

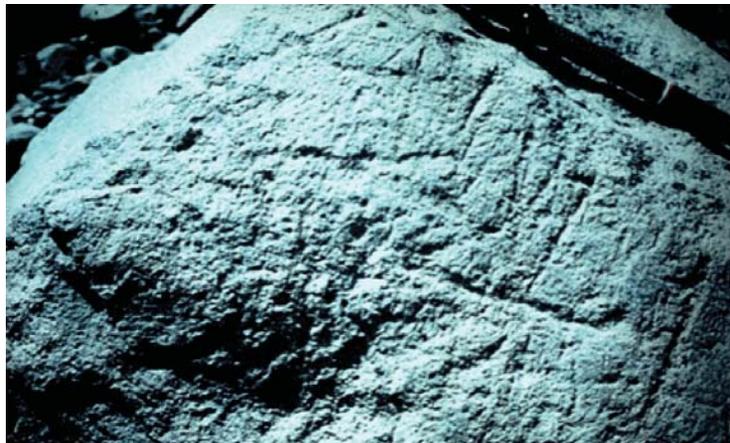
Büyük Agri: Birthplace of Civilization

THE LOCATION OF THE BIBLICAL NOAH'S ARK

National Geographic is not well-known as a publication which might support the Genesis account of a boat capsized on a mountaintop nowhere near any sign of a river at an elevation of 4500 meters (14764 feet). Indeed, the popular magazine made no mention of the curious 1983 discovery of what is now known as the **Ahora Covenant Inscription**. Rather, the discovery was first published in the Field Notes section of the quarterly *Research & Exploration: A Scholarly Publication of the National Geographic Society*, 10(4), Autumn, 1994, p. 484. The article is entitled "Proto-Sumerian Inscriptions in the Ahora Gorge of Büyük Agri (Greater Mt Ararat), Turkey" and authored by Edward E. Crawford, director of Project von Bora. Of what would seem to be of monumental importance, the article concluded:

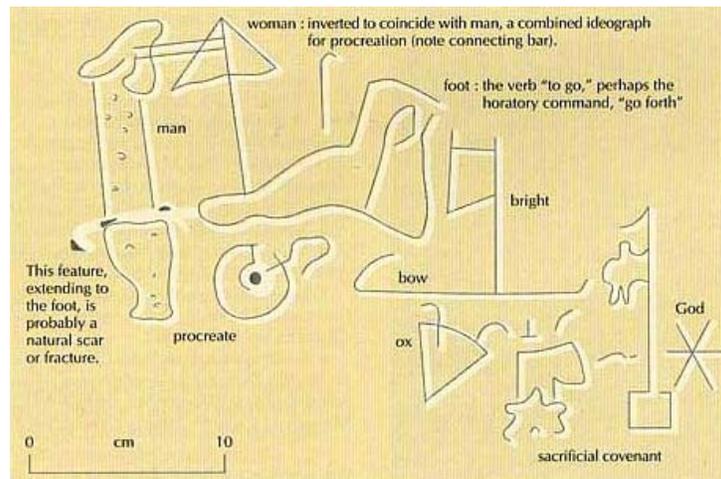
Irrespective of anyone's interpretation, the inscription indicates a fully developed proto-Sumerian writing system, found high in the inhospitable and nearly inaccessible Ahora Gorge of Büyük Agri. Furthermore, these ideograms appear more representational, in that they are less stylized than proto-Sumerian found to the south and in Mesopotamia, which suggests that they are significantly older. Also, the irregular size and manner in which the individual pictographs are arranged in relation to each other, when compared to other proto-Sumerian writing, is consistent with the suggestion that this Ahora Covenant Inscription is older.

There was never any follow-up as this proved to be the last hard-copy issue of the scholarly publication. This may be rather disturbing because, although now recognized by prominent archaeologists, it could well be the case that **the oldest known sample of human writing** has largely gone unnoticed.



Ahora Covenant Inscription (photo by Brian Bartlet)

Encyclopædia Britannica notes that "it has long been known that the earliest writing system in the world was Sumerian script, which in its later stages was known as cuneiform" and that "archaeologists have discovered in lower Mesopotamia (now southern Iraq) large numbers of small, distinctively shaped clay objects" which bear markings "that are unambiguously related to the Sumerian language." The Mesopotamian inscriptions are known as Archaic Sumerian or proto-Sumerian. Thus, the 1983 discovery in Turkey, being older, should logically be seen as the oldest example of writing yet discovered.



Ahora Covenant Inscription (drawing by Edward E. Crawford, reproduced from *Research & Exploration: A Scholarly Publication of the National Geographic Society*)

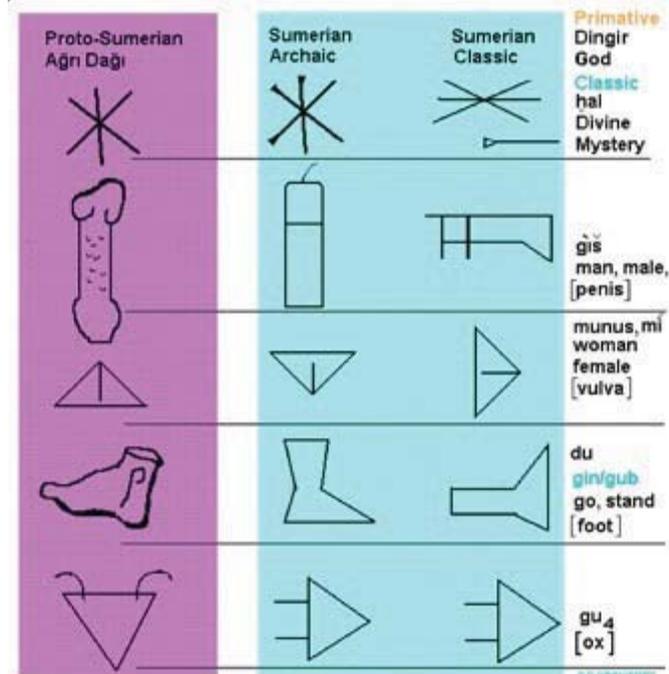
Of particular interest is the subject matter of the Ahora Covenant. The interpretation, as supported by the redoubtable Veysel Donbaz, Sumerologist and Assyriologist of the Turkish Ministry of Culture, Archaeological Museums of Istanbul, is:

(Because of) the divine mystery (revealed) of the savour of the sacrifice accepted, the sacrifice of wild ox, ram, lamb, [and possibly bird], (there is the sacrificial covenant of) the rainbow, let man and woman go forth, procreate, and be fruitful, or have progeny.

