urartu* (New York: Cowles Book Company, 1969) , 43.

Whatever polities existed there in the late second millennium were so inconsequential as to leave few archaeological traces.¹⁷

The great linguist, A. H. Sayce, postulates that

Urardhu, therefore, contracted into Urdhu, would have been the designation of the highlands of Armenia among the Babylonians as early as the 16th or 17th century B.C. Possibly it was then applied only to the mountainous country immediately to the north of Assyria, and was not extended to the districts further north until the Assyrians had become better acquainted with this region, and the native names of its several states.¹⁸

Therefore, it is highly unlikely that Genesis 8:4 could be referring to the area of present-day Agri Dagh, a volcanic mountain that is far to the north of the mountains of Ararat/Urartu.

A Fourth Reason

A **fourth reason** I reject this site as the landing place has to do with the so-called eyewitnesses. Since the start of the ark search (mostly Americans) in the mid twentieth century, several dozen claims have been made about seeing the ark on Ararat/Agri Dagh.¹⁹ In almost every case, where possible, these claims have been shown to be troublesome, contradictory, stretching credulity. With good research and detective work most have been proven to be untrue. Two or three outright hoaxes have misled many. Perhaps the greatest hoax of all was an alleged discovery by the Russian military during the First World War. According to the story, a Russian plane spotted a large black submarine-like object embedded in a frozen lake high on Mt. Ararat.

¹⁷ Paul E. Zimansky, “*The Kingdom of Urartu in Eastern Anatolia*,” in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* Vol. II., ed. Jack M. Sasson. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Son, 1995), 1136.

¹⁸ A. H. Sayce, “*The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Van, deciphered and translated.*” *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* xiv, (1882), 392ff.

¹⁹ A list can be found at this website: <http://www.noahsarksearch.com/Eyewitnesses.htm>. (accessed: 8/1/2013).

Later, a large contingent of the Russian soldiers with much difficulty, managed to get to the site in the middle of winter and found it was indeed Noah's Ark. Pieces of wood and a detailed report were supposedly sent to the Czar, but alas, the country was besieged by the Bolsheviks and both the wood and the report turned up missing. Much detective work was done and the story was traced to a man in California who wrote the story in a very small newsletter/magazine.²⁰ The story, however, was reprinted in tract form and literally went around the world several times, and still surfaces occasionally today. I know this story to be false because I had correspondence with the author who confessed that the story had no historical reality.

During WWII several more stories surfaced about pilots seeing large black rectangular objects on the mountain during flyovers. Personally, I believe some of the pilots may have been telling the truth when they described large barge-like objects on the mountain. Being a volcanic mountain, and given the right shadows and lighting, large blocks of basalt can easily be mistaken for a ship-like object. The author has several photos of these phantom arks; some are absolutely breath-taking in appearance.

There is also another matter: on the southwest side of the mountain, as viewed from the village of Dogbayazit, one can see a large black spot near the peak of the mountain. When I first saw it, I stared at it for hours. What this anomaly is, or what caused it, is not certain. Acquaintances of mine have climbed to this spot and testify that it is definitely not any kind of

²⁰The original story was published by Floyd M. Gurley in: *New Eden* magazine in the March, 1939 issue. In a letter dated June 21, 1989, in possession of the author, Mr. Floyd M. Gurley confesses that the article was fiction.

wooden structure! The locals call it the “eye of the bird,” and it certainly could have contributed to the rumors and stories that the ark of Noah lay at the summit.

The story from WWII that has received the most attention came not from a pilot but from a soldier who claimed he was taken to see the ark by locals who wanted to repay a favor. This American soldier was a road builder stationed in, Hamadan, Iran. This sensational story was the feature of one book and retold in several others.²¹ The problems with the story are many. First, the man in question has changed his story several times in the telling after being questioned by incompetent interrogators. Secondly, many of his details are in contradiction to reality. Again, this author has had personal interaction with this man and did not find him credible.

