Investigating the story of Noah’s Flood according to Qur'anic verses and archaeological researches

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Abstract

One meaning of the word āyah in Qur'anic context refers to a sign, which is a divine miracle as we can see in verse15 of Surah Al-Qamar: "Certainly We have left it as a sign; so is there anyone who will be admonished?" The verse refers to the story of Noah’s Ark and his nation’s penalty, which is presented as a sign for posterity. There are various perspectives among interpreters about the reference of pronoun "it" in the verse. Depending on what the pronoun "it" refers to, the verse can be considered as one of the verses expresses divine miracle. The present study tries to investigate the forenamed verse and its miraculous aspects through an interdisciplinary method between Qur'an and archaeology. Based on conducted studies, the word āyah implies to Noah’s Ark or the Flood phenomenon and rescuing a few of his nation whom are the only survivors of humankind. Given archaeological studies, no certain evidence yet to confirm the remains of the Noah’s Ark therefore, the verse cannot be considered as a scientific miracle. As a result, the miraculous aspect of the verse indicates "giving notice of the unseen" which is verified in verse 49 of Surah Hūd.

Keywords: Noah, flood, Noah’s Ark, archaeological researches.

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1. Introduction

One of the methods to prove the legitimacy of Qur'an scientific miracle is to inspect it based on archaeological documents. Investigating the miracle of the verse 15 of surah Al-Qamar, "Certainly We have left it as a sign; so is there anyone who will be admonished?", which refers to survival of Noah’s ark, according to some interpretive opinions, needs an interdisciplinary inspection based on interpretive opinions and archaeological research. The most important questions in this study are as follows:

- What is the criterion for a thing to be āyah (sign) at any time, based on the fact that Qur'an’s contacts are all times and generations: Seeing āyah or hearing about it?
- According to Qur'an, is wreckage of Noah’s ark a miracle and sign for thinkers or its story?
- According to interpretive opinions and archaeological documents, what is the miraculous aspect of the verse and to what extent can the miraculous aspect be considered scientific?

Thus, in the Qur'anic section, we have investigated lexical and interpretive verses to answer the questions. Then, we have inspected wreckage of Noah’s ark through archaeological documents from the beginning until now in order to define the miraculous aspect of verse 15 of surah Al-Qamar.

2. Lexical study

The words taraka (left) and āyah are the most important and key terms which should be investigated to understand the miraculous aspect of the verse.

2.1. The word taraka

Taraka means "to give up" (Al-Farāḥīdī, 1988, 5: 336), both intentional or obligatory (Al-Rāghib, 1991, 166), whether giving up a material matter or a spiritual one (Al-Muṣṭafawī, 1981, 1: 386). Thus, in this verse, whatever God left...
as a sign among people can be a tangible matter like Noah’s ark or an intangible one such as Noah’s flood.

2.2. The word āyah

Āyah derived from root "ʾa,y,y" means sign and admonition (Ibn Manẓūr, 1993, 14:51-63). Al-Muṣṭafawī believes that āyah is derived from root "ʾa,w,y" which means being noteworthy (1981, 1:186). This word also means miracle that is mentioned in many verses of the Qur'an (Qurashī, 1992, 1:145-146). All of these meanings for āyah are applied in the Qur'an, as in verse 37 of Al-Furqān, it means admonition and great sign for beholders and listeners (Al-Ālusī, 1994, 10:20). Thus, āyah means a sign, which implies to legitimacy of divine affair. Such an implication can be obtained through seeing or hearing. Therefore, in verse 15 of Surah Al-Qamar, the criterion of being a sign and miracle concludes both seeing and hearing the miracle.

3. Interpretive study

In order to define the referent of āyah in verse 15 of Surah Al-Qamar, we will probe the most authoritative Shiite and Sunni interpretations.

3.1. The reference of the pronoun hā in (Al-Qamar, 15)

There is disagreement about the reference of the pronoun hā (it) in phrase taraknāhā (left it), which indicates what God has left. Some, according to context, have referred to Noah’s Ark as its reference, provided that the ark or its wreckage at least had remained until the descending time of this verse (Al-Ṭabarsī 1993, 4:209). Ṭabāṭabāyī(145,379),(459,491), after declaring this attitude, points to the wreckage of Noah’s Ark, which was found at the Ararat Mountains and confirms this perspective (Ṭabāṭabāyī, 1996, 19:69). In addition, Qatādah affirms in interpreting the verse that the Noah’s Ark had been existed and Muslims had seen it (Al-Suyūṭī, 1983, 6:135). On the contrary, some interpreters believe that Flood story and the adventure of Noah and his opponents are the pronoun reference. Thus, the point is that God has kept the story of this event. It is also possible that the reference of the pronoun hā is both Noah’s Flood and rescue of the believers as well as the remains of the Ark (Al-Ṭabarsī, 1993, 9:287; Al-Ṭusī, 2010, 9:448-
449; Al-Zamakhsharī, 1986, 4:435; Al-Rāzī, 1999, 29:298-299). Ibn ʿĀshūr, whilst admitting both aspects, believes that Noah’s Ark is considered as the reference of the pronoun hā since its remains were existed at the beginning of Islam and he also regards, due to widely transmitted traditions, the second aspect acceptable (1999, 17:179-180). Therefore, it seems that Noah’s Ark had remained for a long time and had been a reminder for Noah’s Flood. For further discussion, some related verses are examined.