The familiar story of the Global Deluge is not unique to the Bible. It is voiced in one form or another in over 200 accounts, from the Middle East and Africa to Asia and the Americas, even to remote Pacific islands. The Flood story could easily hold the honor as the world's most common denominator, surpassed perhaps only by the very idea of deity itself.

The idea behind the Ahora Covenant Inscription remarkably mirrors the familiar Genesis account which specifies that upon receiving the savor of Noah's burnt sacrifice, God signified an everlasting covenant with man with the rainbow and commanded man to be fruitful and multiply. If not for the extremely ancient language

in which it is written, one might dismiss the Inscription as the work of more modern pilgrims commemorating the site. But, the combination of the age of the language, the extremity of the location, and specificity of the subject matter clearly exonerates such suspicion.



Genesis 8:20-22 tells us:

And Noah built an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savor; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

We also recall God's words to Noah upon departing the Ark in Genesis 9:7-17 as:

And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein. And God spoke unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to

pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.



Cave of the Ahora Covenant Inscription about 3 km NW of Ark

The region of Büyük Agri is well-known by archaeologists as an area of ancient place names which lend testimony to the story of the Flood:

Büyük Agri itself means "Mountain of Pain," allegedly signifying God's infliction on mankind and/or his remorse over the need of such.

Persians refer to the mountain as either *Koh-i-nuh*, meaning "Mountain of Noah", or *Saad Dagh*, meaning "Blessed Mountain."

Armenians refer to it as *Masis*, meaning "Mother of the World", whereas ancient Armenia called it *Masis Leusar*, meaning "Mountain of the Ark."

The town of *Echmiadzin, Armenia* (40°10'22"N, 44°17'33"E), 32 miles to the north, means "the descent" or "those who descended", in apparent reference to the decent from the high peak.

Similarly, *Nakhchivan City, Azerbaijan* (39°12'32" N, 45°24'44" E), 68 miles toward the SE, means "the first place of lodging" or "the place of first descent". Its ancient name was *Apobaterion*, meaning "the landing place". Josephus noted the first city to be built after the flood was *Themanin* (meaning "the eight" in reference to the eight human souls saved on the Ark) and many believe this to be yet another ancient name for Nakhchivan.

The *Ahora Gorge* (39°43'17"N, 44°17'50"E) where the inscription was found is named after an ancient town which was destroyed in 1840 by an earthquake. *Ahora* means "the planting of the vine" and was the traditional place of Noah's vineyard mentioned in Genesis 9:20.

The town of *Maser, Turkey* (39°26'26"N, 44°13'44"E), 18 miles southward, now known as Üzengili, means "doomsday" in reference to the day of judgment heralded by the Flood.

Kargakonmaz, Turkey (39°25'24"N, 44°17'02"E) is 19 miles south of Ararat. The name means "the raven will not land" in reference to the raven of Genesis 8:7.

The ancient town of *Seron* means "place of dispersion", traditionally where Noah's sons and their respective families parted. The Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* agrees with the Judaic tradition that this was the second city to be built after the flood and this reference is often interpreted that the "older" Sumerian story must have been copied by the "more recent" Genesis account. Recall, however that the *Ahora Covenant Inscription* pre-dates Sumerian. Also, Genesis contains eleven colophons identified in the *Wiseman Hypothesis* which suggest its earliest portions were copied by Moses from tablets. The Genesis account also reads like an historical ship's log with exact dates and events, suggestive of an eyewitness account. So, who copied whom? Perhaps neither. Maybe both (not to mention about 220 other accounts worldwide) are based on an actual event. Possibly, the common ancestor is reality.

Tabriz or Ta Baris, Iran (38°04'45"N, 46°17'20"E) is 155 miles from Ararat. It means "the ship" (note the definite article, indicating a very large and/or famous ship). The nearest body of water is Lake Urmia, a dead salt lake 40 miles to the west which supports no species of fish, thus no ships. Today, you may see boating enthusiasts, but still no ships.

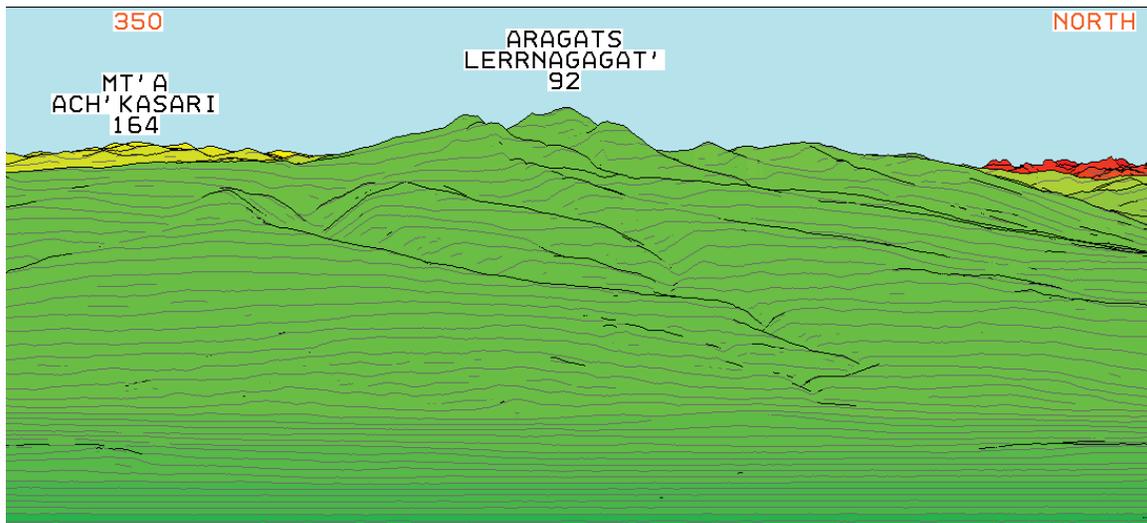
Marand, Iran (38°25'58" N, 45°46'30" E) is 118 miles SE of Ararat and is the traditional burial place of Noah's wife, meaning "the mother is here".