A more recent hoax about a discovery on Mt. Ararat has a local claiming that the inside of a cave is actually chambers in a buried Ark. He managed to convince a Chinese group from Hong Kong and several others who continue to perpetuate this story.²²

A Fifth Reason

There is a **fifth reason** why I have to reject Mt. Ararat, and that is the fact that this large object has not been found despite great efforts. The mountain, though large and forbidding, is not infinite. A Turkish officer, a commando, told me he has taken his men all over the mountain

²¹ Don Shockey, *Agri-Dagh: The Painful Mountain* (Fresno, CA: Pioneer Publishing Company, 1986); Robert Cornuke, *Ark Fever* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2005). 11ff.

²² The group is from Hong Kong and their organization is known as: *Noah's Ark Ministries, International* (NAMI)

in maneuvers and has never seen anything resembling the ark . I also know of one native from a village at the foot of the mountain who walked all the way into the Ahora Gorge then climbed out.²³ He has the photographic proof. Thousands, no, hundreds of thousand of dollars have been spent on fixed wing aircraft and helicopters flights. One enterprising searcher hired a plane with an ultra high resolution mapping camera and then hired a professional volcanologist from NASA to study the 900 overlapping (stereo pairs), 10 inch by10 inch transparencies magnified 300 times in three dimensions. Nothing unnatural was identified.²⁴ Currently, satellite data are being employed with no positive results as well, though there are at times tantalizing objects visible which succeed in setting off “ark fever.” Most of the contemporary searchers still continue the search on Ararat because of a refusal to give up the hope that the biblical artifact will be found intact. Enthusiasm dims with some if the obverse would be reality since no one would then believe the claims. Since the many eyewitnesses always claim to have seen it intact, or in several pieces, the quest continues. A tangible ship-like object is always described. The possibility that Noah’s Ark could be found intact and witnessed by the world dies hard.

Five Reasons Why the Ark Landed on Cudi Dagh

The First Reason

Turning now to the more positive: I believe there is an abundance of evidence supporting the final berth of Noah’s Ark right on the very southern edge of the Urartian mountain chain

²³ Ahmet Ali Arslan, Ph.D

²⁴This project was carried out by the Mount Ararat Research Foundation headed by Scott Van Dyke, a businessman in Houston, TX.

overlooking the Cizre Plain. There is a consensus of very diverse ancient witnesses that point to Cudi Dagh. There are pagan, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic sources, that corroborate this conclusion.

A Pagan Source

A very important pagan reference to this southern site in the mountains of Urartu comes from Berossus, a Babylonian high priest of Bel, a historian from the early third century BC. His work: *Babyloniaca*, has only survived as it has been quoted from several sources. The most important of these was by the late first century writer, Polyhistor.²⁵ Berossus wrote his history in Greek but there is evidence that he was also competent in both Akkadian and Sumerian.²⁶ His account of the flood draws heavily on the Babylonian flood account as one would expect. He notes that: “A portion of the ship which came to rest in Armenia still remains in the mountains of the Korduaians of Armenia, and some of the people, scraping off pieces of bitumen from the ship, bring them back and use them as talismans.”²⁷ When Josephus, a first century Jewish historian, quotes from Berossus about the ark’s final resting place, he makes one subtle change. He has “A portion of the of the vessel still survives in Armenia on the “mountain”(singular) of the Cordyaeans...” It is not known if the singular “mountain” (orei) is his own interpolation, or if it is in the original of what he’s quoting from. Hence, the Josephus version makes it a very

²⁵Many of the people who quote Berossus did not have an original copy either, but quote sources who themselves are no longer extant. For example, Eusebius quotes from Polyhistor whose writings are lost.

²⁶G. Komoroczy. “Berossus And The Mesopotamian Literature,” *Acta Antiqua* 22, (1973): 127-128.

²⁷Stanley Mayer Burstein, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus* (Malibu, CA: Udena Publications, 1978). 21. This Burstein work represents the most complete effort to restore *The Babyloniaca*.

specific mountain.

