

# Was Noah a metalworker? The theory of the Iron Ark and how it definitively establishes the Biblical fossil record

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## Abstract

The prevailing view is that Noah's ark was made from wood. Using Biblical justifications, we instead put forward the view that Noah very likely fabricated his Ark making substantial and essential use of iron and other metals. We show how this greatly simplifies many problems with the story of The Flood that can be used in secular criticisms of the Biblical view of history.

## 1 Introduction

A common point of contention concerning the history of the world as laid out in the Bible is that concerning Noah's Ark. Much of the secular criticism of the story of Noah's Ark comes from two interconnected directions. First, as a consequence of the fossil record, it is argued that Noah must have had on the Ark *all* of the species represented in the fossil record. Second, in consequence, Noah's Ark must have been structurally and logistically capable of supporting these species for the forty days of The Flood. The first criticism has been successfully attacked in both the secular literature [e.g., 11] and the Creationist literature [e.g., 7, 13]. In this paper we adopt the point of view that the first criticism can even be accepted, i.e., that it is indeed true Noah must have had on the Ark all species represented in the fossil record. Then, notwithstanding this premise, there is no obstruction arising from the second objection *provided that one allows that Noah may have used metal in the construction of the Ark*. Understanding that this is not a part of the prevailing understanding of the story of the Ark, we first provide evidence of the strong probability that Noah had access to metals in

his construction of the Ark from the best, nay only, possible source for this, namely the Bible itself. Then, given the strong possibility that Noah made substantial and critical use of metal in the Ark fabrication, we argue that this completely invalidates the second of the above-mentioned criticisms to Noah’s Ark in the secular objections to Biblical history.

## 2 The case from scripture for the Iron Ark

Of course, when one thinks of Noah’s Ark, what very quickly springs to mind is an image like that shown in Figure 1.<sup>1</sup> We shall refer to this as the



Figure 1: The popular image of Noah’s Ark

“Wooden Ark.” However, if one considers the evidence for this widespread belief, there is very little support for it in scripture. Indeed, only in [4] do we find a single vague command from God to Noah that he build his Ark from “gopher wood.” As gopher wood is never again mentioned in scripture, this then leads one down the path of trying to understand what gopher wood might be and what properties it might possess that made it ideal for Ark construction [e.g., 14]. However, it is exactly the paucity of direction from the Bible that leads us to wonder if there may be a simpler explanation of to what gopher wood might refer.

Indeed, instead let us consider significant mentions of iron and other metals in the Bible. Since the event of Noah’s Ark occurs early on in Biblical history, let us even restrict consideration to early metallurgical references in the Bible. In [3], prior to any mention of Noah or the Ark, we are informed of the existence of an instructor in the metallurgical arts. One can surely surmise that Noah was aware both of the difficulties of building

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<sup>1</sup>Image downloaded from Ark Encounter.

a vessel of the desired size in wood, and of the availability of alternative technologies for building his Ark. And there are certainly multitudinous references in the Bible of God’s exhortations regarding the availability of metals and His desire that Man use these; see [5, 1] and [2], respectively. In this last scriptural reference, we even see *explicit* reference to an “iron furnace.” This, to our thinking, provides a clear justification for thinking that relatively advanced metalworking knowledge would have been known to Noah, and that he would have thought that making use of this technology was consistent with the will of God.

So then, what are we to think of the “gopher wood” reference in the Bible. First of all, one must acknowledge that we are forced to make some sort of interpretation, as the original Hebrew **גפר** does not come with an unequivocal meaning. Indeed, it is not even clear whether it is a noun, verb, adjective, or adverb! Given this ambiguity, and given other and ample scriptural evidence for doing so, to us it seems, not just justifiable, but entirely rational, to make a presumption that Noah in fact built an Ark making substantial and essential use of metal, hence the Iron Ark.

### 3 The implications of the Iron Ark

One need look no further than the Ark Encounter exhibit associated with Ken Ham’s Creation Museum to see the effort required to provide a justification for the Wooden Ark; see also [8, 12]. Quite apart from such popular outreach efforts, there has been a significant amount of work at the interface of the secular and Creationist literature having to do with the consequences of accepting that Noah must have built his Ark from wood. In [10], effects on the Wooden Ark are examined of a seaway such as would have been encountered during The Flood. By use of a 1/200th scale model as well as finite element simulations, the authors are able to conclude that a Wooden Ark would have been able to withstand the rigours of plying the waters of The Flood. In [9], the effects of prolonged saltwater exposure on the woods available to Noah in the Middle East around the period of The Flood are examined, as well as various methods of wood treatment such as would have been available. Again, with some effort one can arrive at a conclusion that supports the Wooden Ark theory.

While studies such as these do indeed provide compelling evidence that a Wooden Ark would have been a possibility, the fact is that equally compelling counterarguments are also available to those refuting such a possibility. What we have done in Section 2 is provide *scriptural* evidence for

an Iron Ark instead of a Wooden Ark. If one adopts this idea, then all of the difficult and readily refutable scientific arguments against the Wooden Ark melt away. Indeed, one need look no further than our current world to evaluate the efficacy of placing on board a very large ship the many different species required to substantiate the evidence of the fossil record being consistent with an Iron Ark. Indeed, the World Organisation for Animal Health has provided a comprehensive evaluation of sea transport of animals [6], providing guidelines for the care and handling of a wide variety of modern animals. It is surely reasonable to expect that Noah would have had a similar knowledge when it came to taking care of the species he had residing on the Ark.

Thus, we see that the Iron Ark provides the modern Christian with a powerful weapon to use against arguments given in opposition to the Biblical story of Noah's Ark.

## 4 Summary

Even conceding that accepting the arguments arising from the fossil record, and conceding that Noah must have had onboard the Ark representatives of all species found in the fossil record, the Iron Ark provides a simple and compelling argument in favour of the Biblical version of history. Further work on scriptural analysis will only help to improve the solidity of our conclusions, and this will be the subject of future work. This being the case, the Iron Ark eliminates a significant portion of pseudo-scientific argumentation that is used against Biblical history, namely the supposed infeasibility of an Ark that performs the task it was required to perform.

## References

- [1] Deuteronomy 28.23. *And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron.*
- [2] Deuteronomy 4.1. *But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.*
- [3] Genesis 4.22. *And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.*

- [4] Genesis 6.14. *Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.*
- [5] Leviticus 26.19. *And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass.*
- [6] W. O. for Animal Health. *The welfare of animals during long distance transport by sea in Europe*. Technical Report. OIE. URL: <https://rpawe.oie.int/index.php?id=57&L=0> (visited on 04/18/2021).
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- [12] T. Lovett. “Could Noah’s Ark Have Been Made of Wood?” In: *The New Answers Book 4*. Ed. by K. Ham. Master Books, 2013. Chap. 19. ISBN: 978-0890517888.
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