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## Humanity's Second Chance: Darren Aronofsky's Noah (2014) as an Environmental Cinematic Midrash

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## Humanity's Second Chance: Darren Aronofsky's *Noah* (2014) as an Environmental Cinematic Midrash

### Abstract

This article proposes an interpretative study of Daren Aronofsky and Ari Handel's film *Noah* (2014). Our main assertion is that the film attempts to present a contemporary interpretation of the biblical flood story by incorporating values and urgent issues of the 21st century Western society, such as environmentalism, fundamentalism and eco-feminism. The paper details various traditions that serve as inspirations to the filmmakers in the re-telling of the flood myth, and elaborates on the midrashic traditions that were intertwined – or else omitted – in the process of creating the innovative cinematic midrash. It also points to the psychologization of God in the film and its theological implications.

### Keywords

Midrash, biblical film, Noah, flood, environmentalism, eco-feminism, alternative spirituality, Darren Aronofsky, Ari Handel

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## **1. Introduction**

This article<sup>1</sup> proposes an interpretative study of Darren Aronofsky and Ari Handel's film *Noah* (2014).<sup>2</sup> In order to engage in a cultural interpretation of the film, we will trace its main messages. For this purpose, the paper analyzes the inspiration the film draws from various traditions, and its textual and visual design in the context of contemporary Western culture. We will start by presenting the idea of the film as midrash, engaging with the nature of midrashic tradition and introducing the film and its makers (Section 1). Then we will proceed to present the inspiration provided by religious sources to the film particularly the midrashic tradition and various world traditions, thus, referring to the novelty of a few ideas in the film (Section 2). On the basis of the previous sections, we will summarize our argument as to the cinematic midrash of the filmmakers and its central themes and messages (Section 3). The main assertion of this article is that the film attempts to present a contemporary interpretation of the biblical flood story by incorporating values and burning environmental issues of 21st century Western society.

### **1.1. Cinematic Midrash**

Midrash is a Jewish Rabbinic method of exegesis and literary genre created during the first centuries of the Common Era. Classical midrashic literature was written in the land of Israel and in Babylon as a method of biblical exegesis, which was applied to some extent by non-Jewish exegetes. In midrash, the interpretations of the scriptural text were made in a highly

creative manner. Such interpretation may include information not present in scripture, engage in play with the original text, and sometimes even contradict it. Naturally, one of the traits of midrashim (plural of midrash in Hebrew) is a multiplicity of views and stories that do not agree with one another. Some of the midrashim assume an aggadic (legendary) character, while others assume halachic (legal) ones.<sup>3</sup> Overall, the term “midrash” is also borrowed to other historical and cultural contexts, and to any extremely creative interpretation or variation. In this case, the term is borrowed to the cinematic context of *Noah*.

For the purpose of this research, we surveyed a wide range of traditions and interpretations of the Flood story, including its broader narrative framework. In order to discern which midrashim were adopted and which were declined by the filmmakers, we focus our research upon three midrashic anthologies that are available in English, namely, Bialik and Ravnitzky 1992;<sup>4</sup> Ginzberg 1969;<sup>5</sup> Graves and Patai 1967.<sup>6</sup> These popular anthologies, which are accessible to English speakers, are comprehensive and characterized by melting dozens of midrashic sources, written within a millennium, into a rather unified and fluent narrative. It is feasible to assume that these anthologies were the Jewish American filmmakers’ sources and influenced them directly or in some way.

The filmmakers’ implementation of a midrashic approach induced discontent amongst the film’s viewers who expected conventional narratives in a movie about the Flood.<sup>7</sup> The filmmakers were aware of that confrontation, as Handel said: “We set out very purposefully to upset expectations and change

expectations people had about this story.”<sup>8</sup> The general disgruntlement of both viewers and critics might derive from three very different kinds of unfamiliarity with midrash tradition: the first is unawareness of the many midrashic details in the film's narrative; the second is misunderstanding of the creative midrashic style adopted by the filmmakers, in line with this tradition, and thirdly the midrashic mode of interpretational openness, which transcend the literal biblical text. This paper will later demonstrate some traditional midrashic narratives, as well as particular innovative depictions in *Noah*.

## 1.2. The Film and its Makers

As Aronofsky stated, *Noah* brings the genre of the biblical epic film back to the realm of popular cinema after a long absence of approximately half a century.<sup>9</sup> This may be perceived as part of a new wave beginning with *The Passion* (2004), and continuing with *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (2014) and *Ben-Hur* (2016). These films continue the biblical epic film tradition of large-scale productions and impressive special effects.<sup>10</sup> It is of relevance to indicate that *Noah* is the first Hollywood film entirely dedicated to the Flood story. Two former Hollywood films addressed this story in a partial manner. The first was Michael Curtiz's *Noah's Ark* from 1928 that depicted the Flood in parallel with the First World War. The second was John Huston's *The Bible: In the Beginning* from 1966, which includes a scene of the Flood story within the Genesis' sequence of events. *Noah* could be categorized both as biblical epic

film and a mythic film. It can also be categorized as post-apocalyptic and ecological film. These different contexts contribute to the complexity of its narrative and messages as will be explicated in section 3.