3.2. The reference of the pronoun hā in (Al-ʿAnkabūt, 15)

In Verse 15 of Surah Al-ʿAnkabūt, God says, "Then We delivered him and the occupants of the Ark, and made it a sign for all the nations". This verse as the under-discussion verse, talks about Noah’s Ark and his story as a sign and miracle for people. There is disagreement about the reference of the pronoun hā in this verse too. Some ascribe it to Noah’s Ark (Al-Ṭabarsī, 1993, 8:433). Some others, while admitting this view, consider Noah’s story, based on its fame and widespread transmission, as the pronoun reference (Al-Zamakhsharī, 1986, 3:446; Al-Rāzī, 1999, 25:37; Ṭabāṭabāyī, 1996, 16:115).

3.3. The purpose of āyah in (Al-Furqān, 37)

The majority of interpreters have regarded the purpose of āyah in verse 37 of surah Al-Furqān to be the story of Noah and the drowning of the oppressors (Al-Zamakhsharī, 1986, 3:380; Al-Rāzī, 1999, 24:459), as well as the widespread transmission of this story (Ibn Asshur, 19: 51) but they have not referred to the remains of Noah’s Ark.

As we saw, from the interpreters’ viewpoints, Noah’s Ark and its remains or the event of Noah’s Flood itself is the referent of āyah. However, most of the interpreters allow considering both material (Ark) and spiritual (the story of Noah’s Flood) aspects.

And the people of Noah, when they rejected the messengers, We drowned them, and We made them as a Sign for mankind; and We have prepared for (all) wrong-doers a grievous Penalty.
4. Quranic evidence of the universality of Noah’s Flood

Discussing locality or universality of Noah’s Flood is a significant topic when debating about miraculous aspect of the verse. It is an important issue since the universality of the Flood confirms the miraculous aspect of Qur'an in citing this story while its locality decreases the miraculous of the verse.

The Bible affirms that Noah’s Flood is universal and all humankind except Noah and his family perished so that human generations can keep on of Noah’s loin (Hawkes, 1998, 896). Qur'anic verses refer to the universality of Noah’s invitation and verify The Flood, as in verses such as verse 12 of Surah Al-Qamar, verse 40 of Surah Hūd and verse 17 of Surah Al-Mu'mīnūn exist evident signs about the universality of The Flood as follows.

4.1. Verses (Al-Qamar, 12) and (Hūd, 44)

These two verses talk about gushing of the water¹ before The Flood and subsiding (swallowing up) of it after that². The context of the verses and the type of the prescript indicate that the earth means the entire surface of it, not just a limited part of it, as Al-Zamakhsharī used the phrase, "We made the whole earth as if it was like boiling springs", in the interpretation of the first verse (1986, 4:434). Ṭabāṭabāyī, in his interpretation of verse 44 of Surah Hūd, declares that God’s Command to the earth and the sky is a creating command so that swallowing up the water on the earth at once is the referent of that Command (1996, 10:230).

And We made the earth burst forth with springs, and the waters met for a preordained purpose.

Then it was said, ‘O earth, swallow your water! O sky, leave off!’ The waters receded; the edict was carried out, and it settled on [Mount] Judi. Then it was said, ‘Away with the wrongdoing lot!’
4.2. Verses (Hūd, 40) and (Al-Mu‘minūn, 27)

In two verses, the creatures that Noah (pbuh) boarded to survive are spoken of using the phrase, "a pair of every kind [of animal]"¹, which is the second evidence that shows the universality of Noah’s flood.

Interpreters have announced about verse 40 of Surah Hūd² that this phrase refers to a male and female pair of each animal (Al-Ṭabarsī, 1993, 5:249; Al-Rāzī, 1999, 17:347; Ṭabāṭabāyī, 1996, 10:226). In contrary with Ḥafṣ’s qirā’ah (reading), if the word kullin (all) is written as idāfah, without tanwīn, then the phrase means two of each male and female class (Al-Bayḍāwī, 1997, 3:135). However, according to Ḥafṣ’s reading and numerous opinions of the interpreters, the first viewpoint seems correct.

Interpreters, based on the famous reading of verse 27 of Al-Mu‘minūn³, considered a male and female pair of each animal as the referent of the phrase (Al-Ṭabarsī, 1993, 7:127; Al-Zamakhschārī, 1986, 3:184; Al-Rāzī, 1999, 23:273; Ṭabāṭabāyī, 1996, 15:29). Therefore, Noah had shipped, with respect to God’s command, a pair of males and females of any species to survive them so that it implies that the Flood was universal.