It is a known fact that the Babylonian Flood story puts the landing place of the Ark on Mt. Nisir/Nimus which most scholars claim is Pir Omar Gudrun in modern day Iraq.²⁸ What I find fascinating is that Berossus, apparently having the cuneiform tablets in front of him, knows that it gives him a different mountain, but instead gives the one that is more in agreement with the Hebrew Bible! Why he does this is an interesting question for which we have no answer. The mountain of the Babylonian flood account, Pir Omar Gudrun, is in the *Zagros Mountains*. They conceivably could be called the “Kurdish mountains,” but Armenia never extended that far south east, so it cannot be said that the ark landed on a “Kurdish mountain in Armenia.” And consequently, we can also add: while Kurdish tribesman currently live in villages surrounding contemporary Mt. Ararat/Agri Dagh, and have for hundreds of years, it was not so at the time of this reference (third century BC). It was not until the tenth and eleventh centuries AD that the Kurdish people migrated there from the northern parts of Mesopotamia!²⁹

Three Jewish Sources

The first source are the Jewish targums which were paraphrases of the Old Testament Hebrew in the Aramaic language. These were made for the Jews after they returned from the captivity in Babylon. After their long captivity many of the Jews forgot their native tongue

²⁸Ephraim A. Speiser, “Southern Kurdistan In the Annals of Ashurnasirpal and Today,” *The Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* .VIII: 18.

²⁹ Sargis Haroutyunian, “Armenian Epic Tradition and Kurdish Folklore,” *Iran & the Caucasus* 1 (1997): 88.

(Hebrew) only understanding the language of their former captors. These paraphrases were originally oral and may have begun as early as the fifth century BC (Nehemiah 8:8). They were rather loose paraphrases, and in some instances, were like running commentaries. There is a definite tendency to update place names. These targums later attained a fixed form as early as the first century AD and were written down and preserved.³⁰ They give Bible scholars a valuable tool for textual criticism and interpretation. Two of these targums: Onkelos, and pseudo-Jonathan, put the landing place of the Ark in the Qardu (Kurdish) mountains. It should be remembered, some of the Jews were taken by their captors to these very mountains as well as in the vicinity of northern Mesopotamia. They probably did not know of a kingdom of Urartu/Ararat since by that time the kingdom ceased to exist around the seventh century BC. In addition, at Isa. 37:38 these targums also update the place the sons of Sennacherib escaped to: to the “mountains of Kardu.”

A second source is the *Pseudepigrapha*, a body of Jewish literature from about 300 BC to 300 AD.³¹ Portions and fragments of this material were found in Qumran, and several of these books are quoted in the New Testament. This body of literature is notorious for the details it adds to the Flood story. The book of *Jubilees*, known as *Little Genesis*, has been dated as early as the second century BC and was undoubtedly written originally in Hebrew.³² It has the Ark

³⁰F.F. Bruce, *The Books and The Parchments*, revised ed. (Westwood, NJ: Fleming Revell, 1963), 134.

³¹There is some definite Christian influence in the texts with later dates.

³²James H. Charlesworth, editor. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol.2 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 43-44.

landing on “Lubar,” one of the mountains of Ararat.”³³ It also notes that Noah planted a vine on this mountain and each of his sons built cities there, naming them after their wives.³⁴ The mystery is the location of a mountain named “Lubar.” It seems to have originated with *Jubilees*. Christian writer, Epiphanius, and others, along with Midrashic literature, seemingly copy this tradition. Cassuto thinks the possibility ought to be considered that “Lubar” is identical to “Baris” in the Nicholas of Damascus account (quoted by Josephus: see below).³⁵ Sayce is more certain that they are one and the same.³⁶ *The Genesis Apocryphon*, another book from this same body of literature, shows a great deal of similarity to *Jubilees* but is fragmentary at a crucial spot. It mentions that Noah planted a vine and was buried on Mt. Lubar. The assumption is that it also would have the Ark landing on the same Mt. Lubar.

The *Sibyline Oracles* has the Ark landing on a

....certain tall lofty mountain on the dark mainland of Phrygia. It is called Ararat. When all were about to be saved on it, thereupon there was a great heartfelt longing. There the springs of the great river Marsyos had sprung up. In this place the Ark remained on lofty summits when the waters had subsided.³⁷

The reference to Phrygia is certainly problematic for the view being presented. There are so many unknowns. Interestingly enough, Julius Africanus, a Christian writer of the second and

³³Charlesworth, *Jubilees*, 5:29; 7:1

³⁴Charlesworth, *Jubilees*, 7:17

³⁵U. Cassuto, *A Commentary On The Book of Genesis*, Part One (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1964), 105.

