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Tonight, one of the Bible's best known stories.

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A catastrophic flood wipes out nearly every living thing on Earth,

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except those saved by Noah and his fabled Ark.

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Human kind become evil and sinful,

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and God decides to sort of hit the reset button.

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Could this tale be more than mere legend?

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And if the answer is yes, what evidence supports it?

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Research has found that a piece of the Ark may actually have survived.

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Now, we explore the theories behind this biblical mystery.

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Sir Walter Raleigh suggested that we should be looking for Noah's Ark

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in a massive mountain range in India.

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Could be that the story of Noah's Ark was actually based in ancient Greece.

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What in the world is a boat doing 13,000 feet up on a mountain in Turkey?

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Was there really a great flood?

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And if so, what became of the Ark?

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Uzengili, Turkey, 1959

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Army Captain Ilhan Derupinar flies an aerial reconnaissance mission for NATO.

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Captain Derupinar is there to take photographs from his plane

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in order to map a remote area in the Turkish Highlands.

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A few years prior, there had been three large earthquakes that altered the terrain,

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so the government wants updated images.

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The flight is routine, until he spots something strange.

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He's flying over basically the middle of nowhere.

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When he sees a startling and unusual formation amongst the rocks below,

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which of course, he photographs.

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When the film is developed, the captain is surprised to see what appears to be

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the remains of a large ship far inland and 6,500 feet above sea level.

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What in the world would a boat be doing way up there?

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He doesn't know it yet, but he may just have stumbled onto the answer,

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some people think, of a great biblical mystery that has been out there for thousands of years.

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The Mystery of Noah's Ark

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The story of Noah's Ark is told in the biblical book of Genesis.

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After God creates the universe and mankind begins with Adam and Eve,

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they go on to populate the earth.

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Ten generations later, Noah's born.

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According to Genesis, during Noah's time, God loses faith in humanity.

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Humankind become evil and sinful, and God sees all this and is very, very displeased by it,

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and he essentially decides to sort of hit the reset button.

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He's going to wipe out all living things that he has created and start afresh.

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God spares Noah and his family on one condition.

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He must build an ark and stock it with pairs of every animal on earth.

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So the ark is a giant ship that's designed to survive this cataclysmic flood that's about to cover the earth.

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God gives Noah extremely detailed instructions on how to build this ark,

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how many floors it should have, how many rooms, what type of wood to use,

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and even its exact dimensions, 515 feet long, 86 feet wide, and 51 feet tall.

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According to the book of Genesis, the flood lasted for 40 days and 40 nights.

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Eventually, as the waters receded back into the earth, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.

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And actually, there is a mountain today called Mount Ararat.

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It's a huge peak in Turkey, and Darupinar's aerial photo is taking just a few miles south of there.

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For centuries, religious scholars and historians view the story of the great flood as a metaphor,

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a warning that God punishes sin.

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But curiously, the flood is also mentioned in both the Torah and the Koran.

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Could these photos be proof that Noah's tale is in fact true?

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Darupinar's photos create a kind of firestorm of controversy and excitement,

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especially when they're featured in a story that Life Magazine puts out in 1960.

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People are super excited because if these photos actually show Noah's ark,

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then they can prove that everything that's written in the Bible about this whole event is actually true.

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This is a historical event that actually happened.

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Inspired by the article, a team of Americans led by Ron Wyatt begins researching the site in the 1970s.

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One of the first things the team learns when they arrive is that the locals call the mountain where the Darupinar site is located, Mount Kuddi.

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And why is this important?

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Well, the Koran also tells the story of Noah's ark, and in the Koran's version, the ark comes to rest on a mountain called Al-Guddi.

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So they think Kuddi is actually Al-Guddi.

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So the team now believes that they're able to connect the site back to the Koran and the Bible.

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Everything seems to be adding up.

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And so they embark on this arduous hike all the way up the mountain, convinced that they're on the right track.

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Near the Darupinar site, they actually discover several very large boulders with holes bored through them.

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And the marine archaeologists who are part of the team are very excited about this because they look at them and they recognize them.

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They say, you know what these are? These are something called drogue stones.

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Drogue stones are ancient anchors.

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Archaeologists have found evidence of drogue stones used as anchors in some of the oldest shipwrecks in Egypt and the Mediterranean.