5. The place of descent of Noah’s Ark according to interpretations

There are different opinions in Islamic references about where the Noah’s Ark had settled on. Al-Ṭabarsī quotes from Abū muslīm, Jūdī is the name of every tough mountain and ground (1993, 5:350). Al-Rāzī states the place on where the Ark rested i.e., Jūdī Mountain is in India (1999, 29:298). Others introduced a place near Kufah (Al-Ayyāshī, 2001, 2:141; Al-Qumī, 1983, 6:175), South of Armenia (Ibn ʿĀshūr, 1999, 20:147) Al-Sham, Amol (Al-

5.1. The historical background of Noah’s story

In 1872, George Smith among clayey tablets of library of Ashurbanipal run into the story of a flood, which had an entire similarity with Noah’s story in the Torah. This story was known as Epic of Gilgamesh (Heidel, 1949, 194). After that, archaeologists discovered older version of this story, which date backs to 1700 BC while excavating city of Nippur. Then its Babylonian text was later achieved.

The protagonist of the story is named Ziusudra in Sumerian text, Atrahasis in Babylonian text and Utnapishtim in the text, which was discovered in the Assyrian library (Kramer, 1956, 42-44). We encounter, in part of this tablet, with gods’ decision to send a flood and destroy humankind. Ziusudra is equated with Noah whom was described as a religious and deist king and a god informed him about the decision of an assembly of gods to send a flood and destroy human race.

Forty lines of the tablets were broken and possibly associated with shipbuilding and storm rescue. The text becomes meaningful when we see that a severe storm has flowed over the land and ravaged it seven days and nights. Utu, The Sun god, rises and Ziusudra prostrate before him and makes sacrifices for him (Majidzade, 1997, 2:270)

This story in wholeness corresponds to the story of Holy Scripture. However, with differences in the details of the story, its principal discrepancy with the great heavenly religious is to have assembly of gods instead of The One God. The base story of the Flood is so ancient and must have been flowed in 2400 BC, and reached to Babylonians and then to Assyrians through cuneiform and Sumerian-Akkadian language. It has been constantly repeated, newly embellished and apparently exaggerated about the story and slang tendencies have been attached, too (Burkhardt, 2004, 12).

There are more than 600 different legends around the world (Greek, Indian, Scandinavian, Chinese, etc.) about the Great Flood. They possess some
intersections such as being a universal flood, favorite family, rescuing by boat or ship, happening the flood because of people’s unjust actions, settling on the top of a mountain, sending a bird out by survivors, donating a sacrifice to thank for their rescuing (Lahaye & Morris, 1977). In Iran, the story of Jamshid corresponds with the Flood story. Furthermore, some researchers have investigated and compared these stories with each other. For example, in 1949, an archaeologist whose name was Heidel compared Gilgamesh and The Scripture with each other. He wanted to know the difference and similarity points in these books, since it was supposed that the Torah and the Gospel have adopted the Flood story from Mesopotamia (Heidel, 1949).

Historians pay attention to the Flood since it is important and attractive. The most ancient historic document, which is related to third century BC, belongs to Berossus, a Babylonian historian. (Lanser & Div, 2008, 15) Indeed, Berossus should be considered as a reference for historians like Josephus and Nicolaus of Damascus who had written about the Flood since first century AD. In addition, there is some information about Noah’s Ark in many travelogues. The story of the Flood from the beginning was narrated in many regions of the Middle East from one generation to the other one because of its greatness so that the residents of each region consider the location of the Ark in their areas, and many interpretations were and are about the place of descendent.

5.2. The time of the Flood

We do not know the exact date of this significant event. There is no access to any authentic narration. Muslim historians have estimated the occurrence date around 3250-3000 BC. For instance, Ḥamzah Iṣfahānī has assessed 3104 BC (1988, 11), as well as Al-Maṣʿūdī 3236 BC (2002), and Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī 3102 BC (1984, 25).

Archaeologists have given an approximate date for this event in accordance with Mesopotamian tablets, which have discovered. Mallowan, according to The Epic of Gilgamesh and dynasty of Sumerian kings, proposed the date of the Flood about 2900 BC or a previous century i.e. Early Dynastic Period (Mallowan, 1971). He believes that evidence of this Flood has found in layers of Early Dynastic Period. Burkhardt considers some factors such as the period of Gilgamesh rule, the fifth king of ancient dynasty of Uruk in 2650 BC, investigating Sumerian texts and individuals’ names then adjusting them with
historic names, announced this time at least 200 years earlier (Burkhardt, 2004, 12). Thus, according to the present resources, this phenomenon had probably happened during 3000-2600 BC.