³⁶Sayce, 389, n.1.

³⁷Charlesworth, *Sibyline Oracles*, 1:261-266.

third centuries, may have been influenced by the *Sibylline Oracles*. He notes that “the Ark settled on the mountains of Ararat, which we know to be in Parthia(emphasis mine); but some say that they are at Celanene of Phrygia. He gives the view he knows to be true, but wants his readers to know that there is another opinion out there. Indeed, in the second and third centuries the mountains of Ararat, that range of mountains just north of the old kingdom of Assyria, were under Parthian rule; it would have been proper to say that the Ark landed in Parthia at that time. The author has personally visited this area and has seen the archaeological evidence of the previous Parthian dominance.³⁸ It lasted until the third century AD.

A third important Jewish source is the first century historian, Josephus. He is one of the sources of the quote of the pagan priest, Berossus mentioned above. In the course of his writings he mentions the landing site of Noah’s Ark on four other occasions.³⁹ What is notable is that he updates “Urartu” with “Armenia,” but later makes it more specific as being “ in Armenia on a Kurdish mountain.” Josephus quotes a number of what he calls “barbarian” or “pagan” sources.⁴⁰ Some want to point out the seeming contradictions in Josephus’ account of the flood.⁴¹ For example, he quotes Nicholas of Damascus who has a large number of people surviving the flood on a high mountain, presumably the same mountain where the ark landed. He is also

³⁸I am referring to a rock carving in Kasrik Canyon. Aglaze identifies it as Parthian. See Guillermo Algaze, “A new Frontier: First Results of the Tigris-Euphrates Archaeological Reconnaissance Project, 1988.” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 48, no. 4 (Oct. 1989): 250.

³⁹ Here are all five references: *Antiquities*: I:90-92; I:93-94; I:95; 20:24-25; *Against Apion*, 1:130.

⁴⁰Josephus says others who corroborate Berossus’ testimony are: Hieronymus the Egyptian, Mnaseas, Nicholas of Damascus, and many more (his words). *Antiquities*, 1:94.

⁴¹Bailey, 66.

accused of giving several different sites for the landing place. While this is certainly a possibility, we think Josephus is just giving us the results from his extensive research, and it also may be that he is just trying to be precise. When we carefully examine his various locations we believe it is entirely possible to harmonize the various accounts. The Kurdish mountain was indeed located within the Kingdom of Armenia during the first century. The quote from Nicholas is a little more difficult. He says “There is above the country of Minyas in Armenia a great mountain called Baris, where as the story goes, many refugees found safety at the time of the flood, and one man, transported upon an ark, grounded upon the summit, and relics of the timber were for long preserved . . .”⁴² Minni, one of the three kingdoms mentioned in Jer. 51, is usually located south of Lake Urmia in what is now Iran. Nicholas not only has a story that contradicts the Old Testament, but we have no conclusive evidence of this mountain he calls “Baris.” Some have suggested it refers to “Lubar” as noted above; he may also be wrong on the location of the Ark’s final berth. He’s is not far off; he has the general vicinity, and wherever he is referring to, it is doubtful he is referring to Agri dagh which lies to the northwest. I also note that he speaks in the past tense about the ark’s existence!

On his Fourth mention of the ark’s landing place, Josephus puts it in a country called “Carrae” which was in the kingdom of Adiabene. Scholars of the original text of Josephus believe the “Carrae” here is a corruption and should read “Kardu.” If we assume he was reading some Hebrew text about the kingdom of Adiabene it would have been very easy to confuse the

⁴²1:94-98. The big question mark here is how to translate the (*uper*). It can certainly be translated “above” but it can also be translated “beyond” “about” “over.”

Hebrew letter “daleth” and the “resh.”⁴³ The Jewish kingdom of Adiabene was concentrated to the southeast of the mountains of Urartu with a center in Arbela (present-day Irbil). As is well-known, borders in antiquity were not precise. Since it is a known fact that Jews populated the Cizre plain in the first century, it is highly likely that the kingdom of Adiabene did indeed extend that far north west. We know it included Nisibis which is even further west of Cizre and Cudi Dagh.⁴⁴ Josephus here adds a little caveat that the ark landed in a land where much amomum grows. This is apparently a plant from which a spice is derived known elsewhere in classical literature as “cardomum,” and in Latin as “cardamomum.”⁴⁵ It was native to Media and grows in mountainous areas in that part of the world.