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So could these stones be the anchors used on Noah's ark?

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Next, the team examines the strange boat-shaped formation with ground penetrating radar.

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While they're performing the scan, the team is excited to note the measurements of this formation.

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In the Bible, the ark is 300 cubits or about 515 feet long.

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This structure on the mountain is 538 feet long.

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It's almost an exact match and they can't believe this coincidence.

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The scan also reveals what appears to be a man-made internal structure.

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The team believes this could be fossilized remains of chambers inside the ark.

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If this is an ancient ark, it's unlikely that any wood could survive all these thousands of years.

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So this might be an incredible stroke of luck if some of the remains have been petrified or fossilized.

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The team drills down. They take some samples when the samples are analyzed.

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They're found to be nothing other than soil and regular sedimental rock.

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In other words, it seems to be just a natural formation.

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But that doesn't end the hunt for the ark in this area.

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See, there are two things researchers can look for.

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Now, the boat itself is one of them, but another avenue to explore is looking for evidence of a giant flood.

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Large-scale natural disasters leave traces behind that can last thousands of years.

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And interestingly enough, research has found that a massive flood may indeed have taken place

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and it happened right near where Darupinar's photograph was taken in Turkey.

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In 1997, a team of geologists, geophysicists and oceanographers,

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led by a couple of Americans, William Ryan and Walter Pittman,

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analyzed the area around the Black Sea and they find evidence for what they call the Black Sea deluge.

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And at the bottom of the saltwater Black Sea, they find remains of freshwater animals

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dating back to around 5,000 or 6,000 BC.

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And soil samples in bedrock tests also prove that this once was a freshwater lake,

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and then it changed very quickly.

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So the theory runs that about 8,000 years ago, there was a huge glacier,

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and suddenly that glacier collapses.

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It causes this massive upsurge of the Mediterranean Sea that floods all the surrounding areas,

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including what's now the Black Sea.

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Every day, the equivalent of 200 Niagara Falls worth of water floods in

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and this goes on for 300 days straight.

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Madness, the existing freshwater lake that will become the Black Sea,

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it gets bigger and deeper at the rate of one mile a day.

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If you lived in this region in just a matter of hours, your home could be at the bottom of the sea.

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In 2000, marine archaeologists, led by former Navy Officer Robert Ballard,

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find evidence of a flooded ancient human settlement over 300 feet down on the bottom of the Black

Sea.

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The flood was actually the size of Colorado before receding.

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It could have affected thousands upon thousands of people.

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According to the study's authors, any survivors could possibly have passed the flood story down through the generations.

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Now we may have evidence of a great flood right here, and this reignites interest in the Darupinar site.

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The Turkish government sanctions further ground penetrating radar studies in 2014, in 2019, and again in 2021.

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So as the technology advances, the scans get better, and we're finding evidence for straight lines.

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Now any time you have a straight line like that, it could be the result of human occupation.

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Although Turkish authorities currently restrict access to the site,

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some remain hopeful that evidence of the ark may eventually be found.

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So there's pretty good evidence for a large ancient flood here in Turkey,

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and if it turns out that this is a boat that dates to the same time as the flood,

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then pretty good chance that we've found the inspiration for Noah's Ark.

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But this is not the only candidate, not by a long shot.

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When evidence of a massive ancient flood is discovered near the Black Sea in 1997,

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many believe it may be proof the story of Noah's Ark is real.

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This story is famous in three of the world's major Western religions.

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It's in the Jewish and Christian scriptures, and it's also in the Koran.

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But each of these books only give archaic or vague locations for precisely where this might have taken place.

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Names of mountains and regions that have been lost to time.

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But one additional ancient text may hold clues.

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There's an early Roman historian named Josephus who was writing around the same time

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that some of the Bible was written in the first century AD.

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Flavius Josephus is the most important source of information about Judaism outside of the Bible that we have.

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Josephus is actually Jewish, but he's raised and educated in Rome,

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and one of the things he seeks to do in his writings is to kind of explain the Jewish people for a Roman audience.

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The particular book that Josephus writes still exists. It's known as the Antiquities of the Jews.

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In researching it, he talks to other Jewish historians and combs through all these ancient documents as many as he can find.

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Based on his research, Josephus believes he's found a new location for the story of Noah, the Ark, and the Great Flood.