Ed Crawford's approach was remarkably simple. Genesis 8:4 tells us that the ark rested "upon the mountains of Ararat," the Babylonian name being Urartu. This was a kingdom located on a plateau centered in modern-day eastern Turkey from which flow the Euphrates, Tigris, Aras and Choruk rivers. Genesis does not specifically tell us that the ark rested on the region's most prominent mountain, Greater Mt. Ararat (Büyük Agri), as is commonly supposed, but clearly searches for Noah's Ark outside the boundaries of Urartu are not supported by the ancient text.

Urartu covered a vast area. Lake Van, like the Dead Sea with no outlet, was at its center. 2 Kings 19:37 and Isaiah 37:38 refer to the area as Armenia, and much of modern-day Armenia in fact is located within the ancient kingdom.

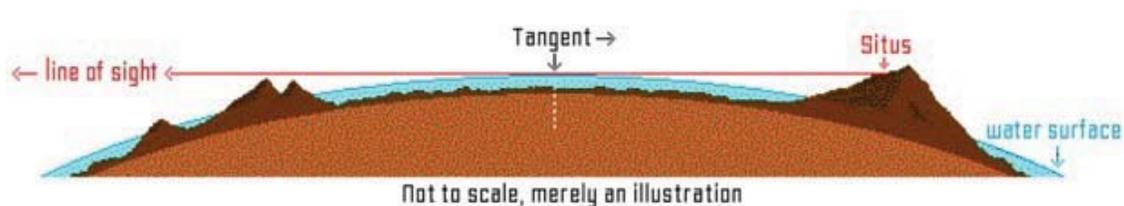
The next clue to the search was Genesis 8:4-5. The Ark rested on the seventeenth day of the seventh month. The waters decreased continually. Over 70 days later, on the first day of the tenth month, "were the tops of the mountains seen." In other words, for over 70 days the only visible island was the mountain upon which the Ark rested. Therefore, Crawford concluded that Genesis refers to the highest mountain in the region, Greater Mt. Ararat itself (39°42'07" North, 44°17'53" East, elevation 5132 meters or 16837 feet).

Moreover, Crawford determined that the tops of the mountains (plural) which were first seen would likely have been those in the prominence of Mt. Agarats in Armenia, 92 km to the north.

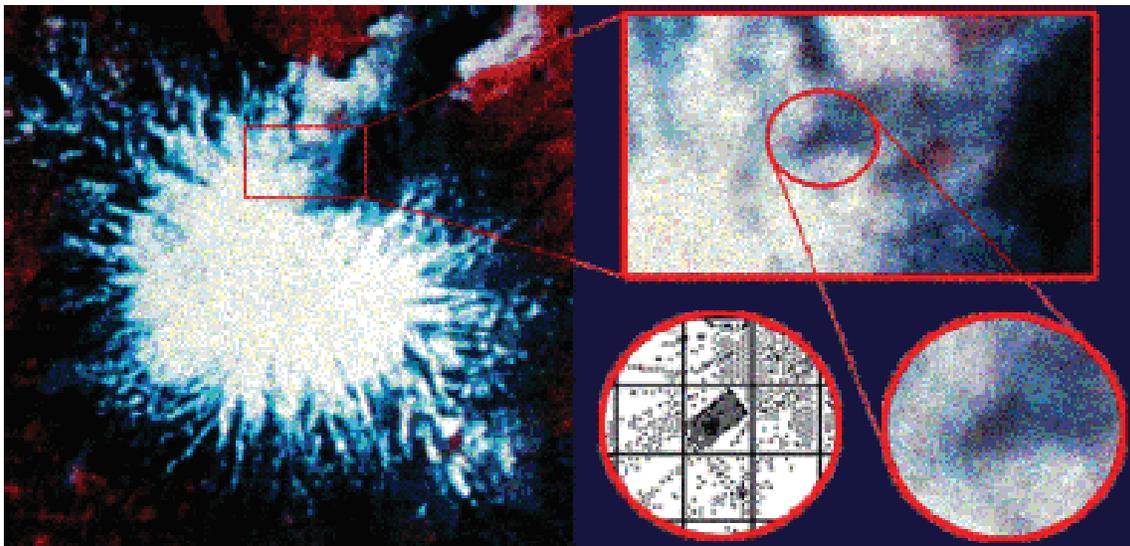


Thus, Crawford concentrated his search on the large northern plateau of Mt. Ararat.

This line-of-sight illustration, viewed from the west, shows how the Armenian mountains would have emerged above the horizon as the waters abated. The Ark is located at the *situs* on the higher Mt. Ararat.