In the fifth reference, Josephus has the ark landing on “the highest mountain in Armenia” in Whiston’s translation. As it stands, this very well could be a reference to the 17,000 ft Mt Ararat. The Kingdom of Armenia by this time did include that northern area. However, it is far from certain that he had that mountain in mind. Thackeray, translates the passage: “it landed on the heights of the mountains of Armenia.” This would make it a non-designated mountain.

Nine Christian Sources

The first is Theophilus, a Bishop of Antioch (later second century), a city not too far removed from the Cudi site. He does not mention it by name, but notes that “the remains are to

⁴³LCL 10:15. See discussion n.b.

⁴⁴Pliny *Natural History*, 6:16

⁴⁵Andrew Dalby, *Dangerous tastes* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 102ff. See also: Pliny, *Natural History Books XII-XVI*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 49ff.

this day to be seen in the Arabian mountains.”⁴⁶ It is not likely that the great Bishop is referring to the mountains of Saudi Arabia. The Greek word “araba”, in the strict sense of the term, means “desert” or “wilderness,” and during the early second century it often referred to the desert areas east of Syria. Cudi Dagh is not directly east of Syria, but if you go east from the northernmost tip of Syria you would be right at Cudi Dagh. It is not a positive directive, but most certainly does not refer to Saudi Arabia or Mt. Ararat.

A second source is Eusebius, a Bishop of Caesaraea in the third century AD, who was also the first great historian of the church. In his two-volume work, *Chronicle*, he notes that a small part of the Ark still remains in the Gordian Mountains.⁴⁷ This seems to be a clear reference to this southern mountain range.

The third Christian witness is St. Ephrem, a Syrian exegete and biblical scholar who wrote in the fourth century that the ark landed in the “mountains of Qardu.”⁴⁸ Ephrem may have also been following early Jewish Aramaic documents such as the Targums. What is interesting, and must carry some weight: he lived in Nisibis, was a student of, and was ordained by the St. Jacob of Nisibis noted in the account of Faustus.

A fourth witness from the fourth and fifth centuries was the great biblical scholar, Jerome.

⁴⁶Arndt and Gingrich (1957), 103

⁴⁷Eusebius, 1818:1:36-37.

⁴⁸Ephraem, *The Armenian Commentary on Genesis Attributed to Ephrem the Syrian*. Trans. Edward G. Mathews, Jr. *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*. Vol. 573. xxx.

He says:

“ ‘Ararat’ is region in Armenia, through which the Araxes flows, of extra-ordinary fertility, lying at the roots of Mount Taurus, which reaches to that point. Therefore the ark, in which Noah and his children were perserved, was borne, on subsidence of the deluge, not to the mountains generally of Armenia which is called Ararat, but to the most elevated summits of Taurus, which overlook the plains of Ararat.”⁴⁹

Jerome seems to be a little confused here, and may have mixed up his sources. Present-day Ararat is indeed located near the Araxes River, but the Taurus Mountains are in southern Turkey and include what we are calling the Urartian Mountains of antiquity.

Fifthly, the Peshitto is a version of the entire Bible made for the Syrian Christians.

Scholars are not sure exactly when it was translated, but it shows up for the first time around the beginning of the fifth century AD. However, Syriac versions of the Pentateuch may have been circulating as early as the middle of the first century.⁵⁰ In Genesis 8:4 it reads ”mountains of Quardu” for the resting place of Noah’s Ark. This version also shows a definite influence from the targums (which were in Aramaic) mentioned above.

A sixth source is Epiphanius, a Bishop of Salamis who was born in Palestine. He was a fierce opponent of heresy in the fourth century AD, and on two occasions he mentions that the Ark landed “in the mountains of Ararat in the midst of Armenia and Gordyene on a mountain called ”Lubar.”⁵¹ In fact, he says, “(T)he remains are still shown, and that if one looks diligently

⁴⁹Jerome, *Opera Sancti Hieronym.* II, 12 Comment in Isaiam.

