

FOUNTAINS OF THE GREAT DEEP: THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF THE FLOOD

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Abstract

A word study of "ma'yan" (fountain, KJV) found in Genesis 7, 8 shows that the word would there be better translated "reservoir." It makes more sense that a container would be broken up than a jet of water. The reservoir that contains the deep (global oceans) is the oceanic depressions on the crust of the earth. It is the crust that was broken up causing massive tectonic movement and associated tsunami catastrophe--i.e. The Flood.

Introduction

To the uniformitarian mind, which conceives millions and billions of inches of precipitation moving millions and billions of cubic miles of soil over millions and billions of years, the concept of any kind of rainstorm of only 40 days, 150 days or even a year's duration is inconsequential at the very, very best. That such a "flood" could be the cause for all global sedimentation, for the orogeny of the mountain complexes across the entire world, and for vast continental tectonic movement is preposterous.

Many creationists agree that even the collapsing of the 'water above the firmament' would not cause the catastrophic destruction seen in the geologic record. Therefore, they recourse to the other factor mentioned by the Bible--the "fountains of the great deep." Oard (1990, pp. 28, 29) says:

The second mechanism of the Flood which has post-Flood climatic consequences is the fountains of the great deep specific in Genesis 7:11. There is little information in the Bible as to what these were. The Bible says all of them burst open on the first day of the Flood, and that enough water was available to cover all the mountains all over the earth (Genesis 7:19). Since the amount of water in the vapor canopy was too small for a global flood, the water from the fountains, which would be part of the ocean today, would need to be considerable.

Again, the uniformitarian wonders where all this water was stored. Was it ground water similar to what is now in the rocks and soils? If it was, then the same problem exists because the quantity of ground water is woefully unable to flood the whole earth.

On the whole, creationists have skimmed over this problem. Oard (1990, p. 29), while referring to Whitcomb and Morris (1961, p. 9), simply states, "Where could this water have come from but below the ground or oceans?" Brown (1986) proposes that water, stored in vast chambers many miles below the surface, burst through as violent fountain-jets and covered the earth in a flood. Oard (1990, p. 29) described the concept this way:

Any water erupting from this source (the deep) [below ground] would move out, under pressure from the crust, and hence would shoot up into the air. The ejected water would produce fountains. In order to release the necessary amount of water,

many holes and cracks in the earth would have opened. A world wide eruption of the fountains of the great deep would be expected to be accompanied by extensive tectonic activity. The tectonic activity would cause immense tidal waves and churning of the water, as the ocean level rose above the mountains.

Violence might indeed ensue, but by what unknown means, for which there is no physical evidence, was this water held in place before the "Flood"?

The New International Version (NIV) of the Bible interprets the "fountains" as "springs" of the great deep. In the late 1970's, deep sea hydrothermal vents were discovered and some have thought to associate them with the Biblical "springs" of the great deep (Austin, 1981). However, Lee (1992, p. 16) explains that they

are probably not the springs or fountains mentioned in Genesis 7:11, since they seem to be a side effect of seawater flowing through heated, fractured ocean crust, and not exit sites for an underground source of water.

I would like to propose an alternative view of the 'fountains of the great deep' based on clear and consistent interpretations of the words and texts of the Bible that will provide a reasonable and excellent source of water for the Flood. Let's begin with the beginning:

Genesis 7: 11

". . . the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, . . ."

". . . on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, . . ." NIV

Because the 'fountains' are OF the 'great deep' it is important that we first discover what is this 'great deep.' The word 'deep' is translated from the Hebrew word 'tehom' (Strong) and is used 34 times in the Bible. Nineteen times 'tehom' is translated as 'deep,' five times as 'depth' and 10 times as 'depths' in the KJV. Let us look at some uses of 'tehom' to get a better understanding of what it means.

Psalms 135:6

"Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all 'deep' places." KJV

"The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their 'depths'." NIV

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Isaiah 51: 10

“Art thou not it which hast dried the sea, the waters of the great ‘deep’; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?” KJV

“Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great ‘deep,’ who made a road in the depths of the sea so that the redeemed might cross over?”