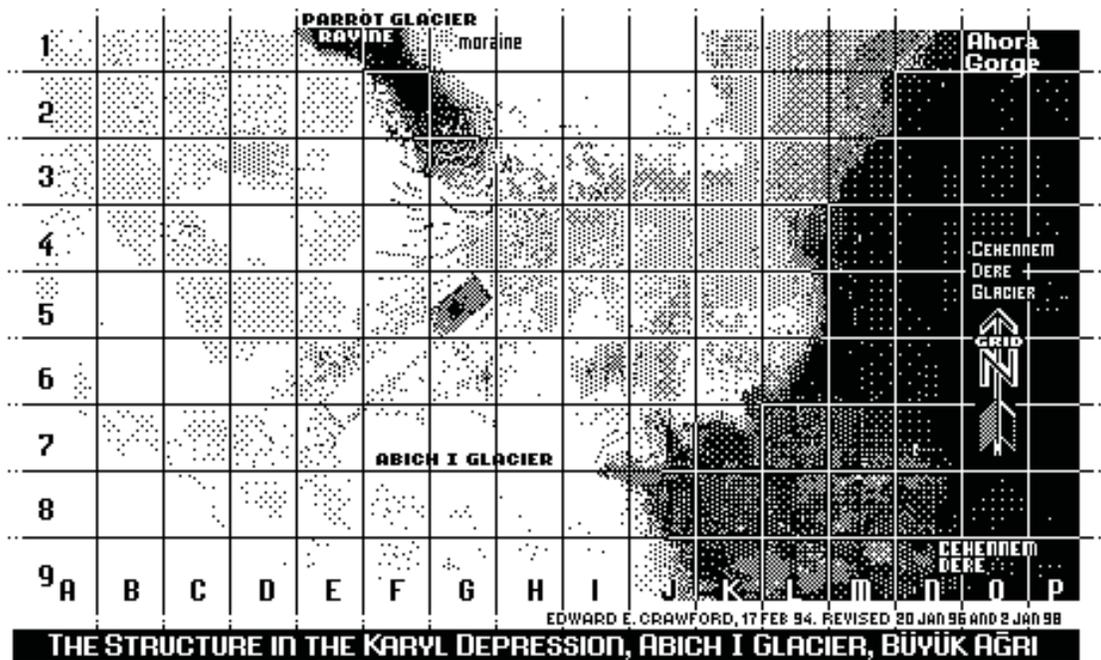
Next, Crawford did a study of the glaciers on the Ararat plateau. It has long been postulated that glacial movements of an imbedded wooden structure in their course of over 4300 years would have long ago ground it to splinters. In fact, because of this likelihood, most expeditions have concentrated their efforts on various slopes at elevations below the ice cap, such as within the steep Ahora Gorge. Yet, one would presume God to have chosen a relatively level resting spot for the chosen family and the breath of life preserved through such providence. Moreover, all surrounding slopes below the ice cap elevation are in crush or scour zones. So, Crawford did not rule out the glacier-covered plateau. He determined that a small area known as the *Karyl Depression*, located between the Parrot and Abich I Glaciers flowing in opposite directions to the northwest of the peak, had probably remained stable for several thousand years. The Ark could well have been preserved there.



Upon examining the above Landsat image of Ararat, dated 13 July 1973 during a summer of extreme melt, Crawford found what appeared to be a rectilinear man-made structure protruding from the ice in the Karyl Depression along a bearing of approximately 60 ± 10 degrees (southwest to northeast lengthwise).

However, other archaeologists had also seen the object in the photo and one of the most highly-respected, John Morris, had even made a personal survey of the location and found nothing of interest. The right-angled edges are not so noteworthy when one considers the fact that natural basalt formations all over the mountain also exhibit right angles. Crawford was criticized for being overly imaginative. To the untrained eye, his enhanced drawings seemed like wishful thinking.

Nonetheless, Crawford did not lose faith in the site. In fact, by process of elimination, he saw the Karyl Depression as the *only* area where a successful recovery *could* be made.



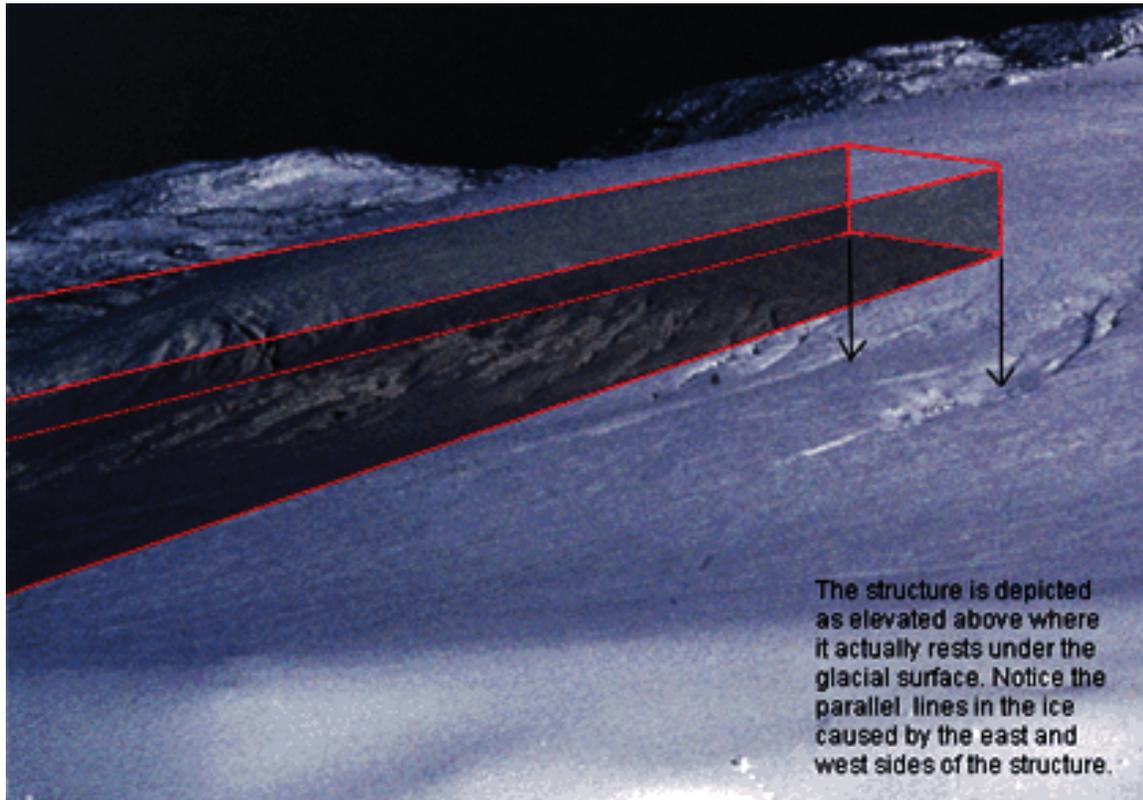
Of course, the very idea of discovering Noah's Ark depends on a few formidable prerequisites. Was there indeed a worldwide flood as growing numbers of geologists assert? If so, is the story of the Ark an historical account or merely an embellished or fabricated myth? If true, does the Ark still exist or was it dismantled for firewood or destroyed by seismic, volcanic, or glacial activity? And lastly, if it is still intact, is it *God's will* that it be found?