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He believes it all took place in the Kingdom of Armenia.

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While researching his book, Josephus comes across the writings of a Babylonian historian whose name is Borossus.

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Now Borossus is writing between 300 and 200 BC.

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According to Borossus, the remains of Noah's Ark are still around in 200 BC.

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Borossus writes, quote, the Ark, grounded in Armenia, some parts still remains in the mountains of Armenia.

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Armenia is very mountainous, and where would you start to look?

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As amazing as this little kind of piece of historical lore goes, it's still really very vague and unspecified.

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Instead, Josephus tries to track the Ark's pieces.

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Josephus cites Borossus as saying people are going up into these mountains in Armenia to grab

chunks of the ship,

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taking them as keepsakes and amulets.

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Eventually, according to Josephus, most of the Ark ends up in a city in the Kingdom of Armenia called Kare.

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During Josephus' time, he says they're still showing pieces of the Ark to visitors, and if true, this could be a tremendous lead.

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Who knows, maybe today, some traces of the Ark could still be found there.

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But there's one problem.

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In 1260, the Mongols invade and burn down Kare.

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Luckily, the trail doesn't end there.

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According to the Armenian Apostolic Church, a piece of the Ark may actually have survived.

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The Armenian Apostolics believe that in the 4th century AD, a holy man by the name of Jacob of Nisibus,

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climbed a sacred holy mountain in Armenia, and there he found a piece of Noah's Ark.

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Now, once again, we don't know precisely where this mountain is, but we do know what happens to the piece.

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Jacob brings it to the Cathedral of Etchmiadzin in the Armenian Mountains.

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The Cathedral of Etchmiadzin still exists today in Armenia.

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It dates back to the year 301 AD, and it is believed by many to be the oldest Christian cathedral in the world.

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And the cathedral claims to still possess Jacob's piece of Noah's Ark.

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There was an ornate reliquary built in the Cathedral of Etchmiadzin in 1698 that supposedly housed this piece of wood.

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No one's ever tested it, and we don't know how old it is.

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We're not even sure what kind of tree it comes from.

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It is unlikely that it will ever be allowed to leave the cathedral since it is a precious religious relic.

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But maybe someday, science can definitively link it to the Great Flood.

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Even if you accurately date this piece of wood, that doesn't necessarily mean it's part of the story from the Bible.

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But there's possible evidence that Noah's Ark is based on a real story, and it's not because of an object.

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It's because of the story itself.

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Sure enough, there is another ancient flood story.

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This one is older than Christianity, it's older than Islam, and it comes out of ancient Greece.

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The ancient Greek flood story is surprisingly similar to the biblical account.

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So once again, in this you have a man, a flood, and a boat.

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The protagonist of this particular story is called Dukallion, and Dukallion lives in a very mountainous region of Greece called the Peloponnese.

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Zeus, God of Lightning, the leader of the Greek gods, becomes enraged because mankind is corrupt and evil.

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And according to the story, Zeus unleashes a massive deluge with the rivers and the sea flooding everywhere.

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Dukallion builds what is described in the flood story as a giant chest.

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And he and his wife climb into this chest, and they float around through this deluge for nine days and nights.

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Finally, it touches down on solid land on a mountainside.

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And just like Noah, Dukallion and his wife, Pira, are the only human survivors of this great flood.

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Dukallion's flood is one of the key stories in Greek mythology, and it's pretty interesting that this same tale pops up in more than one place.

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But again, it makes you want to ask, is this just a myth?

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Then in the early 1600s, a key new piece of evidence emerges.

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There's a man called Thomas Howard. He's a British nobleman, and he is like many of the elite men of his day.

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He's very interested in going on what's called the Grand Tour.

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That is, he would travel to all the archaic regions, Italy, Greece, what's now Turkey, and he would on this tour bring back as many antiquities as he could possibly carry back with him.

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In 1627, he buys two small pieces of marble with ancient Greek writing on them.

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They're given to a respected English scholar named John Selden, who begins working on a translation of the writing.

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As Selden starts this process of translating these texts, he realizes that he has in his hands something really interesting and really important.

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What he's got is a listing of historical events since ancient antiquity.

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Since these marble pieces originated on the island of Paros, he calls this the Parian Chronicle.

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And right there on the Parian Chronicle, amongst all the other historical events, is an entry for Dukeliin's flood.