Psalms 106:9

“He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the ‘depths,’ as through the wilderness.” KJV

“He rebuked the Red Sea, and it dried up; he led them through the ‘depths’ as through a desert.” NIV

Jonah 2:5

“The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the ‘depth’ closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.” KJV

“the engulfing waters threatened me, the ‘deep’ surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head.” NIV

It is obvious that in these verses, the term ‘tehom’ refers to the sea, the oceans, the large bodies of water on the globe. In only two of the 34 verses does it appear to refer to waters coming out from the ground (Deuteronomy 8:7 and Ezekiel 31:4). It makes sense to use the most common meaning of the word unless special contextual evidence demands otherwise. So, let us now substitute ‘oceans’ for the word ‘deep’ the text to see how that changes things

Genesis 7: 11

“... the same day were all the fountains of the great ‘oceans’ broken up, ...” KJV

“... on that day all the springs of the great ‘oceans’ burst forth, ...” NIV

The word ‘great’ comes from ‘rabbah’ which means ‘abundant’ (Strong). Place ‘abundant’ with ‘oceans’ and you get ‘abundant oceans’ which can mean ‘global water masses.’ In the Hebrew language the phrase ‘tehom rabbah’ (great deep) became “a compound noun and was stereotyped and therefore always used without the definite article.” (Hasel, 1974, p. 70) This means that there was not “this or that” great deep or ‘a’ great deep among many, but rather an all encompassing great deep. Again substitution gives us:

Genesis 7: 11

“... the same day were all the fountains of the ‘global water masses’ broken up, ...” KJV

“... on that day all the springs of the ‘global water masses’ burst forth, ...” NIV

“The Hebrew word te’hom is translated by Gesenius as ‘Urwasser, Ozean, das grosse Weltmeer. Delitzsch translates it with ‘unfathomable ocean’.” (Rehwinkel, 1951, p. 100) Now that we have an idea what the ‘great deep’ could be, let us move on to the ‘fountains’

In the Old Testament of the King James Bible, the word ‘fountain’ is translated from five different Hebrew words (see Table I), each of which has a different meaning (see Table II).

Table I

KJV/NIV #	Cistern	Fountain	Spring	Well	Other	
‘asheded	3	---	---	3/0	---	0/3
‘ayin	21	---	11/4	0/15	10/1	0/1
Eyan	1	---	---	0/1	1/0	---
Be’er	31	---	---	---	31/31	---
Bo’r	1	1/1	---	---	---	---
Bowr	12	4/5	1/0	---	7/7	---
Gal	1	---	---	1/1	---	---
Gullah	4	4/4	---	---	---	---
Mabbuwa’	3	---	1/0	2/3	---	---
Maqor	14	---	11/16	3/4	0/1	0/3
Ma’yan	23	---	16/2	2/20	5/1	---
Motsa	3	---	---	3/3	---	---
Nebek	1	---	---	1/1	---	---
Totals		9/10	40/12	15/48	54/41	0/7

(from Strong)

Table II

‘ayin:	an eye, by analogy a fountain (as the ‘eye’ of the landscape).
Bowr:	a pit hole (a cistern or prison).
Mabbuwa:	a fountain (in the sense of out pouring)
Maqor:	something dug, a source
Ma’yan:	from ‘ayin: a fountain name, or fountain

(from Strong)

This should make us suspect that the word “fountain” is only an approximation for the words in the original language. To complicate things further, the word in our text, “ma’yan.” is elsewhere translated twice as springs, and five times as well or wells (Strong, 1890). When we look above at how the translators treated the same Hebrew words, one has to wonder just how sure the translation process is. It seems as though the Hebrew words were treated as if they were synonymous and interchangeable. Occasionally, some English words have the same or similar meanings, yet specific definitions make each one unique. Common sense tells us the same must occur in Hebrew.

In a general sense, the words fountain, spring, well, and cistern can mean the same thing—a source (of water). Our word Ma’yan is used just that way in several places in the Bible, both literally and figuratively:

Literally:

II Kings 3:19

“And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells (sources) of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.” KJV

“You will overthrow every fortified city and every major town. You will cut down every good tree, stop up all the springs (sources of water), and ruin every good field with stones.” NIV

2 Chronicles 32:4

“So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains (sources of water), and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, ...” KJV

“A large force of men assembled, and they blocked all the springs (sources of water) and the stream that flowed through the land. ...”