We might do well to heed 2 Peter 3:3-6, where we are told

that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.

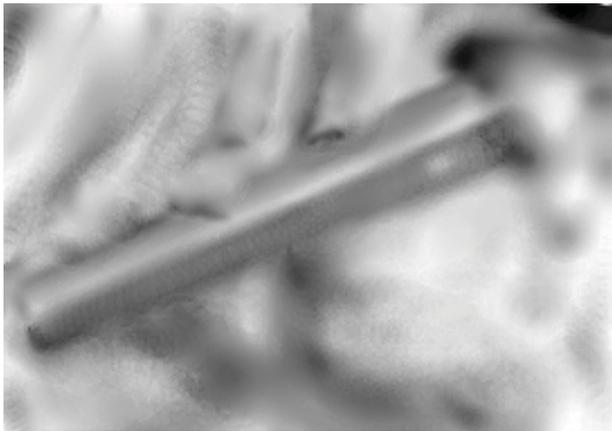
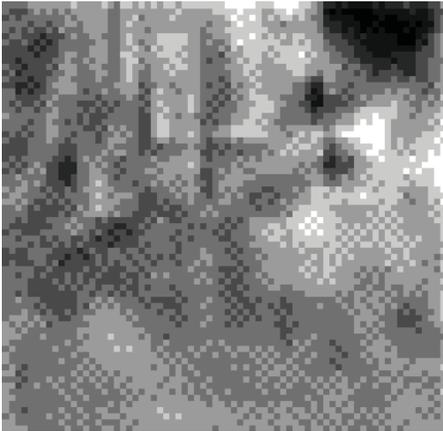
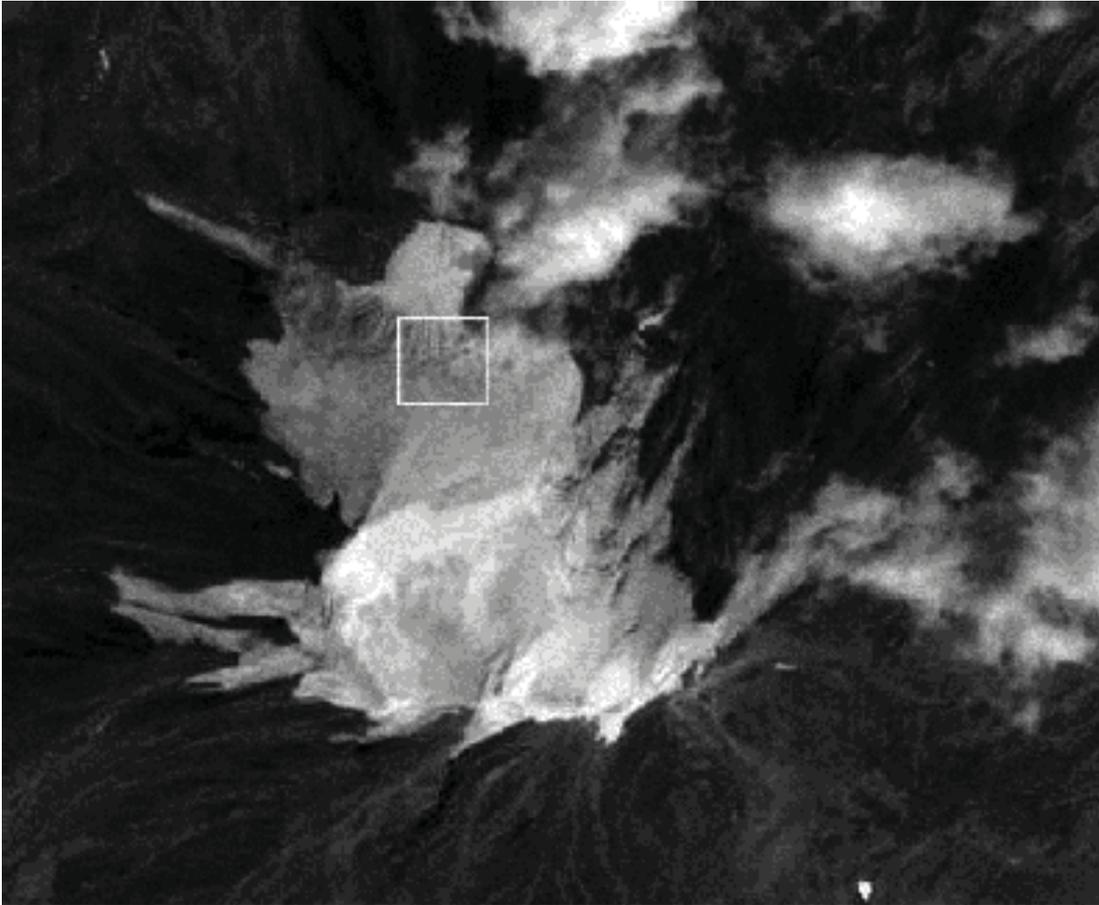
Notice that the key phrase is that "they *willingly* are ignorant" of the truth. The typical scoffers of today are not *willingly* ignorant of the global Flood. They have simply been misled by a faulty science and education system. The full and open revelation of a large ship on top of a high mountain would remove any excuse for ignorance. This is something that even a child could easily understand. Perhaps this prophecy is a clue that the Ark will indeed be fully and irreproachably revealed by the will of God. In fact, there is enough evidence today for the honest naysayer to make a reasonable conclusion in favor of the Ark's existence and preservation.

