

Facts & Fancy About the Bible - 3

In his work, *On the Interpretation of the Old Testament*, Voltaire raised a number of objections to the narrative of the flood in the book of Genesis. The author evidently knew enough about the calculated volume of water on earth, and from this asserted the impossibility of not only the mountains, but also all the high hills, being covered with water - Genesis 7:19-20.

Would there be any practical necessity for the very tallest, snow-capped mountains to be covered by the flood waters? Not when it is understood that the objective of the flood was to destroy everything that breathed - Genesis 6:17. The Hebrew word for "mountain" is *harar*, while that for "hill" is *har*.

Given the usual pattern of practical usage in language, there is some crossover in the use of these terms in Scripture. Nevertheless, in the case of Genesis 7:19 the word for "hill" is used in both places - "The waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills (*har*) under the whole heaven were covered. 20 The waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains (*har* = hill) were covered."

Keeping in mind the declared result of the flood - Genesis 7:22 "All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, all that was on the dry land, died" - all that was required was to destroy the natural environment upon which all land life were living at that time. This leaves out the higher levels of tall mountains, generally above the tree line. However, this still leaves a considerable height of habitable land to be flooded. How could that have occurred?

Genesis 7:11 records, "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life... all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. 12 And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights." In this extraordinary event, all available water was put to work in the destruction. This suggests not only the precipitation of a large proportion of that which was in the clouds, but also a combination of oceans, other surface and subterranean waters, with melted polar and glacial ice.

The world has recently seen in the Tonga tsunami a mild example of the immense damage that moving water can leave behind. This was triggered by the eruption of a submarine volcano. Much worse was what followed the eruption of Krakatau volcano on the island of Pulau between Java and Sumatra, Indonesia. Its eruption in 1883 triggered a series of tsunamis which travelled as far away as South America. The worst one reached a height of 120 ft and took 36,000 lives in nearby coastal towns in Java and Sumatra.

More recently, in 2004, an undersea megathrust earthquake was caused by a rupture along the fault between the Burmese and Indian Plates off northern Sumatra. This sent waves up to 100 feet high in the Indian Ocean Tsunami, resulting in 230,000 people killed or missing in 14 countries.

These events were the result of submarine volcanic activity in only a single location, whereas we saw that in the Genesis flood, "all the fountains of the great deep were broken up (*Heb. baka* = split apart)." The exact same word is used in Zechariah 14:4 "... the Mount of Olives shall be split in two..." Genesis describes major seismic activity occurring under the seas everywhere and setting off countless series of tsunamis. Once these immense and highly energetic waves washed over a district, not only the living things, but the environment to support life was gone also.