Table III

Be'er	Well/s	at Esek, Sitnah, Rehoboth, Shiba
Bowr	Cistern	at Sechu, Sirah, Bethlehem
Ma'an	Fountain	at Nephtoah
'ayin	Spring/s	at The way to Shur, Nahor, Elim, Jezreel

(from Strong)

(See also: I Kings 18:05, II Kings 3:25, Psalm 74:15, Psalm 84:16, Psalm 104:10, Hosea 13:15.)

Figuratively:
Psalms 87:7

"As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs (sources) are in thee."

KJV

"As they make music they will sing, 'All my fountains (sources) are in you'." NIV

Isaiah 12:3

"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells (sources) of salvation." KJV

"With joy you will draw water from the wells (sources) of salvation." NIV

(See also: Proverbs 5:16, Song of Solomon 4:12, Song of Solomon 4:15, Jol 3:18.)

There are more specific meanings for fountain. Along with the words spring and well, fountain can refer to a natural flow of water coming from the ground. It can also refer to a small reservoir for holding liquid such as for an oil lamp or for ink in a printing press. And, fountain can be a jet of water in a basin structure or the basin itself.

Obviously, before we can assign a specific definition from the above possibilities, we must first study the remaining verses of the Bible that use "ma'yan" (Genesis 7:11, Genesis 8:02, Leviticus 11:36, Joshua 15:9, Joshua 18:15, Psalm 114:8, Proverbs 8:24, Proverbs 25:26, Isaiah 41:18). Our primary clue is found at the ancient site called Nephtoah.

Joshua 15:9

"And the border was drawn from the top of the hill unto the 'fountain' of the waters of Nephtoah,"

KJV

"From the hill top the boundary headed toward the 'spring' of the waters of Nephtoah," NIV

Joshua 18:15

"and the border went out on the west, and went out to the 'well' of waters of Nephtoah." KJV

"and the boundary came out at the 'spring' of the waters of Nephtoah." NIV

At Nephtoah "... there is a copious spring called by the name of Samuel, which not only supplies large basins, but waters a succession of blooming gardens . . ." (Keil and Delitzsch, 1980, p. 154). Nephtoah is "... generally identified with Lifta, a village with a large fountain, the waters of which are collected in a great walled reservoir of very early origin . . ." (Cheyne, J. K., 1902) This reservoir makes "ma'yan" unique among the digged pit wells, cisterns, and springs that are associated with the other Hebrew words that are also translated as 'fountains,' 'springs' and 'wells' (see Table III).

A fountain as a reservoir rather than water jets is typical in history.

'An early example [of a fountain] is preserved in the carved Babylonian basin (c. 3000 BC) found at Tello, the ancient Lagash in Mesopotamia. An Assyrian fountain discovered in the gorge of the Comel River consists of basins cut in solid rock and descending in steps to the stream. Small conduits led the water from one basin to the other, the lowest of which was ornamented by two rampant lions in relief. . . . springs were frequently considered sacred and shrines were built around them, the water often emerging into artificial basins. In Roman civilization, water was distributed from each terminal reservoir, or castellum, to baths and large houses as well as to many public fountains that supplied the bulk of the population. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1991).

If the writer of Genesis 7 and 8 had wanted to communicate the concept of water jets, he could have used words like: "nebek" (to burst forth), "'asheded" (an out pouring) or "mabbuwa" (to gush forth). Instead, he used "ma'yan" (a reservoir). These words were used in other verses of the Bible for gullies, springs and fountains.

None of the sites mentioned in Table III are known to be artesian-that is, a jet of water naturally squirting up out of the ground-nor have they artificial jets of water. Therefore, I propose that "ma'yan" would be better translated as 'reservoir' in these remaining verses. Let's see how 'reservoir' works:

Joshua 15:9 becomes

"And the border was drawn from the top of the hill unto the 'reservoir' of the waters of Nephtoah,"

KJV

"From the hill top the boundary headed toward the 'reservoir' of the waters of Nephtoah," NIV

Psalms 114:08

"Which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a 'fountain' of water." KJV

"Who turned the rock into a pool, the hard rock into 'springs' of water." NIV

Becomes:

"Which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a 'reservoir' of water." KJV

"Who turned the rock into a pool, the hard rock into 'reservoirs' of water." NIV

Proverbs 25:26

"A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled 'fountain,' and a corrupt spring."