Crawford's team was finally able to obtain the proper permits and visit the site on 28 August 1990. Most notably, they found two straight parallel crevasses which corresponded with the two sides of the object in the 1973 Landsat photo. One of the crevasses was venting a rush of expanding air into the morning sunlight, suggesting a large underlying hollow structure very close to the ice surface. Crawford also identified what appeared to be two very long and perfectly straight hewn beams just under the surface of the ice and south of the main structure.



Turkish law required the team to be accompanied by a licensed guide. Unfortunately, Crawford's guide was ready to descend the mountain in order to escort another group. The team hurriedly left their marker, a 40-centimeter black plastic pipe containing capped test tubes, at 10:00 am at 39°42'59.7" North, 44°17'29.3" East, and descended the mountain. It would be 17 years before Crawford would again be granted permits and revisit the site.

Regarding legal permits and proper archaeological procedures, Crawford had always endeavored to maintain the highest integrity. The majority of Ararat expeditions in recent years have been conducted illegally. Crawford contended that if one is to declare a major discovery, he had better have the blessing of the government to which the land and artifacts belong. Crawford was a born-again Christian and trespassing is simply not Christian. Likewise, improper procedure such as removing artifacts without proper documentation, and especially the theft of artifacts while illegally trespassing would only bring reproach and shame upon the name of Christ.



The 13 September 2000 IKONOS Satellite image above shows what appears to be Crawford's structure. IKONOS refused to sell the full-sized version of this photo to Crawford, which is strange because this is a major reason they are in business. However, a 2003 SPOT 5 photo (see page 14) confirms the object's location and orientation along an approximately 70.7° northeasterly bearing. Located in the exact same location as the 1973 Landsat photo and the parallel crevasses observed in 1990, the object is quite large compared to the traditional dimensions of the Ark.

Genesis 6:15 tells us the Ark was 300 cubits long by 50 cubits wide by 30 cubits high. So, we can expect a volume of 450,000 cubic cubits. But, what was a *cubit*? Typically, a cubit is said to be 18 inches (457 mm), the distance between an average man's elbow and middle fingertip. Cubits have been as short as 17.22 inches (437 mm), such as in the case of Siloam Tunnel as confirmed by modern measurements. The Long Babylonian Cubit was 24 inches (610 mm) and the Royal Egyptian Cubit used in the construction of the Great Pyramid was 20.6 inches (523 mm). But, a cubit could more accurately be defined simply as a construction unit which varied greatly in definition between cultures. At certain times and places, for example, a cubit was the distance between a vertical wall and middle fingertip when stretched forward with back pinned to the wall. These cubits were much larger, often over a meter in length.

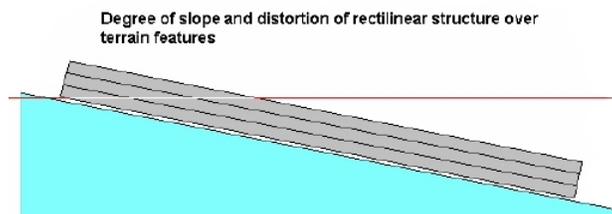
Based on the 18-inch cubit, the Ark is usually given as 450 feet (137.16 m) long by 75 feet (22.86 m) wide by 45 feet (13.72 m) high. Thus, the volume is typically calculated as 1,518,750 cubic feet (43,006 cubic meters). Researchers such as John Woodmorappe have shown this to be ample space for a full collection of wildlife. But, is the Ark actually much *larger*?

Veysel Donbaz suggests that the antediluvian cubit used by Noah was most likely the 46.06 inches (1170 mm) as found of the most ancient Sumerian brass measuring rods. If so, we would expect the Ark to measure 1151.57 feet (351.00 m) long by 191.93 feet (58.50 m) wide by 115.16 feet (35.10 m) high. Using this most ancient 117-centimeter cubit, we get a volume of 25,452,191 cubic feet (720,726 cubic meters). This is 2.559 times the length and 16.759 times the volume (and weight) of the typical Ark description.