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There it is, just carved in stone with a date that may just prove this version of Noah's Ark is actually real.

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When the Parian Chronicle is discovered in ancient Greece in the early 17th century, some scholars believe it could hold the answer to the mystery of Noah's Ark.

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The Bipolkole story could, in fact, be inspired by the story of Dukeliin, or it's possible that they both related to the same historical event.

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Either way, according to the Parian Chronicle, Dukeliin's flood was an actual historical event and it took place in 1581 BC.

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When historians get a look at that date, they get pretty excited because there's a real life event that fits that timeline, which could well have inspired this widespread flood myth.

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There's a huge natural disaster that is so catastrophic.

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Observers as far away as Egypt and even China record its impact.

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It's called the Minoan eruption on the Greek island of Thera.

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Thera is an active volcanic island in the Aegean Sea.

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And right there, some point in the late 1500 BC, this volcano suddenly erupts.

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What's even deadlier than this eruption is actually the tsunami that it creates.

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It has an estimated wave height of 400 feet, radiating out from the eruption site.

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This floods and destroys everything for hundreds of miles in every direction.

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And many believe the destruction of the island of Thera inspired Dukeliin's flood.

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If this is Dukeliin's flood, what became of his version of the ark?

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Depending on which ancient author you believe, there are four possible locations for the mountainside where this chest of Dukeliin comes to rest.

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Of the four, there's only one that shows evidence that dates back to around the 2nd millennium BC.

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They have Parnassus.

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Mount Parnassus features an ancient settlement called Delphi, most known today for its famed oracle.

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If there were any survivors of the flood, this is one of the best candidates for where they might have set up a new town.

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But so far, no ark, no boat, no giant chest has been found in Delphi.

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But could there be an entirely different location where Noah's ark came to rest?

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According to famed 17th century explorer Sir Walter Raleigh, the answer is in the Bible.

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Late in life, Raleigh sets on writing a very ambitious project called The History of the World in five books.

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Sir Walter Raleigh is a Christian and he really kind of goes back to what he sees as the most important historical text.

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And that's the Old Testament starting with the book of Genesis.

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And he takes a close look at the story of Noah's ark.

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During Sir Walter Raleigh's time, people believed that the ark landed in the mountains of Erarath in Turkey.

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But Sir Walter Raleigh came up with a shocking proposal.

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According to his research, the story of Noah and the Great Flood occurred some 2,000 miles away from Turkey in India.

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Raleigh finds several key clues that suggest India.

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The Bible talks about the descendants of the flood traveling to a place called Shinar.

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It's a name for a Mesopotamia from the east, Mikedam.

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Now Walter Raleigh asked the question, why would the descendants of the flood be traveling to Shinar from the east

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if Mount Erarath is to the northwest?

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So he suggested that we should be looking for Noah's ark in a massive mountain range to the east of Mesopotamia.

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And that would be the Himalayas in India.

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The other thing he's looking for is vineyards because in the Bible it says that one of the first things Noah does when he lands is plant a vineyard of grapes.

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Raleigh points to another written account to support his claim.

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Raleigh reads a history of Alexander the Great's conquest in India.

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It says that after a successful campaign in India,

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00:22:28,000 --> 00:22:36,000

quote, did Alexander feast himself and his army 10 days together finding therein the most delicate wine?

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This pretty much seals the deal for Raleigh.

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Of course, today we'd say his argument is a little thin.

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But there may be more substantial evidence to prove his theory.

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Raleigh doesn't seem to be aware of this, but there's a well-known story of a massive flood in Indian folklore.

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The Indian flood legend appears in a sacred text known as the Matsya Purana.

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In this story, Vivasvata Manu is warned by Vishnu, one of the chief Indian deities of a great flood.

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Manu survives the flood by crafting a giant boat and saves humanity.

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Yet again, the similarities to Noah are uncanny, and so we find ourselves wondering, was Raleigh actually right?

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Did the great flood take place in India?

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In 2017, Indian archaeologist Bibi Lal believes he's uncovered the answer.

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Bibi Lal is the former director general of the Archaeological Survey for the state of India,

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and he was doing research in the Indus Valley looking at the civilizations from 4,000 to 1,000 BCE.

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He's actually trying to solve a different mystery.