5.3. The place of descent of Ark

Researchers have introduced different countries like Turkey (the mountain of Ararat, Cudi Dagh and Durupinar), Iran (Delfan Sarkesht Mountain, Nahavand, Mount Takht-e Suleyman and Dasht-e Kavir), Lebanon, Iraq (the mountain of Pir Omar Gudrun and Judi), Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia (mount of Judi), Syria and Yemen as the place of descent. Most of these places have no scientific documents; however, legends and religious texts talked about the place of descent. In the Epic of Gilgamesh, it is mentioned as the Mount of Nisir (Montgomery, 1972) which is considered the same with Mount of Pir Omar Gudrun in north of Sulaymaniyah of Iraq (Mallowan, 1964, 65). The Mount of Ararat is mentioned in the Old Testament and in chapter 7 and 8 of Genesis (Genesis, 8:5) and the Mount of Judi pointed in The Holly Qur'an (Hūd, 44). Berossus and Pliny have referred to the Kardu mountains which some have considered it as the Mount of Cudi Dagh in Turkey.

5.3.1. Turkey

Turkey has been the focus of explorers, historians, geographers, archaeologists, geologists, clergies since third century BC until now. Due to the largest area of Urartu territory in the eighth century BC was in this country and the Scripture has mentioned the Ararat Mountain as the place of descent of the Ark, we can figure out the reason of this importance. Ararat is considered as one with Urartu from third century BC until now. Moreover, the Holy Qur'an has mentioned the Mount of Judi as the place of descent that is also a mountain of the same name in Turkey. Durupinar Mountain is the third option that Turkey is trying to attract tourist for it.
5.3.1.1. The Ararat

Volcanic Mount of Ararat (Fig 1) located in east of Turkey consists of two major cones: Greater Ararat (5,137 m) and Little Ararat (3,896 m).

![Fig 1. Location of the Ararat Mountain (Hill, 2002, 173)](image)

Most of the researchers began to hypothesize due to the names of Ararat Mountains, which were registered in Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, Latin, American and Turkish languages. Brynner believes that since the tenth century west Christians have misinterpreted Hebraic phrase in the Torah Ararat Mountains as mountain (in singular form not plural) and introduced the highest mountain in Ararat as the place of descent. While Ararat is derived from Urartu, as a Hebraic word, it is predicated to a kingdom in the East Turkey, which included both Ararat and Judi Mountains. This kingdom was recalled in older documents like Ashurnasirpal’s annually record, (1280-1261 BC). Mount of Ararat had not been in Urartu’s territory (Plotrovsky, 1969, 43). The works of this area have rarely been discovered through archaeological excavation around Mount of Ararat (Başaran et al, 2008, 76). In the Scripture, Genesis Book, the name of the mountain, which was the place of descent, was written as "rrt" so that it is also interpreted as the name of Urartu. In fact, the exact name of the mountain has not
come in The Scripture, and merely a geographic area is mentioned (Habermehl, 2008, 486).

Philostorgius, a historian of fifth century AD, referred to Ararat on where Noah’s Ark had rested and in his time, its wreckage had existed (Habermehl, 2008, 486). Artsruni, in the tenth century AD, introduced this mount as the place of descent (Young, 1995) and this opinion remained as a persistent tradition in 14th century AD. Mandeville visited the Mount Ararat in 1356 and could see a figure of the Ark (Berlitz, 1991, 23). Chardin designed assumed Ark due to natives’ narrations in seventeenth century. In 1820, news about seeing the Ark by Parrot, Prince Nouri and Hagopian were published (Lanser and Div, 2008, 1-7). Then, Roskovitsky in 1916, American pilots in 1943, Jefferson in 1952 and Turkish air force in 1959 informed about a puddle like a ship on this mountain. In 1955 and 1969, Navarra experimented some pieces of wood of Ararat and claimed that picked them up from the Ark (Navarra, 1974). Of course, numerous individuals attributed many uncovered pieces of wood with various colors and solidity to the Ark’s remains since 1826 onwards. Navarra's samples (Fig 2) indicated an antiquity of 5000 years or even in some samples 4000 to 6000 years through Radiocarbon dating. In following studies, the wood was dated to the century of 7-8 AD and probably related to monument, which was built by Armenians in memory of Noah (Bailey, 1978).

![Image](image_url)

**Fig 2.** Navarra while picking up the wood of Ararat highlands (Bailey, 1977, 139)
There had been rarely geological information about Mount of Ararat until 1966. Then, Burdick showed that Mount of Ararat had existed before the Flood and even before creation time and its lava layer has been estimated at most to height 6100 meters, which reached the height of 5165 meters because of erosion. According to evidence like sediment and pillow lava, he believed that 4200 meters of the mount were under water when the Flood happened. Therefore, The Ark had settled on the Ararat. This theory was rejected since a small amount of pillow lava, which was newer than the Flood was found in Ararat. Rock salt and sea fossils are not unique to this mount, and were found in several kilometers away. Geologists believe that the mountain sediment belongs to post-flood era (Habermehl, 2008).