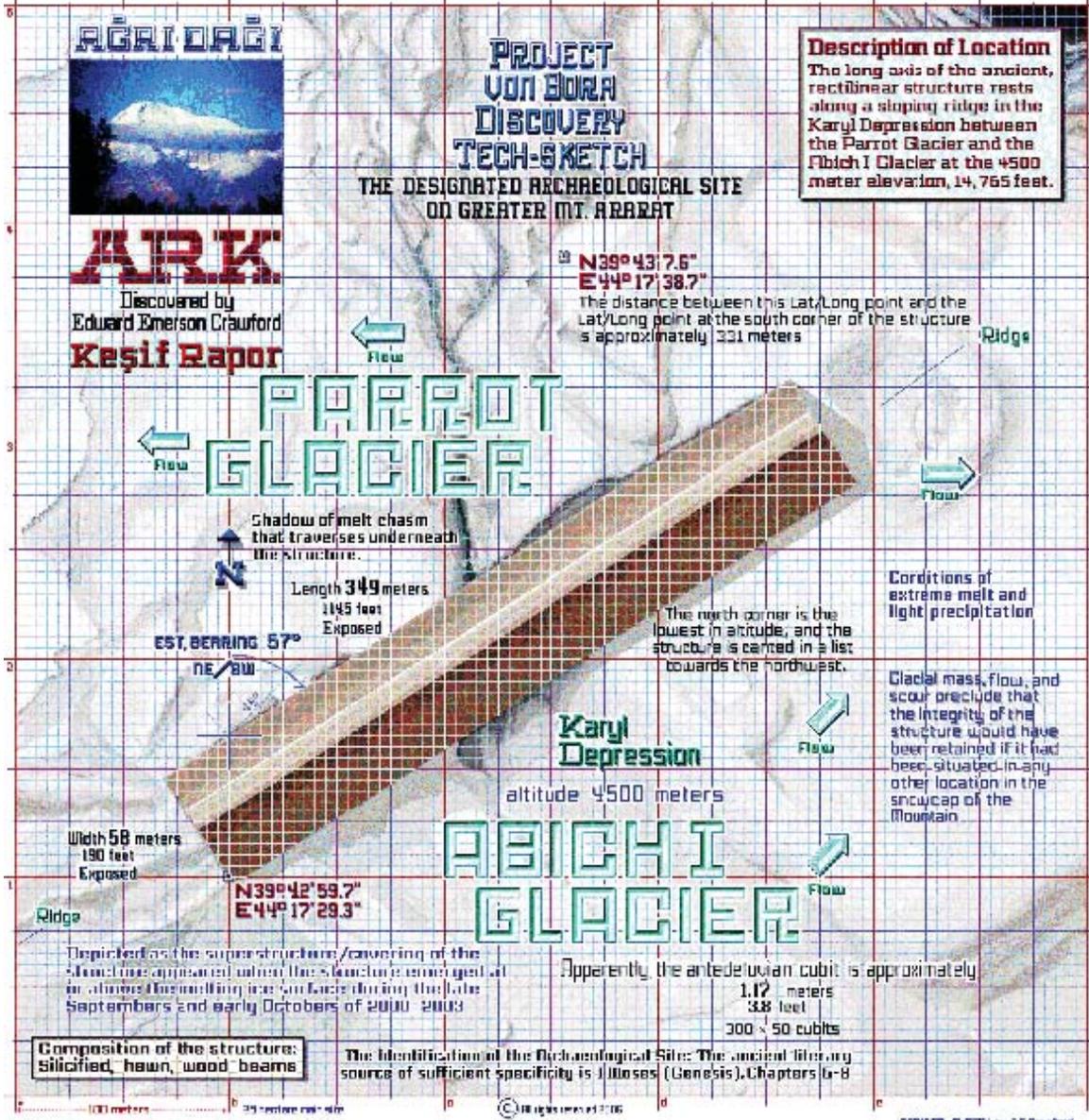
Crawford's Technical Sketch (next page) as presented to the Turkish Government and UNESCO World Heritage, based on measurements from satellite photos, gives 349 meters in length and 58 meters in width. Regardless of the cubit being used, the Biblical proportion of length to width is exactly 6.000 to 1. Crawford was remarkably close at 6.017 to 1. The following corner coordinates are probably more accurate:

East	39° 43.087' N,	44° 17.524' E	4460m
North	39° 43.121' N,	44° 17.706' E	4435m
West	39° 43.055' N,	44° 17.457' E	4499m
South	39° 43.020' N,	44° 17.473' E	4528m

Using NASA's SRTM elevations for the four corners, we find a lengthwise slope of 9.97° downward to the NE and a widthwise slope of 21.37° downward to the NW.



THE WORLD HERITAGE SITE

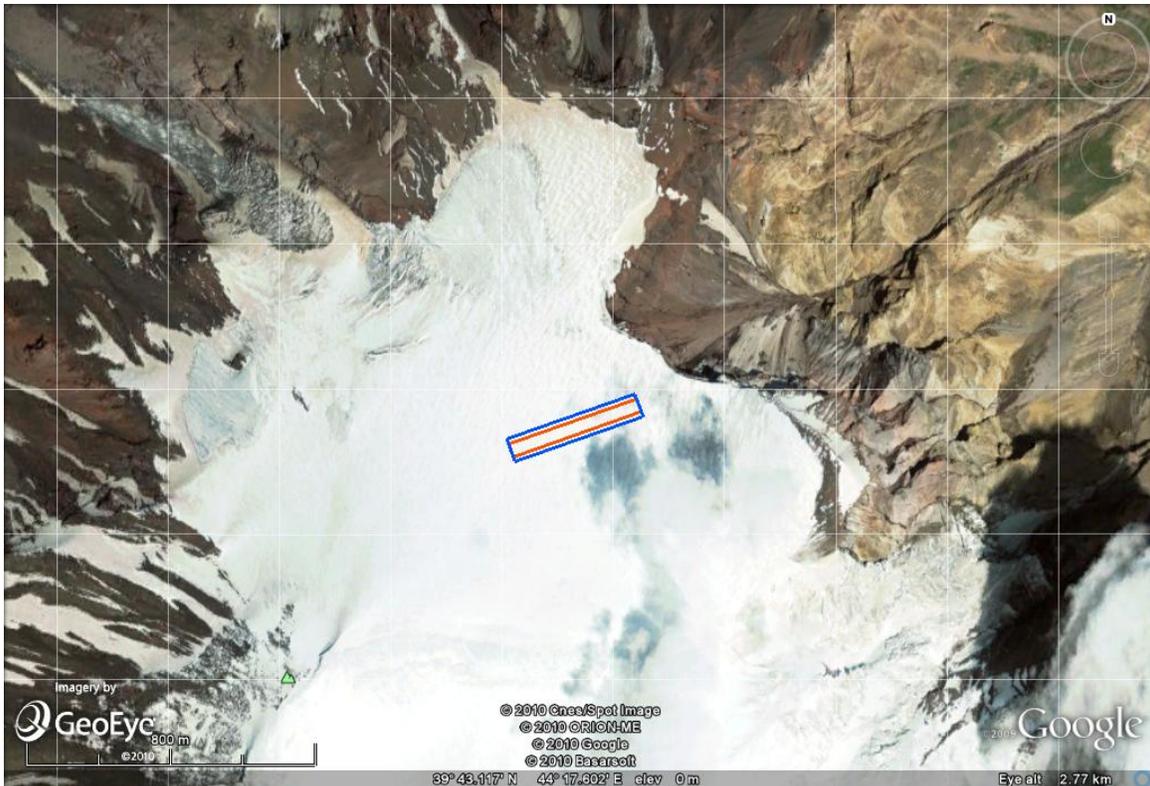


The linear data and Lat/Long positions presented herein are within the tolerances of and subject to the accuracy of civilian satellite and remote sensing capabilities, and according to that which has emerged above the melting ice surface. A marker of discovery was deposited at the site of the structure by Eduard Emerson Crauford on 28 August 1990. This discovery (both the location and the proportions of the ancient structure) has been confirmed by both military and civilian remote sensing high resolution photo and radar imaging.