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This ancient culture describes a great holy river in northwestern India called the Saraswati, but it's not there anymore.

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It's said to have just disappeared.

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He discovers that there was a massive tectonic shift around 2000 BC that suddenly obstructed the Saraswati River's path into a nearby valley, flooding it in a massive delusion.

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Lal believes that this explains both the fate of the Saraswati River and Manu's flood.

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He believes he's proven that Manu's flood is real.

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If correct, could this be the origin story of Noah's infamous flood?

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Bibi Lal passes away, unfortunately, in September of 2022 before he's able to further develop his Indian flood theory.

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But it is kind of interesting to see how this well-known English researcher and this great Indian archaeologist both point to the same conclusion 400 years apart using very different methods.

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The Indus Valley remains a hotbed of archaeological exploration, so who knows what they might turn up?

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00:24:57,000 --> 00:25:04,000

Maybe one day we'll find out that both Raleigh and Lal were right, and this is the location of the great flood.

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00:25:06,000 --> 00:25:11,000

In 1985, the long hunt for Noah's Ark takes a sudden turn.

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When a 4,000-year-old clay tablet is discovered in the attic of a British Air Force veteran, it takes many years to translate.

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But some believe it could finally solve the mystery of where the Bible's great flood took place and where the Ark itself landed.

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In the 1980s, in England, a man by the name of Leonard Simmons passes away.

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Simmons had led a really interesting life, so he had been a Royal Air Force officer and as such, it traveled a lot around the world, around the Mediterranean basin.

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And he had collected on his travels a lot of different artifacts which he brought back to England with him.

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Simmons' son Douglas would like to know what some of these things are, so every so often he'll take one and bring it to the British Museum.

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One day in 1985, he arrives with a tiny clay tablet, maybe four inches high, not very big.

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It's covered front and back in cuneiform script, the writing of ancient Mesopotamia.

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Simmons meets with Dr. Irvin Finkel, who is chief curator for Near Eastern artifacts at the British Museum.

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And when Finkel starts working with this text, he is apparently really amazed.

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Finkel knows that every single scratch on this tablet is gold.

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00:26:33,000 --> 00:26:42,000

His eyes scan the first line and he's almost drowning in excitement at this point, because here in this tiny tablet is an account of a devastating flood.

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Finkel asks Simmons if he can keep the tablet to fully translated, but Simmons declines.

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Finkel really wants a crack at this tablet because he's devoted his life to the study of these cuneiform writings and he knows that this is something special.

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Finkel's department at the British Museum includes over 130,000 of these clay cuneiform tablets, most of which were unearthed in 1852 in Iraq.

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Ancient Mesopotamians used cuneiform essentially to kind of keep track of things like provisioning, how many ducks were needed for a feast, things like that.

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But they also wrote down at least one exciting historical tale, one of my favorites, the epic of Gilgamesh.

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The poem recounts the exploits of King Gilgamesh, who ruled in ancient Mesopotamia, an area near modern day Iraq.

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The story begins with a great flood that is sent by the gods that basically wipes out everything.

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Most scholars believe that the epic of Gilgamesh was written between three and four thousand years ago, and it plays out almost identically to the story of Noah's ark.

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But it's important to remember that this story was written a thousand, if not more, years before the story of Noah's ark.

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So the big question that we have is, was there one original event or were there lots of different floods or different flood stories?

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In the epic of Gilgamesh, an immortal man by the name of Utnapishtim rounds up various animals and brings them with him into an ark.

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Together they survive this catastrophic flood.

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00:28:31,000 --> 00:28:37,000

Utnapishtim's boat comes to rest on a mountain called Mount Namush.

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And this story is so similar to the story of Noah's ark that many scholars believe that the story of Noah's ark is a direct descendant of the story of Utnapishtim and the epic of Gilgamesh.

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That means Noah's great flood actually takes place in Mesopotamia in modern day Iraq.

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When Dr. Finkel first examines Douglas Simmons' clay tablet, he hopes it holds answers that Gilgamesh doesn't.

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The tablet at the British Museum that Gilgamesh is written on is missing some pretty critical lines.

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00:29:12,000 --> 00:29:16,000

It says the ark that you are to build, blank, be equal, blank.

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00:29:16,000 --> 00:29:18,000

It's like going through a tunnel with your cell phone. You miss certain parts.