⁵⁰R.K Harrison, *Introducing the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 241.

⁵¹Epiphanius, *Panarion*, I.i.4.

he can still find the altar of Noah.” He seems to be acquainted with the Jewish writings, notably the tradition of *Jubilees* (noted earlier), in that he puts the Ark specifically on a mountain called “Lubar.” What he adds here, is a slight measure of exactness when he comments that it is in the “midst,” “middle” or “between” Armenia and Gordyene.

The seventh source is the famous preacher, Chrysostom, who was known for his oratory. He was also a patriarch of Constantinople in the fourth century. While he does not get very specific about location, it is notable that he says you can still go there and view the remains. He writes in one of his sermons: “Let us therefore ask them (the unbelieving): Have you heard of the Flood—of that universal destruction? That was not a threat, was it? Did it not really come to pass—was not this mighty work carried out? Do not the mountains of Armenia testify to it, where the Ark rested? And are not the remains of the Ark preserved there to this very day for our admonition?”⁵²

Isidore, an eighth source, was the Archbishop of Seville, Spain. He wrote in the sixth and seventh centuries, and was known as a very careful scholar of the Middle Ages. In his compilation of all knowledge (*summa*) he writes: “Ararat is a mountain in Armenia, where historians testify that the Ark came to rest after the Flood. So even to this day wood remains of it are to be seen there.” He specifically calls the mountain “Ararat,” but because of the early date it is doubtful that he is referring to present-day Mt. Ararat.

⁵²Montgomery, *Quest for Noah's Ark*, 73. Translation is by Montgomery.

For a final Christian witness, I cite Eutychius, a Patriarch of Alexandria in the ninth and tenth centuries. He was of Arabic origin and had a background in medicine before he became a leader in the church. His most important work is *Nazm al-Gewahir (Chaplet of Pearls)*, a history of the world from Adam to 938. He says, “The Ark rested on the mountains of Ararat, that is Jabal Judi near Mosul.”⁵³ Mosul is a city near ancient Nineveh about 130 km (about 81 miles) south of Cudi Dagh. This is a very precise geographical reference. While it is likely that he was influenced by the Quran, he specifically adds the referent, “Mosul.”

As noted earlier, sometime around the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Christian sources begin to point more specifically to Mt. Ararat of the north as the landing place. But what I am arguing in this paper, that prior to that, based on an abundance of historical evidence, the mountain known today as “Cudi Dagh” was in an area that was known in ancient history as in the mountains of Urartu/Ararat; it was also in the Kurdish mountains (spelled in a variety of ways), and in the Armenian mountains. The Kurdish mountainous area was always an enclave in the Urartian mountains, later called the Armenian mountains.

Five Islamic Sources

The Quran, the most important Islamic source, and dating from the seventh century, says: “The Ark came to rest upon Jebel al Judi...”⁵⁴ The modern *Muslim Encyclopedia* is familiar with the early traditions that the Ark came to rest on Cudi Dagh. However, the writer of the article

⁵³Eutychius,41.

⁵⁴Houd 11:44

under *Jebel Judi* believes Mohammed was referring to the Judi Mountains in Saudi Arabia. This is not certain. Mohammed was very familiar with Christian and Jewish traditions, not to mention the fact that he may have traveled to this area during his days as a merchant. In the English translation of the Quran made by George Sale in 1734, a footnote concerning the landing place of the Ark states that the Quran is following an ancient tradition.⁵⁵ At least the following Muslim sources seem to agree:

A second Muslim source is the tenth century scholar and native of Baghdad, Al-Mas'udi, who was known for his extensive travels. "He writes that "...[T]he ark stood on the mount el-Judi. El-Judi is a mountain in the country Masur, and extends to Jezirah Ibn 'Omar which belongs to the territory of el-Mausil. The mountain is eight farasangs (about 48 km) from the Tigris."⁵⁶ The place where the ship stopped, which is on the top of this mountain, is still seen."⁵⁷ This puts one right on Cudi Dagh. Note that remains were still seen in the tenth century, and notice his precision about the location.