Fasold and researchers of the Ataturk University focused their attention on studying the area (Fig 3) since 1985. They showed the molecular frequency of a bulky and massive body under the snow and inside an elliptically dusty hill of the mount by scanner device. Evidences for the presence of iron in the form of parallel and intersecting lines were also found (Fig4), which were apparently used to connect timber and to build animal cages.

Furthermore, they found remarkable iron fittings, which were used in 5400 points of the Ark. They drew some points in order to show internal frame and the hall of a giant ship. In Fasold’s belief, the dimensions of supposed ship agreed with the dimensions in The Scripture. The existence of different rooms and floors confirms the theory of advanced engineering. Detector device showed nine arches which agreed with description in Babylonian texts that referred to nine separate sections. 5000 nails with round ends were also identified. Radar imagery demonstrated that iron strips or metal beams were tilted at the descending site (Collins, 1996; Berlitz, 1991).
The researchers confirmed interior walls, three-layer wooden wall of the Ark, cavities, rooms and two large cylindrical tanks by radar scan experiment. They acclaimed that a cement-like material accompanied with a pitchy and impregnated to Manganese covered the exterior hall of the Ark (Berlitz, 1991, 234-235). Furthermore, Analysis of the compounds of one nail confirmed the presence of alloys of aluminum, titanium and other metals. However, until the twentieth century, no sign of these alloys has been discovered anywhere in the world and it is impossible.

**Fig 3. Location of the Ark claimed by Fasold**

**Fig 4. Marked strips of iron lines with regular arrangement of ship frame**

(http://www.anchorstone.com)
Bayrak Tutan indicated that figures which were presented by Wyatt and Fasold would not show morphological characteristics and internal structures. However, investigating through Fasold’s underground radar revealed an internal symmetric with regular distribution. According to Tutan’s discoveries, the site has natural outcrops and regular geometric features. At Fasold’s request, Collins studied the detected iron hook from Dogubayazit to determine whether it was produced in furnace or not. The examination of forenamed hook affirmed that it was made in the Ararat region not Mesopotamia where had been the place of departure. Therefore, this detection has no relation with real Noah’s Ark. Collins, after conducting experiments, declared that renovation of the Ark’s Hall through radar and electronic devices, which had been done in Ararat was not a man-made so that the present form could have been created naturally. Lack of fossilized wood and any trace of carbon element, wood and straw fragments reinforced the theory that the boat-shaped structure is normal despite the lack of archaeological evidence (Collins, 1996).

In Fasold’s studies, eleven flat boulders were discovered each with a circular cavity at the beginning weighed between 4-10 tons in 24 kilometers of Ararat. According to Fasold, they were the ship’s anchors (Fasold, 1988, 319–25). The theory of anchoring these boulders was rejected because the same were detected in Arzap, Durupinar, Toklucek, Kazan, Ahora, and Carahunge. The question raises here is whether Noah had hundreds of anchors that he threw into the water during the flood, which have been scattered everywhere and how these multi-ton boulders had been thrown in the water (Snelling, 1992). Further, chemical isotopic and mining experiments that conducted by Merling on the Arzap and DonaPinar boulders showed that these boulders were basalt and native to Ararat. As a result, the boulders were created and caved in site not in Mesopotamia where the Ark moved. Thus, there is no evidence to confirm any connection between these cavity boulders and the Ark (Collins, 1996).

Geissler and Keles, as Arc Imaging group, conducted an archaeological study in 2001 around the Mount of Ararat to find Noah’s Ark. They discovered some remains related to Stone Copper Period, which was near to the Flood time. In Arzap area, Toklucek ground in the southeast of Carahange ground and Ahora cemetery in the northeast of Ararat stones (Fig 5) similar to Fasold’s boulder were found (Başaran et al, 2008). Therefore, they are not related to Noah’s Ark because the study of Fasold’s sample proved that they are local.
Lanser and Div, according to Berossus’s writings, eyewitnesses and toponymy consider Ararat as the place of descent (Lanser, 2006; Lanser and Div, 2008) in 2008 and 2010, Noah’s Ark Ministries International archaeological team from Turkey and Hong Kong explored Mount of Ararat and announced that they found Noah’s Ark. The team has not yet published authentic scientific results of their research. Thus, we cannot truly study about validity or invalidity of their results.

Despite the efforts made in Great Ararat, many researchers disagree with Ararat’s theory. The reasons are as follows:

- It does not refer to Great Ararat Mountain as the place of descent in primary sources, although it refers to Ararat Mountains not the peak of Ararat in Genesis Book.
- It is a volcanic mountain and had not been under water at all. It also created after the Flood so it cannot be the place of descent.
- Great Ararat Mountain and Small Ararat Mountain are in flat and do not connect to Ararat Mountain Ranges.
- Witnesses’ record is not trustworthy.
- They have found nothing after sixty years of searching.
- Mount of Ararat had not been in territory of Urartu (Fig 6) when the Torah was written to attribute the name of Ararat that derived from a kingdom.
- Most of the individuals who visited Ararat and saw some evidence of the Ark, truly, saw Cudi Dagh Mountain and mistaken it for Ararat (Habermehl,

Fig 6. The area of Urartu rule in which Ararat is not located (Habermehl, 2008, 486)

Many claims have been made about seeing Noah’s Ark in Ararat since 1800. However, no result has been achieved so far despite determined reconnaissance teams, airy photographs, the use of satellites, and modern technology, and new competitors arise for Mount of Ararat. The question now is, if Mount of Ararat was the place on where the Ark rested, why Armenian historical sources had been silent about it until tenth century.