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00:29:18,000 --> 00:29:21,000

The tablet is broken. The story is incomplete.

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Finkel is hoping that this new find from Simmons' attic can fill in the blanks.

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Finkel finally convinces Douglas Simmons to let him translate the tablet in 2009.

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And as expected, it's a retelling of the Mesopotamian flood story.

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The tablet is so old that he's having a hard time reading it.

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So he has to have it 3D scanned in order to complete the translation.

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In 2013, he's finally ready to publish his findings.

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Finkel believes that this was worth the nearly 30 year wait

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00:29:59,000 --> 00:30:05,000

because what he's got in there is explicit instructions for how to build the ark.

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00:30:05,000 --> 00:30:07,000

I mean, this is incredible.

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00:30:07,000 --> 00:30:14,000

A British tourist buys a souvenir in 1948, puts it in his attic where it sits for decades until his death.

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00:30:14,000 --> 00:30:18,000

And the whole time, he had the ark's instruction manual.

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00:30:18,000 --> 00:30:26,000

The tablet describes in great detail the measurements, materials, and construction process.

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00:30:26,000 --> 00:30:31,000

It reads more clearly than most build-it-yourself furniture instructions these days.

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00:30:31,000 --> 00:30:34,000

It describes how to make the ropes to bind together,

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00:30:34,000 --> 00:30:38,000

how to space out and connect 30 ribs and 3600 stanchions,

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00:30:38,000 --> 00:30:40,000

and how to waterproof it with bitumen.

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The boat built as described is enormous.

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It's 4300 square yards about the size of a modern football field.

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00:30:49,000 --> 00:30:52,000

And its walls are about 20 feet tall.

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00:30:52,000 --> 00:30:59,000

The length of rope that's needed on this boat would stretch from New York all the way to Pittsburgh.

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00:30:59,000 --> 00:31:05,000

And the weird thing about this boat is that it's not rectangular, it's actually circular.

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00:31:06,000 --> 00:31:10,000

This is much different from the vague metaphor of the biblical story of Noah.

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00:31:10,000 --> 00:31:12,000

It also rings much truer.

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00:31:12,000 --> 00:31:13,000

It's more convincing.

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00:31:13,000 --> 00:31:18,000

The level of detail of these instructions, it seems like they're meant to be followed.

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00:31:18,000 --> 00:31:23,000

It seems like this is a literal boat that is supposed to be actually built.

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00:31:23,000 --> 00:31:29,000

So the natural next step, if you've got these instructions, is to build it.

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In 2014, a 4000-year-old tablet, translated by Dr. Irving Finkel,

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00:31:40,000 --> 00:31:45,000

reveals instructions to build a massive boat.

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Many people believe that this tablet is proof that Noah's Ark was real

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00:31:50,000 --> 00:31:55,000

and that it was used to survive the great flood that was in Mesopotamia,

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00:31:55,000 --> 00:31:57,000

which is now modern-day Iraq.

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00:31:57,000 --> 00:32:04,000

To test that theory, a team of Indian archaeologists attempts to build a version of the Ark.

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They don't have the money or the time to build the full-size version.

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00:32:08,000 --> 00:32:14,000

So they decide they're going to make their replica at one-fifth the size of the original version.

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Even scaled down, the finished product weighs 35 tons and is made of wood, rope, and bitumen,

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00:32:21,000 --> 00:32:24,000

which is a form of natural tar that will waterproof the boat.

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00:32:24,000 --> 00:32:29,000

So this team sets up shop, they gather all the necessary tools that they would need,

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00:32:29,000 --> 00:32:34,000

and they're really kind of keeping it to the sorts of tools and materials

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00:32:34,000 --> 00:32:37,000

that would have been available in ancient Mesopotamia.

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00:32:37,000 --> 00:32:41,000

No metal, no adhesive, no power tools.

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00:32:41,000 --> 00:32:46,000

The wood acts as like a sort of skeleton that they wrap over a mile of rope around.

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00:32:46,000 --> 00:32:49,000

Kind of like a giant basket. It's like they're weaving it almost.

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00:32:49,000 --> 00:32:52,000

Then they add the bitumen last, which waterproofs the hull.

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Finally, after four months of building, they construct a platform with rollers

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00:32:57,000 --> 00:33:00,000

to launch their creation into the Indian Ocean.