A third reference is from Ibn Haukel, also 10th century native of Baghdad, and an early Muslim geographer.⁵⁸ He places Cudi Dagh near the town of Nesbin (modern Nusaybin) and mentions that Noah built a village at the foot of the mountain. Nusaybin is about 120 km west of

⁵⁵Sale 1734: 195, 496; Weil 1846: 54.

⁵⁶ A Farasang or parasang is Persian measurement equal to about 6 Kms. This seems to be longer than actuality.

⁵⁷Davis A. Young, *The Biblical Flood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 32.

⁵⁸Ibn Haukal, *The Oriental Geography of Ebn Haukal, and Arabian Traveler of the Tenth Century*, Trans. William Ousley from Arabic. (London; T. Cadell, 1800).

the site.

A fourth Muslim source, Ibn al-Amid, or al Macin, who wrote a history of the Saracens in the thirteenth century.⁵⁹ He reported that the Byzantine emperor, Heraclius, climbed Mount Judi to see the ark in the seventh century after he conquered the Persians.

For a fifth Muslim source we refer to Zakariya ibn Muhammed al Qazvini, a geographer of the thirteenth century from modern Qazvin, Iran.⁶⁰ He was not a traveler, but compiled his two major works from the writings of others. He reports that wood from the Ark was still seen on Cudi Dagh as late as the Abbasid period (eighth and ninth centuries AD). He reports that wood was removed and used to construct a monastery sometime after that (others say it was a “mosque.”⁶¹

Hence the **first reason**, and the primary reason, why I accept Cudi Dagh as the Landing Place of Noah’s ark is the abundance and diversity of credible ancient witnesses who seem to point to the southern site.

The Second Reason

⁵⁹Erpenius, 1625.

⁶⁰Hamd-Allah Mustawfi, Trans. G. Le Strange, (1919) 184.

⁶¹Benjamin of Tudela reports that wood was taken from the Ark by Omar ben al Khataab to built a Mosque. Marcus Nathan Adler, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela* (London: Oxford University Press, 1907), 33. Guyer thinks the mosque was built in Cizre. Could the mosque in Cizre with the leaning minaret contain wood from the ark? See S. Guyer, *My Journey Down The Tigris* trans. Joseph McCabe. (New York: The Adelphi Company, 1925), 164.

The **second reason** I accept Cudi Dagh is that over the millenniums it has been seen by thousands. Consider the scenario: If an object the size of the ark were parked on the very edge of Cudi Dagh overlooking the Cizre plain such an object would be readily visible for many kilometers. Given that it was made of durable wood and coated with a preservative to retard decay, it could have been visible for several thousand of years. Ancient historians tell us that people of all faiths climbed to the ark for religious reasons every September 14. Religious rites were carried out and stone shrines were built near the site. Wigram says:

Christians of all nations and confessions, Musselmans of both *Shiah* and *Sunni* type, Sabeans, Jews, and even the furtive timid Yezidis are there, each group bringing sheep or kid for sacrifice; and for one day there is a “truce of God’ even in turbulent Kurdistan, and the smoke of a hundred offerings goes up once more on the ancient altar.⁶²

We know that at least two Assyrian kings visited the area as they left proof. The first was Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC), who visited the Cudi Dagh area in the ninth century.⁶³ He attacked several villages in the Cizre area in the second of his two campaigns probably to bring them into submission. Of course in his reports, he says the villages where at the foot of Mt. Nipir, the name the Assyrians give to the mountain. It is an argument from silence since he does not mention the ark. The only point I’m making is that he was definitely there and had a chance.

The second Assyrian king to visit the area was Sennacherib in his fifth campaign (cir. 697BC). He left the proof when he carved eight rock stele at different sites describing his

⁶²W.A. Wigram and Edgar T.A. Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind: Life in Eastern Kurdistan* (London: Adam and Charles Black: 1914) 335.