5.3.1.2. Mount of Cudi

Mount Cudi Dagh, at a height of about 2100 meters is located in the east of Mardin province (Fig 7).

Fig 7. Position of Cudi Dagh comparative to Ararat (Crouse and Franz, 2006, 100)
Other names of Cudi Mountain in historical sources are Cardu, Nippur and Karduchian (Crouse and Franz, 2006). Berossus considers Cardu Mount as the place of descent. According to him, people used tar that had been applied in the Ark as evil eye (Crouse, 1992). Pliny and Josephus also accepted this opinion. Today, Mount Cardu coincides with Mount Cudi in Turkey (Lancer & Div. 2007). Jubilees Book regards Mount of Lubar one of the Ararat Mountains as the place of descent. In accordance with Jubilees when Noah settled on Lubar Mountain, planted grape tree and his three sons established three cities near the mount and Noah’s tomb is on top of the mount (Crouse & Franz, 2006, 102). Early Christians and Babylonians considered Mount Cudi as the place of descent (Ainsworth, 1842). In the early Christian tradition, the name Gordian is used for it which is the English name for Greek word “Gordyae” that means Kurds. Some researchers of 18th and 19th century considered Cudi as the deformation of Gordyae (Ainsworth, 1842; Sale, 1734).

During archaeological activities, artifacts from the third and second millennium BC were identified around Mount Cudi (Plotrovsky, 1969). The name of Nippur Mountain written in Sennacherib’s relief is related to 7th century BC. Christians built a monastery of the Ark around Cudi from seventh century onwards, for which a mosque was later built. On report of historic sources, until the end of the first millennium AD, people went on pilgrimage to Cudi Mount and picked up pieces of wood for blessing or charm (Crouse and Franz, 2006, 105).


Biazar Shirazi, a contemporary writer, according to historic texts believes that Judi refers to several mountains: 1) Ararat Mountain in Armenia, 2) Al-Jazīrah in north of Mesopotamia, 3) Judi height in Saudi Arabia, and 4) Cardin Mountains near Mosul (Biazar Shirazi, 2001, 42-43). Most of Muslim historians
and geographers have considered Judi Mountain near Mosul. However, no archaeological activity was done to discover Noah’s Ark in this region.

In 1910, Bell discovered a ship-shaped stone structure in Cudi which was known as the Ark of Prophet Noah in the region. According to him, on September 14 every year, Muslims, Christians, Yazidis, Şabi’în and Jews celebrate in honor of Noah’s sacrifice after subsiding the Flood (Bell, 2002, 289–294). Bender’s fourteen-carbon experiment on a piece of wood (Fig 8) from Cudi Dagh showed a data of 6500 years ago. In his belief, as Cudi Dagh was the first mountain on the northern edge of Mesopotamian plain (the Flood location), it is the place of descent however, because of the few numbers of samples this experiment is not valid.

![Bender while picking up wood from Cudi Dgh](image)

**Fig 8. Bender while picking up wood from Cudi Dgh** (Bender, 2006, 113-114)

Rohl, Hill, Crouse, Franz, Habermehl, Spencer, and Lienard believe that the book of Genesis refers to the mountains of Ararat, not the peak of Ararat, and the witnesses claims to see Noah's ark in Ararat would not confirm the existence of the Ark. Since they have no evidence for their claims, only the pilots are more credible among them, and it can be assumed that the mountain, due to its structural substance, has basalt blocks, which are seen in coherent and regular shapes in some cases, and their images lack details. Although, the mountain is volcanic and lacks alluvial evidences, abundant historical texts and ancient traditions have made Cudi Dagh well known.
According to historic texts, Jewish, Assyrian, Christian sources, Jubilees book, and early historians such as Josephus and Nicolaus of Damascus, Berossus and Pliny, The Holy Qur'an and Islamic texts, the mountain in question is the Mount of Cudi Dagh. This place had been for pilgrimage, worship and ritual so that pilgrims took the wood of this place for blessing or as a charm by themselves for a millennium. Cudi is also in the territory of Urartu, where olives and vineyards are planted. According to the Bible, when Noah sent a pigeon to show the dry land, the pigeon had an olive branch in its beak in return then, Noah established a vineyard there after disembarking (Crouse and Franz, 2006, 99-112; Rohl, 1998; Hill, 2002, 177; Habermehl, 2008). As mentioned, alluvial evidences have not been seen in the mountain. Therefore, we cannot talk about the existence of the Flood. There is a discrepancy between geological studies and written sources. Thus, the acceptance of Cudi Dagh as the place of descent is in doubt.