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00:33:00,000 --> 00:33:04,000

It's the moment of truth. Dr. Finkel himself comes to India to observe.

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00:33:04,000 --> 00:33:09,000

The team is holding their breath. Will this bizarre looking ship actually float?

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00:33:09,000 --> 00:33:14,000

They manage to get it into the water and the Ark floats.

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00:33:14,000 --> 00:33:19,000

I mean, this is pretty incredible. We're talking about a set of instructions that are thousands of years old,

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00:33:19,000 --> 00:33:24,000

and they work. Dr. Finkel is ecstatic. In press interviews,

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00:33:24,000 --> 00:33:28,000

he says a boat like this could potentially have floated all the way to New York.

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00:33:28,000 --> 00:33:33,000

So now there's even more evidence to tie the story of Noah's Ark to Mesopotamia.

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We have a legendary great flood and instructions for a sea-worthy Ark.

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00:33:38,000 --> 00:33:41,000

But where could that Ark have ended up?

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One man thinks he knows the answer.

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00:33:44,000 --> 00:33:49,000

Bob Cornikey is an amateur archaeologist who specializes in biblical geography.

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00:33:49,000 --> 00:33:52,000

He spends over a decade searching for Noah's Ark.

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00:33:52,000 --> 00:33:57,000

Cornikey is a biblical apologist. He wants to prove the Bible to be true.

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00:33:57,000 --> 00:34:04,000

So he starts out looking for Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat, and of course, he's unsuccessful.

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00:34:04,000 --> 00:34:07,000

Then he meets a man named Ed Davis.

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00:34:07,000 --> 00:34:13,000

In 1943, Ed Davis was working for the Army Corps of Engineers in the Hamadan province in Iran.

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00:34:14,000 --> 00:34:19,000

According to Davis, the locals take him up to the top of a mountain 13,000 feet up,

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00:34:19,000 --> 00:34:25,000

and they show him what they believe to be the remains of Noah's Ark.

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This sounds like a tall tale, but Davis takes a lie detector test and passes it.

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00:34:33,000 --> 00:34:37,000

And the more research Cornikey does, the more convinced he becomes.

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00:34:38,000 --> 00:34:44,000

To try and locate the mountain for himself, Cornikey examines a thousand-year-old map.

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00:34:45,000 --> 00:34:52,000

The Hereford Mapa Mundi is a massive medieval map of the ancient world.

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00:34:52,000 --> 00:34:56,000

When it's huge, it's like four feet by five feet.

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00:34:56,000 --> 00:35:03,000

And right there in the middle of this medieval map, in the center of it, is Noah's Ark.

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00:35:03,000 --> 00:35:08,000

In Hamadan, which is right next to where Ed Davis is stationed.

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00:35:08,000 --> 00:35:12,000

Cornikey is able to locate a holy mountain in this area known as Mount Suleiman,

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00:35:12,000 --> 00:35:15,000

which is also known as the Throne of Solomon.

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00:35:16,000 --> 00:35:22,000

Cornikey flies to Iran in 2005, intent on climbing Mount Suleiman.

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00:35:23,000 --> 00:35:29,000

He climbs the mountain and at 13,000 feet up at the same elevation where Ed Davis described the Ark,

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00:35:29,000 --> 00:35:32,000

Cornikey finds several rocks that are quote,

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00:35:32,000 --> 00:35:36,000

Uncannely beam-like in appearance and quote.

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00:35:36,000 --> 00:35:38,000

He believes these are petrified wood.

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00:35:38,000 --> 00:35:43,000

He also finds a worship shrine littered with wood fragments.

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00:35:43,000 --> 00:35:48,000

So Cornikey takes these rocks to be analyzed and sure enough, it's petrified wood.

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00:35:48,000 --> 00:35:52,000

He also claims to find fossilized clams.

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And to Cornikey, this is evidence of a great flood from a couple thousand years ago.

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00:35:59,000 --> 00:36:03,000

But not all of Cornikey's evidence can be proven.

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00:36:03,000 --> 00:36:08,000

Cornikey has the wood fragments dated and they turn out to be only 500 years old.

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00:36:08,000 --> 00:36:11,000

So they can't possibly be from Noah's Ark.