⁶³Bradley J. Parker, *The Mechanics of Empire* (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Corpus Project: 2001) 47.

exploits in the area. He also makes it clear that he climbed all over the mountains.⁶⁴ The rock carvings are to be found in two canyons near the Cudi Dagh site. He clearly names the mountain as Mt. Nipur. While he never mentions seeing the ark, that should not be surprising since it pertained to what a Jewish god did in judgement. There might be circumstantial evidence that he had a change of mind after his army was defeated by this god in Jerusalem.⁶⁵

A third king, or emperor, to visit the site was Heraclius, the emperor of the Byzantine empire in the early seventh century, reportedly climbed Cudi Dagh to make a pilgrimage to the ark.⁶⁶ Being born in Cappadocia of an Armenian family certainly must include his knowledge of the biblical tradition. While it is speculation, this visit may have taken place after the battle of Nineveh where he defeated the Sassanids in 610. It is likely that he would have passed by the Cizre Plain on his return to Constantinople. No details are known about his visit.

A Third Reason

A third reason I offer to support Cudi Dagh as the landing site may not carry the same weight as the first, but nevertheless, I believe it should be given some consideration. The Biblical Ark story notes that Noah discerned that the flood waters had sufficiently receded when a dove returned with an olive leaf in its beak (Gen. 8:10). Present-day Mt Ararat is situated in such a northern latitude that it is impossible to grow the olive trees which thrive in a much more

⁶⁴See L.W King, *Studies of Some Rock Sculptures and Inscriptions of Western Asia*, in *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, 35: 66-94.

⁶⁵See the paper of Gordon Franz: *Did Sennacherib Worship Wood From Noah's Ark?*

⁶⁶This was reported by Ibn al Amid noted earlier.

temperate climate. However, Olive trees were once grown in the Cizre Plain in antiquity.⁶⁷

A Fourth Reason

A fourth reason to be positive about the Cudi Site is that some possible remains may have been found there. Several sources from antiquity have noted that bronze spikes have been found.⁶⁸ In the mid-twentieth Century a German scientist, Friedrich Bender, found particles of highly decayed wood at the site which also tested positive for asphalt. His carbon dating tests resulted in an ancient date of 4500 BC.⁶⁹ Turkish archaeologist, Muvaffak Uyanik, also reports not only finding wood, but also of finding paleolithic rock carving in the area.⁷⁰ These discoveries are of course inconclusive, but further studies have the potential to be explosive in an increasingly secular world.

A Fifth Reason

Finally, a fifth, and one that is often overlooked, Cudi Dagħ is a much more accessible mountain for disembarking from the ark. Proponents of the Mt. Ararat thesis have yet to give reasonable explanations as to how animals and people could have exited the ark from such an altitude.

⁶⁷F.R. Maunsell, Kurdistan, *The Geographical Journal* Vol. 3, No. 2. Feb. 1894, 87.

⁶⁸Claudius James Rich, *Narrative of a Residence in Koordistan vol. II* (London: James Duncan, Paternoster Row: 1836), 124.

⁶⁹Friedrich Bender, *Wanderungen*, (Geowissenschaften: Sven von Loga, 1995).

⁷⁰Muvaffak Uyanik, trans. Haluk V. Saltikgil *Petroglyphs of South-Eastern Anatolia* (Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck-u Verlagsanstalt), 88.

Conclusion

I believe in the future some of the greatest archaeological discoveries will be made in this region corroborating Cudi Dagh as the site where life on earth began anew after the flood. Traditions about Noah, the Flood, and the Ark, are strong in the area. The first city built after the flood, Themanun, is reputed to be located in the area. Two sites, Sah (Caglayan) and Heshton have been noted as possible sites. The first is strongly supported by ancient evidence according to T.A. Sinclair.⁷¹ The second site is supported by the tradition of the locals. Extensive surveys of potential archaeological sites in the Cizre plain have been carried out by two men: Guillermo Aglaze, of University of Chicago, and later by Bradley Parker of the University of Utah.⁷² Dozens of sites have been identified that await excavation and study. Most of these have been proven to Iron Age, but Aglaze and Sinclair believe much more antiquity lies beneath them.

⁷¹T.A. Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey: An Architectural And Archaeological Survey*, vol. III (London: The Pindar Press, 1989), 387,433.

⁷²Bradley Parker, *The Northern Frontier of Assyria: An Archaeological Perspective*, in *Assyria 1995*, edited by S. Parpola and R.M. Whiting. (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), and Guillermo Aglaze, *A New Frontier: First Results of the Tigris-Euphrates Archaeological Reconnaissance Project, 1988* *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 48, no 4 (Oct, 1989)