The photo to the right is of a pictographic inscription (proto-Sumerian ideograms) discovered in the gorge to the north of the structure, a notation/record of the Noahic Covenant, of Genesis, Chapters 6 and 8.

Presented to the Government of the Republic of Turkey and to UNESCO World Heritage



Although nothing of the underlying structure can be seen here, this 2009 Google Earth image provided by GeoEye is overlaid with a graphical representation of the current best estimate of where the structure is hidden. The blue rectangle denotes the structure. The red denotes the window housing as described below.

Still, Crawford's announcement of discovery failed to dazzle many, including the usually enthusiastic Ark researchers and explorers. There was little or no media fanfare, and little or no inquiry by the scientific community. Even Creationist groups seemed indifferent. Nor was there any serious rebuttal made to Crawford's claims. There was just an odd silence.

In late 2008, however, Crawford was able to openly report on a very significant 2003 SPOT 5 satellite photo (next page) which, until that time, had been suppressed by Turkish red tape.

To understand the photo, one needs to consult the Genesis account. Verses 6:16 and 8:6 mention that the Ark had a window near the very top. It was one cubit high, 1/30th of the overall height. Eyewitnesses, such as the late George Hagopian in the early 20th century, confirmed that this window (or series of windows) runs the entire length of both sides of the structure.

In the ongoing war against the Kurds, Turkish F-16 fighters had dropped a 500-pound bomb just off the northeast end of the structure, leaving a 60-meter wide crater. The shock wave from the blast apparently travelled the entire length of the

hollow structure, blowing large chunks of ice from the windows atop the Ark. These ice chunks can be seen in the photo as they are brighter than the glaciers they landed upon. The nine chunks along the northern length are clearly discernible as forming a straight line along the 70.7° northeasterly bearing when the image is properly rotated clockwise 13.8° .



The chunks along the southern length are less distinct, but define another straight line of about nine chunks leading toward the crater at the northeast end. Amazingly, the chunks are fully congruent with Crawford's previous announcement of discovery.

Skeptics who may tend to dismiss this image as a hoax may order their own copy from Spot Image (www.spotimage.com). Request 5m-resolution BW, Acquisition date/time 2003-08-11, 08:01:37, ID Number 51332700308110801371A.

Mt. Ararat is criticized by some as an unbiblical site for Noah's Ark. It is argued that Genesis 11:2 states that the Flood survivors "journeyed from the east" (*i.e.* toward the west from Ararat) and "found a plain in the land of Shinar". However, Shinar is traditionally believed to be located some 50 miles south of Baghdad, Iraq. In fact, the Tower of Babel (a prominent feature of Shinar) is typically believed to be the ruin located at 32°32'11"N, 44°25'15"E, almost 500 miles due south of Ararat.

It would be easy to make an *ad hoc* explanation that they must have first settled southeast of Ararat and then relocated westward from there. After all, it would have required several decades to multiply the population in order to carry out such a massive construction project as the Tower of Babel, thus plenty of time to plant and uproot.

However, there is in fact a district of Diyarbakir Province (in the Southeast Anatolia region) of Turkey named Çınar (about 37°39'08"N, 40°12'29"E) that is 280 miles WSW of Ararat with the modern-day town of Cinar at 37°43'24"N, 40°24'58"E. The hook or *cedilla* under the C in Çınar indicates the *voiceless palatal fricative*. It is used commonly in French where pronounced as "sh" (*e.g.* François). Therefore, modern-day Çınar is still pronounced as "Shinar". There is a large plain there which covers much of southern Turkey. From the town of Cinar can be seen on the plain the ruins of a number of ziggurats (known as tells) similar to those such as the Tower of Babel.

It is interesting to note that the logical pathway toward Çınar from Ararat would have first required westward travel which would have quickly led them to the Murat River, or Eastern Euphrates. People and livestock require fresh water, so continuing along the Murat would have either led them along the Euphrates and toward the southwestern area of the plain or led them to cross a narrow section of land to lead them to the Tigris River toward the northeastern area of the plain.

Consider one more interesting observation. Genesis 6:14 tells us that the Ark was preserved "within and without with pitch." Why would a vessel designed to be afloat for only one year be coated with preservative on the *inside*? And why was this peculiar fact considered so important to include in Genesis? Biblical archaeologists are familiar with hundreds of tiny clues throughout the Bible. Perhaps this is one more clue that God left for us indicating the Ark would be preserved for eventual rediscovery.

Interested parties are directed to the Project von Bora website (www.vonbora.org) to get Crawford's complete story and a summary of those who support the Project. These include archaeologists, glacial morphologists, and military men who specialize in remote sensing (the art of interpreting satellite surveillance images with the goal of discerning man-made vs. natural objects).

In closing, if Crawford indeed located Noah's Ark, this is very good news as such a discovery sheds light on our common origin, moving it out of the realm of millions of years to mere thousands past. Such a relatively recent event would have a calming effect on our present arguments and wars over different faiths. It would also begin to correct about 150 years of bad forensic science and unsupportable theories in the

areas of history, chronology, theology, anthropology, archaeology, geology, and perhaps paleontology.

After subsequent expeditions in 2007, 2008, and 2009, Ed Crawford passed away on 10 December 2009 at the age of 65 in Puyallup, Washington, USA. If Crawford's work proves to be correct, he should not be opposed, but rather honored as a true "Indiana Jones" of our time.

Colonel James Irwin (1930-1991), one of the twelve astronauts to walk on the moon who later led several expeditions to Mt. Ararat in search of the Ark, returned the famous Genesis Rock (estimated at 4 billion years) from his Apollo 15 mission. Regarding his interest in locating Noah's Ark, he explained, "I thought the Lord wanted me involved in finding artifacts from the Genesis time that would be more important than the Genesis Rock we found on the moon."

Indeed, such artifacts would be most important and helpful in these troublous times. Investigate this story diligently. And, beware of willful ignorance.

END