KJV

"Like a muddied 'spring' or a polluted well is a righteous man who gives way to the wicked." NIV

Becomes:

"A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled 'reservoir,' and a corrupt spring."

KJV

"Like a muddied 'reservoir' or a polluted well is a righteous man who gives way to the wicked." NIV

Proverbs 8:24

“When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no ‘fountains’ abounding with water.” KJV

“When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no ‘springs’ abounding with water.” NIV

Becomes:

“When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no ‘reservoirs’ abounding with water.” KJV

“When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no ‘reservoirs’ abounding with water.” NIV

In each verse the word reservoir fits very well and even makes the verses easier to understand. Let’s now see how it fits into our text:

Genesis 7:11

“. . . the same day were all the ‘reservoirs’ of the ‘global water masses’ broken up, . . .”

“. . . on that day all the ‘reservoirs’ of the ‘global water masses’ burst forth, . . .” NIV

We do not call a fountain pen a ‘fountain’ pen because it squirts jets of ink all over the place. If that were so, they would soon be very unpopular. The reason they are called fountain pens is because they have a fountain—i.e. a reservoir—which holds the ink. It is in this sense that the Genesis 7:11 ‘fountains’ make the most sense. After all, it is the ‘fountains’ that are broken up. The reservoirs which hold or contain the oceans in basins are broken up and burst open. So now, let us substitute the words ‘containers’ or ‘basins’ for ‘reservoirs’ in our text.

Genesis 7:11

“. . . the same day were all the ‘containers’ of the ‘global water masses’ broken up, . . .” KJV

“. . . on that day all the ‘basins’ of the ‘global water masses’ burst open, . . .” NIV

The text is beginning to make grammatical sense. The most common interpretation of this text has the object of the preposition-‘tehom’ (the ‘deep’-misunderstood to be the ground)-being acted upon. After all, it is easier to imagine the ground being broken, rather than jets of water. But in reality, it is the noun-‘ma’yan’ (reservoir)-that is being broken.

The phrase ‘broken up’ comes from ‘baqa.’ (Strong) “Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea and divided (baqa) it. The idea is a splitting apart of the waters. According to Judges 15:19 God ‘split open’ (baqa) the hollow place and water came from it. In Isaiah 48:21 it is stated that he ‘cleft’ (baqa) the rock . . . in these verses the same verb . . . has consistently the meaning of bursting forth, dividing, cleaving, splitting open.” (Hasel, 1974, p. 70) With that in mind, let us go back to the verse to see this point.

Genesis 7:11

“. . . the same day were all the ‘containers’ of the ‘global water masses’ ‘divided’ . . .” KJV

“. . . on that day all the ‘basins’ of the ‘global water masses’ ‘split open,’ . . .” NIV

The “ma’yan” is that part of the globe which holds the waters in vast reservoir depressions—i.e., the crust. The breaking forth of the fountains of the great deep would, then, mean that the ocean broke out and poured over the land. . . . But the statement that the fountains of the great deep were broken open implies a great deal more. It means that the earth was rent, that great fissures and chasms appeared on the surface of the earth.” (Rehwinkel, 1951, p. 100,191) A breakup of the earth’s crust would cause tremendous, catastrophic flooding as innumerable tsunamis sweep over the entire globe. The concept of plate tectonic breakup and ‘drift’ on an accelerated schedule fits well with Genesis 7:11. Combined with the collapse of the “waters above the firmament,” the breakup of the crust would cause a global catastrophe.

The end of the Flood is described in the same terminology as the beginning.

Genesis 8:2

“The fountains (ma’yan-crustal basins) also of the deep (oceans) and the windows of heaven were stopped, . . .” KJV

“Now the springs (ma’yan-crustal basins) of the deep (oceans) and the flood gates of heaven had been closed, . . .” NIV

The stopping of tectonic movement would terminate tsunami action and allow the displaced, agitated waters to fully drain from the highlands into newly formed basins on the crust.

In summary: The word ma’yan, that is translated as ‘fountains’ in some verses of the KJV, would be better translated as ‘reservoirs’ or ‘basins.’ It makes more sense to break up a reservoir basin than a jet of water. Since the oceans of the earth are the ‘great deep,’ and the Ma’yan are reservoirs, then the ‘fountains of the great deep’ would be the reservoir basins on the crust of the globe that hold the oceans and bodies of water.

