

tends between the tableland of Arabia and the highlands of Persia, from the Arabian Sea to Armenia, and includes the long valleys of the Euphrates and Tigris and the Persian Gulf. Long before the flood had attained to its maximum, the voyagers, drifting in the middle of this area, must have been entirely out of sight of land.

The narrator next mentions a wind made by God to pass over the earth, probably the return of the prevalent northwest wind of the region, tending to clear up the atmosphere and beat back the waters, and opposing the northward driftage of the ark, lest it should find a passage over the watershed into the boundless waste of waters which must have covered the Aralo-Caspian depressed area and its extensions to the northward. At the same time the influx of water is assuaged or dammed back, as the expression seems to intimate,* and the waters begin to retire, but with an intermittent motion, "going and returning," perhaps under the influence of tidal or earthquake waves, suggesting the possibility that they might again return in force. At length the ark touches ground, and the voyagers either then or subsequently become aware that they have drifted to a great distance to the northwest, into the tableland of Ararat or Armenia; for the terms used do not import the summit of the traditional Mount Ararat, or perhaps even its near neighborhood. Still, however, the inmates of the ark are surrounded by water, and perhaps enveloped in a dim and hazy atmosphere; and not till two months after touching ground can they see the distant hilltops. Noah, rendered cautious by experience, perhaps dreading a relapse of the deluge or fearing the inconvenience of leaving his refuge while the valleys and plains are still inundated, remains patiently, some time longer; and to reinforce his own uncertain vision, sends out winged messengers to explore. His choice of these shows knowledge of their habits. The raven, strong of wing and feeding on animal matter, could fly far and subsist on floating carrion; but it only made excursions more or less wide and returned for shelter. He now sends out the dove, which finds nothing to subsist or perch upon, and returns to him at once. Seven days later, on a second excursion, it is able to pluck an olive leaf, and the narrator notes that it was not a drift leaf but torn off from the tree. Thus not only the desolate mountain-tops, but the valleys, sufficiently low down to sustain wild olive-trees, are now laid bare, and when the dove is again sent forth it returns no more. The Chaldean record adds, quite gratuitously, a swallow, a sure mark of a later insertion by a city dweller not conversant with nature. The swallow in later times was a familiar bird about human dwellings, and for this reason a protected and even sacred bird; hence it appeared to some temple-dwelling scribe that it

* The word used has been understood as importing "hedging in," as if some obstacle were placed in the way of the further advance of the waters. This might be the elevation of a bank or ridge of land. The question of differential depression and elevation at the time of the deluge is one we have as yet no data for answering. It would require careful observation and leveling along the whole length of the great Tigro-Euphratean lowland, and detailed study of the gravels and other modern deposits on its sides.