5.3.1.3. Durupinar Site

The Durupinar site of the boat-shaped formation (Fig 9) is located in 30 kilometers south of the Great Ararat, which has attracted the attention worldwide in 1959. Due to the adaptation of the dimensions of the flat space on the mountain with the dimensions mentioned in the Bible, some accepted this opinion (Habermehl, 2008, 492). A few large boulders were also discovered, which Fasold called them anchors (Fasold, 1988, 25-319); however, similar boulders were observed in the Arazap region. The stone anchors claimed by Fasold in this region according to chemical, isotopic and mining experiments are basalt and native to Ararat (Başaran et al, 2008, 95). Therefore, they do not belong to Mesopotamia. Furthermore, the study of Turkish and American archaeologists in 1985 and 2001 did not have any results in this regard (Başaran et al, 2008, 87).
Fig 9. Durupinar Boat-shaped Formation (Başaran et al, 2008, 88)

5.3.2. Azerbaijan

The Azerbaijanis have considered Mount of Gemikaya as the place of descent (Franz, 2013) and Nakhchivan as the first city established by Noah after the Flood and attributed a tomb to this prophet (Fig 10). These views have no scientific basis (Lanser & Div, 2008; Dwight, 1855).

Fig 10. The tomb attributed to Noah in Azerbaijan (Lanser & Div, 2008)
5.3.3. Iran

In Iran, areas such as Nahavand, Mount Takht-e Suleyman, Delfan Sarkeshti Mountain and Dasht-e Kavir have been introduced as the place of descent. In 290 AH, Ibn Faqīh considered Nahavand as the equivalent of nūḥ āwand that means made by Noah (1970, 93). The author of Mujmal al-tawārīkh wa al-qaṣṣā (1939, 186), Ibn Athīr (1992, 335), Yāqūt Al-Ḥamawī (1988, 361), Qazwīnī (1994, 545), Abū al-Fidā’ (1970, 473) and the unknown author of Ṣuwar al-aqālīm (1974, 92) repeated Ibn Faqīh's opinion. According to these texts, Afrasiabpour considers the origin of nahavand as nūḥ āb band which has been converted to nūḥ āwand (2002, 87). The toponymic study should be presented based on historical-comparative linguistics and according to historical and geographical information related to places, as well as a comprehensive etymology of the words. Therefore, this etymology should not be unscientific and accompanied with ethnic prejudices.

Cornuke in 2005 visited Mount Takht-e Suleyman in the Alborz mountain range in northwest of Tehran and introduced it as the place of Ark's descent (Cornuke, 2005, 16). He introduced Mount of Sabalan previously (Cornuke & Halbrook, 2001). The Cornuke’s reasons about Mount Takht-e Suleyman are as follows.

1) The territory of Urartu’s government was stretched to the Alborz Mountains, and according to the Bible, Ararat on where the Ark settled coincides with Mount Takht-e Suleyman.

2) According to an interpretation of the Genesis (Genesis, 11:2), the Ark descended in Iran and east of Shinar, which today is in south of Iraq.

3) According to the ancient sources such as Josephus, which considers the eastern extension of Ararat to Iran.

4) The outcrops discovered by them are wood converted to stone that is the reason for the Ark's presence at the site.

5) The testimony of a soldier whose name was Davis to observe the remains of the Ark in 1943.

6) The only known mountain outside Israel that has a Hebraic name.

Unlike Cornuke's claims, historical sources and archaeological data confirm that the Urartu border extended in most of its expanse to Urmia Lake in Iran (Zimansky, 1985, 10) and did not extend to Mount Takht-e Suleyman. Thus, the claims 1 and 3 are rejected. The claim 4 is not trustworthy since petrified wood
was found in hundred points of the world and no experiment was conducted on samples of this mount. In addition, Mount Takht-e Suleyman is a natural basaltic formation (Habermehl, 2008, 492). Claim 6 is also meaningless because there are names combining with Solomon in other regions of Iran such as Mount of Mother Solomon in West Azerbaijan. Cornuke's claim faced with negative reaction from Franz et al. (2008), and Habermehl (2008, 492) for the above-mentioned reasons.

Despite archaeological excavations and surveys in the region have not confirmed the possible traces of the Flood, the mount of Sarkshti in Delfan, Lorestan, has been interpreted on internet websites as the place of descent of Noah’s Ark. In 1838, while traveling from Zahab to Khuzestan, Rawlinson referred to Lurs’ belief in descending the Ark on the mountain (Rawlinson, 1983).

The oddest claim about the place of descent was made by Groebli that introduced Dasht-e Kavir and a mountain buried under the sand, and he has not provided a strong reason to prove it (Groebli, 1999, 313).