Genesis 7:11 would be better translated as:

“. . . the same day were all the ocean basins ‘divided’ KJV

“. . . on that day all the ocean basins split apart . . .” NIV

And Genesis 8:2 becomes:

“The convulsing ocean basins and the windows of heaven were stopped, . . .” KJV

“Now the surging oceans and the flood gates of heaven had been closed, . . .” NIV

The rains of the Flood have long been given top billing over the ‘fountains’ of the deep. But, the Bible gives priority to the ‘fountains’ and so should we. The breakup of the crust and continental masses would be the primary cause for high energy, high volume water reaction across the globe. The rainstorms for 150 days would be a contributing factor, but the forces evident in the geologic record depend upon catastrophic crustal movement.

While Uniformitarians would not be any more receptive to this catastrophic episode, it would provide a much bigger concept than 40 days of rain. This is an idea that cannot be so easily dismissed because of the obvious catastrophic events evident in the geologic record. The rise of neo-catastrophism makes a deluge caused by vast tectonic activity less odious.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Matthew Fontaine Maury Not a Young Earth Creationist

Introduction

While I am not a member of the Creation Research Society, I read with interest the article about Matthew Fontaine Maury in the September, 1995 issue. I believe there are some errors in the article which need to be corrected. On page 86 the author wrote: "Lewis, at the very close of his biography, quotes a lengthy passage from the Richmond *Times* written by Virginia Lee Cox." It is not correct that the author quoted Mrs. Cox; it was actually a publisher's note inserted in Lewis's book (Lewis, 1927, pp. 251-252).

The article does not explicitly state that Mr. Maury was a young earth creationist, but the fact that this story appears in the *Creation Research Society Quarterly* certainly gives that impression. That this is not the case can be seen from a book compiled by his daughter Diana Fontaine Maury Corbin (1888, pp. 158-160). The book contains on these pages a letter to *The Southern Churchman* written in 1855. Mr. Maury wrote:

I pass by the history of creation as it is written on the tablets of the rocks and in the Book of Revelation, because the question has been discussed so much and so often, that you, no doubt, are familiar with the whole subject. In both the order of creation is the same. First the plants to afford subsistence and then the animals, the chief point of apparent difference being as to the duration of the period between "the evening and the morning." "A thousand years are in His sight as one day," and the Mosaic account affords evidence itself that the term "day," as there used, is not that which comprehends our twenty-four hours. It was a day that had its "evening and morning" before the sun was made.

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Reply to Baty Concerning the Views of Matthew Fontaine Maury

First, whether C. L. Lewis quoted the *Times* article is, admittedly, a matter of ambiguity. Immediately after Lewis presents an in-text quote, the type size changes and we read the following: "Publisher's Note: Permission has been granted to print the following portion of Miss Virginia Lee Cox's description of the Maury Monument soon to be erected in Richmond, Virginia" (p. 251). The article is reprinted in the same type, and includes Miss Cox's reference to the son's reading of Psalm 8 (p. 252). Did the publisher add this quote without Lewis' approval or cognizance? Did Lewis request this quote, for which the book's publisher had to get permission? But more to the point, does this really make any difference? The fact is this: the broad distribution of Lewis' biography has ensured the popularity of Cox's version of this incident.

Second, my article neither explicitly nor implicitly stated anything about Maury's view on the age of the earth. Nor does the fact that my article was published by *CRSQ* imply anything-one way or the other-about any views Maury may have held on the subject, since on occasion within the pages of *CRSQ* proponents of old and young earth positions have been discussed without mentioning their particular view on the earth's age. In submitting my article to this journal, I neither stated nor implied that Maury would have agreed to all the bylaws of the CRS. Interestingly, however, Maury did argue that the dry land appeared on the second day, and that this "account of Revelation" was the same as the "account which Nature has written" (1859, p. 203). Perhaps he took the word "day" to mean something other than 24 hours, but as yet I have not seen any attempt in his writings to reconcile Genesis with evolutionary theories. Maury's life stands out because of his high regard for both science and Scripture, as my article discussed at length, but this does not mean that I agree necessarily with all his interpretations in either field.

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