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00:36:11,000 --> 00:36:18,000

Cornikey argues that these wood fragments most likely were just part of a shrine that was built and

rebuilt,

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00:36:18,000 --> 00:36:22,000

basically commemorating this area of where the Ark rested.

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00:36:22,000 --> 00:36:28,000

He believes that people have been worshipping here ever since the Mesopotamian Ark came here to rest after the great flood.

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Further research is still ongoing at this site.

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And Cornikey hopes to one day be able to go back to Iran and pursue more evidence on his theory of Noah's Ark.

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But there are some academics who are not swayed by this evidence.

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Because according to their own findings, the story of Noah and the great flood never happened.

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When William Ryan and Walter Pittman published the Black Sea Deleuch theory back in 1997,

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which suggests Noah's Ark is based on a real life flood in ancient Turkey and Armenia,

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critics come forward to suggest that maybe that flood isn't all it was cracked up to be.

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00:37:26,000 --> 00:37:32,000

Most people would agree that something did happen. You can see geological evidence for it.

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But probably it wasn't cataclysmic.

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It could very well have been a change that took place over a much longer period of time.

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And if it really happened in around 8000 BC in the close of the Ice Age,

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00:37:45,000 --> 00:37:49,000

it was really before any significant human activity in the area.

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Regardless of when it occurred, some experts believe it was more of an inconvenience than a disaster.

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People could have just packed up and moved up the hill a little bit and they'd have been fine.

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00:38:00,000 --> 00:38:04,000

Some feel the same way about the ancient Greek flood.

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00:38:04,000 --> 00:38:10,000

The volcanic eruption on Thera most definitely destroyed that island and took a lot of people with it.

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00:38:10,000 --> 00:38:13,000

But the after effects have been hotly debated.

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There may be evidence of a destructive tsunami hitting nearby Crete,

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but others believe that destruction was due to an earthquake, not a flood.

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As for Mesopotamia, there was flooding there all the time.

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Flooding was a very necessary part of Mesopotamian cultures.

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The word Mesopotamia means between the two rivers.

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It's actually this area that lies between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers.

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And the point of being on that flood plain is that twice a year, these two rivers would overflow their banks.

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It was a necessary thing because it would make the soil really fertile.

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00:38:49,000 --> 00:38:56,000

So flooding in a controlled manner was a regular part of the agricultural cycle.

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00:38:56,000 --> 00:39:02,000

But when the floods get out of control, when the levee breaks and destroys a city,

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00:39:02,000 --> 00:39:10,000

to the people who are devastated by these floods, they see these as apocalyptic world-ending events.

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00:39:10,000 --> 00:39:17,000

That can be true without the story of Noah's Ark being true.

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Other parts of the story have been questioned as well.

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So then there's the thing about the animals, you know, two by two.

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00:39:25,000 --> 00:39:31,000

This doesn't show up in every single flood myth, by the way, but as we know in the Bible, Noah saves two of every animal.

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And of course, this didn't happen.

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We have traced the genetic origins of, I don't know, thousands of species,

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and they simply didn't just all come from one place.

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If you put every species of animal on the Ark, the Ark, as described in the Bible, is nowhere large enough to hold all of these animals.

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And forget about the animals excrement and the food for the animals.

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You need a lot of food every day.

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And so this becomes the problem of a literal reading of the story of Noah's Ark.

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It just doesn't make any sense.

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But there is at least one part of Noah's story that rings true to most.

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Ultimately, we have to think, what is the point of this story?

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Why do so many different cultures tell different variants of this kind of flood story?

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Because it makes the same point, all of them.

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It tells us that again, as a species, what we do best is survive.

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I'm pretty sure that at many points in history, a group of human beings put their heads together

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and figured out a way to endure a massive flood.

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It happened in 2004 in Indonesia.

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It happened in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

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And it certainly happened 5,000 years ago, inspiring a story that we still tell to this day.

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One thing is for certain.

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00:41:01,000 --> 00:41:03,000

The hunt for Noah's Ark continues.

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Perhaps Turkish authorities will find evidence on Mount Ararat.

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Perhaps Bob Kornacky will be able to make a return visit to Iran.

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And perhaps one day, science will find definitive proof of the Bible's great flood and of the Ark

itself.

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I'm Lawrence Fishburne.

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Thank you for watching History's Greatest Mysteries.