The screenplay was written by Darren Aronofsky, the director, together with Ari Handel. Both Aronofsky and Handel define themselves as secular American Jews. Aronofsky is the director and screenwriter of other films that deal with religious and spiritual themes, such as *Pi* (1998) and *The Fountain* (2006).<sup>11</sup> Aronofsky and Handel began working on the screenplay in 2003, which means that they were engaged with the pre-production of *Noah* for more than a decade.<sup>12</sup> Aronofsky relates that the story of Noah has occupied his thoughts from an early age. When he was thirteen years old, he wrote a poem about Noah that won an award. At the start of his directing career, he considered making a film about Noah, but was able to realize the great undertaking involved in this film's production only fifteen years later. In one interview, as he spoke about the poem he wrote in his youth, he said, "I've been living with this idea for a very long time... more than any other film I've worked on. This has been living with me way back".<sup>13</sup>

### **1. 2. i. About the Film**

The film *Noah*, starring Russell Crowe, was released in 2014 at a cost of \$125 million. It grossed \$362.6 million worldwide.<sup>14</sup> The film narrates<sup>15</sup> the story of

the biblical Flood, in which Noah, the son of Lamech and the grandson of Methuselah, as well as a tenth-generation descendant of Adam through Adam's son Seth, receives a message from God that a flood will soon destroy all of humanity. He builds an ark in which his family, together with a remnant of all animals on earth, takes refuge from the flood. Noah and his wife Na'ameh<sup>16</sup> enter the ark with their three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their foster daughter. The antediluvian world is depicted as having been brought to ruin by humanity. Animals and plants are rare. Noah's family lives in isolation from other human beings, whom the film portrays as cruel and rapacious. As the plot progresses, Noah is persuaded that God intends to wipe out the human race, albeit, for a just reason. The central drama in the film seems to revolve around the viewpoint that Noah adopts, which eventually leads him to become hostile even towards the members of his own family.

## **2. Cultural Sources of Inspiration and the Midrashic Tradition**

In contrast to the majority of biblical films which depict canonical locations and characters wearing typical robes and sandals, *Noah* was shot in the awe-inspiring wilderness of Iceland. The vast and dramatic terrain that forms the film's scenery, coupled with the organic and futuristic design of the costumes, generates a mythic and post-apocalyptic sci-fi atmosphere.<sup>17</sup> For the purpose of narrating a cinematic midrash that includes a mythic realm, the filmmakers drew inspiration not only from the biblical story of Noah, but also from other

religions and cultures. *Noah*'s fantasy world includes the mythic imagery of the Nephilim, and the miraculous growth of a lush forest in the barren land, to name a few examples.<sup>18</sup>

In this section we will discuss symbols, images, myths, and major ideas that appear in the film as part of the imaginary world that it portrays, the various traditional contexts from which they were drawn, and their design and integration in *Noah*. Aronofsky and Handel say, with good reason, that they are continuing the Jewish tradition of creating midrash, in which the exegetist adheres to either some aspects of the original story, on the one hand, while creating freely, on the other hand, thus giving the biblical account a new interpretation.<sup>19</sup> The following sections show various aspects of the plot's visual design, imagery and details while placing them in the context of midrashic tradition as well as other traditions.

## **2.1. Inspiration from Various Traditions**

The variety of traditions and cultures that serve as sources of inspiration, suggested by the filmmakers, attests to a universalistic approach, typical of liberal Western trends in contemporary spiritualities. The perennialistic belief, common to these trends, sees all religions as sharing an ancient kernel of truth. Accordingly, the option of merging different religious traditions in an eclectic manner is prevalent, allowing each individual to design a personal religion.<sup>20</sup> The cinematic design of *Noah* in the context of the epic mythic genre



expresses the notion that the Flood story appears in dozens of ancient cultures worldwide,<sup>21</sup> so it is not only a biblical story belonging to the Judeo-Christian tradition. The following three traditions, none of them from the midrash corpus, had a recognizable influence on *Noah*.

Inspiration from the Far East is hinted at several points in the film when it shows one character (Na'ameh, Methuselah) touching another (Noah, Japheth) on the forehead. The character touched in this way falls asleep immediately and sometimes has a prophetic dream. The act of touching the forehead is taken from initiation traditions in India, since the forehead is known as the seat of the "third eye."<sup>22</sup> Such acts have become common in contemporary popular spiritual culture; they are also used as a hypnotic technique in which the forehead is touched to induce a trance or sleep-like state.<sup>23</sup> The last moments of Methuselah are presented in the form of a well-known Zen Buddhist story.<sup>24</sup> A man is fleeing for his life. As he dangles over an abyss, holding onto a thin branch with one hand, he reaches for some wild strawberries, which he picks and eats with pleasure. Methuselah, too, searches for wild berries in the forest, and manages to eat some just as the water surges into the forest and sweeps him away. The scene is concluded when Methuselah is depicted enjoying the berries, smiling and widely opening his hands in a gesture of making peace with the waves that flood the forest and drown him. This part of the film expresses the Zen Buddhist approach that emphasizes living in the here and now, which has become widespread in the West.