6. Noah’s Flood: Universal or local?

Has Noah’s Flood been universal or local? There has been no agreement on this issue for centuries. Some believe that since the story of the Flood is narrated in various forms all over the world, it is a universal matter; on the other hand, some have attempted to respond to it through sciences such as geology and archeology. Has any track of this great Flood existed in order to be able to decide whether it is universal or local? In this regard, in the Sumerian text about the Flood, the names of the five cities including Eridu, Bad-Tibira, Larak, Sippar, and Shourouppak were written. Ziusudra also settled in the land of Dilmun and established the cities of Lagash, Kish, Nippour, Urouk and Oumma after the Flood. Dilmun was located in different places like Bahrain, east coast of the Persian Gulf, plains southwest of Babylon, Indus valley or the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula (Bayyūmī Mihrān, 2004, 27). Based on the Mesopotamian texts, Dilmun had some terrific flood such as Shourbak Flood, Kish Flood and Ur Flood (Bayyūmī Mihrān, 2004, 27).

Archaeologists, after reading the story of Gilgamesh, began to find evidence about tremendous Mesopotamian Flood. Woolley encountered a thick layer of river sand 2.70 m to 3.35 m high between the ancient layers of Ur, in which there
was no track of ancient proofs. However, there was clay related to Obeid period in the layers before and after it. He dug in the courtyard of the Nanna Temple and rediscovered an alluvium layer during excavation. The alluvium layer in this amount represented the existence of a flood with a height of 7.5 meters (Fig 11&12). Woolley estimated that such a flood in the low and flat land of Mesopotamia is the same as Noah’s Flood (Woolley, 1930; Woolley, 1938). Two enormous floods occurred in Ur. Malycheff dated the oldest flood to 3500 BC. Based on microscopic experiments, the flood had a fluvial alluvium. The second flood occurred in 2700 BC and its origin was marine alluvium. Therefore, these two floods were not related to each other. (Raikes, 1966, 52-63).

Fig 11. Floodwater layers in Ur city (Mallowan, 1971)
According to archeological excavations, three floods occurred in Kish, two of them in 2900 BC and the third one in 2600 BC, and the effects of all three are evident in the city streets. The thickness of the last alluvium, which was more severe, was estimated at 40 cm. A layer of alluvium with a thickness of 60 cm including soil and sand was discovered in shourouppak, which belongs to 2850 BC (Raikes, 1966, 52-63). Based on the report of the cuneiform tablets, the Sumerian Noah was warned of the flood that came from shourouppak. Some important cities such as Ur, Fara, Kish, and Uruk indicated that the Flood occurred in Mesopotamia and the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates (Mallowan 1971, 238). Although Mallowan believes that Noah’s Flood had happened in 2900 BC or a century earlier, he states that, the Flood was not universal and was considered universal in The Scripture due to its educational aspect.

*Fig 12. Floodwater layers in the courtyard of Nanna Temple (Mallowan, 1971)*

Raikes, after reviewing the above studies, concluded that these results were not convincing and did not indicate the occurrence of Noah's Flood in
Mesopotamia. (Raikes, 1966, 52-63). In fact, there is no report about such an alluvium to implicate a universal flood on the other areas where were contemporary with Mesopotamia.

Suons believed that marine turbulence in Persian Gulf, which had been created by submarine earthquake, caused the Noah’s Flood and such stormy sea turbulences have a long history. In his belief, the Flood had happened on the lower reaches of the Euphrates River so that low lands of Mesopotamia had been completely submerged (Hannink, 1975, 501-500). According to Hill, it was impossible to collect all the animals in the worldwide so that only animals living in Mesopotamia were collected. Archaeological data outside Mesopotamia also cannot prove Noah's universal flood. As a result, most of the available information leads us to the fact that it was a local flood. Otherwise, its proofs must be everywhere if it was a universal flood. It is a leap of logic, if it is said that there is massive alluvial accumulation accompanied with fish fossil everywhere such as Everest Mountain, Thus, the Flood is a universal phenomenon (Hill, 2002, 170; Hill, 2001, 24-40). Because the time of alluvium formation should be investigated and compare it with the Flood’s time.

7. Conclusion

Numerous verses in the Holy Qur'an imply on the inclusiveness of Noah's flood as āyah. Āyah means a material or spiritual sign that indicates the legitimacy of the divine affair (miracle). This implication can be reached through seeing or hearing the sign. Therefore, in verse 15 of Surah Al-Qamar, being a sign and a miracle can mean both seeing a miracle (Noah's ark and the event of the Flood) or hearing about it. Based on the studies, being a sign for Noah's ark can indicate the existence of a material trace of it, or it can also indicate the event of Noah's flood itself.

Most of the interpreters allow considering both material (existence of wreckage) and spiritual (the famous Flood news) aspects of the phenomenon. Given the interpretive opinions of interpreters and archaeological documents in this field, it seems that the second aspect is stronger. owing to the fact that no conclusive evidence has been found so far to indicate the existence of the remains of Noah's ark, the verse in question refers only to "giving notice of the unseen" and its miraculous aspect does not indicate a scientific miracle.
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