Inspiration from Native American shamanism is recalled in the scene portraying Methuselah living in a cave on a green high mountain, far from human civilization. According to the bible, he was a righteous man, who died at the age of 969. He is depicted as a good-natured, wise old man with special healing powers. Among other deeds, he heals Ila, Noah's adopted daughter, from infertility. One scene in the film seems to be inspired by the aboriginal shamanism of Peru, with its tradition of drinking Ayahuasca tea that has become popular in various Western spiritual movements.<sup>25</sup> When Noah visits Methuselah, he drinks tea with the older man and consults him about the approaching Flood. He does not know what he ought to do, and complains about the bitter taste of the tea. Methuselah answers, "Well, perhaps there is more for you to see. Did He not send you here to drink a cup of tea with an old man?! The medicine always tastes bad." Methuselah uses the word "medicine" which is common in the contemporary spiritual discourse that draws on Native American ritualistic practices that are perceived as part of a healing process. Thus, it appears that the tea was actually a psychedelic drink, and Noah indeed loses consciousness and receives a vision guiding him to build the ark. Therefore, though the image of the wise old man or the isolated monk in a cave appears in various cultures and traditions, in *Noah* the shamanic influence on the filmmakers is evident.<sup>26</sup>

Inspiration from Catholic imagery is evoked in an original depiction according to which Noah's family develops an incense that sedates all the animals in the ark for the Flood's duration. The family members assume the

image of Catholic priests carrying incense as they walk along the church aisles: they are seen holding incense-burners suspended from strings as they walk among all the sections of the ark where the animals are housed, and the smoke puts the animals to sleep immediately. In addition, when Lamech passes the family tradition down to Noah early in the film, he binds a snake's slough on his arm and then stretches his glowing finger toward Noah's finger in a manner resembling God's finger stretched toward Adam's in Michelangelo's famous painting in the Sistine Chapel, *The Creation of Adam*. This image conjures the association of a cosmic moment and an encounter with the sublime.

The above-mentioned depictions endow the biblical story with a new cultural context characterized by a contemporary spiritual flavor. Actually, different symbols and fractions of myths are incorporated in the film. Alongside the biblical myth, one can indicate other sources to themes such as the Tree of Life, Garden of the Gods, Prophetic drink, the old wise healer, an initiation rite in a cave, and more. Hence, it may be difficult at times to discern the exact source of inspiration.

## **2.2. Original Ideas in *Noah***

### **2.2. i. "Zohar"**

Some occurrences in *Noah*'s fantasy world, such as the miraculous appearance of a white flower in the dust after the first raindrop falls from the sky, have no

source in any known tradition as far as we know. In addition, the film introduces a piece of ore called “Zohar,” which is used to start fire and provide light. According to the plot, human beings had damaged the earth in their rapacious desire for this ore, which produces fire and light. The ecological context of the zohar stone is obvious: it hints at the way human beings, in order to produce energy, have exploited natural resources such as crude oil, natural gas and coal throughout the twentieth century until the present time. However, the traditional source that the filmmakers utilized in this context is not clear.

In our attempts to allocate sources to the zohar's ore, we were able to discern a couple of possibilities. One of them is the midrashic tradition about a few angels who transformed themselves into gold and precious stones, buried deep in the earth in order to tempt covetous people into searching for them and so prove their greed.<sup>27</sup> Another group of midrashim tells of the metals and gems which were gathered by men and of the fallen angels who taught them how to utilize the metals to make weapons and shields.<sup>28</sup> Yet another possible source is the verse of Genesis 6:16, where God tells Noah to make a “tzohar” for the ark, so it would light it. The word “tzohar” has several interpretations in midrashim which utilize it in order to refer to skylight, precious stone or small window.<sup>29</sup> Other midrashim state as well that a crystal provided light for the ark, and the quality of its light indicated whether it was daytime or nighttime outside.<sup>30</sup> In the film, the fragment of ore known as zohar is utilized to light the ark by day and night. We suggest that the word “tzohar” that

appeared in some English midrash Anthologies<sup>31</sup> gave *Noah*'s creators the idea of their innovative ore's name – "zohar."<sup>32</sup>

## 2.2. ii. The Snake's Slough and Birthright

The biblical traditions tell of ten generations starting from Adam, his third son Enosh until Noah. Many ancient legends relate to this lineage in order to portray items that were passed on within it since Adam, such as a book of secrets. The filmmakers illustrate this tradition in a creative manner when they present Lamech, Noah's father, at the beginning of the film (0.02:05-0.03:03) as he tells Noah, the child, about his birthright. He then takes out a snake's slough from a box and wraps it around his left arm and fingers until it shines. The act of warping the snake's slough on the hand recalls the Jewish practice of wrapping the tefillin on the left hand for the right-handed.<sup>33</sup> The filmmakers' source for utilizing a snake's slough can be found in the mention of an object that God prepared,<sup>34</sup> with which to clothe Adam and Eve after they sinned - *kothnoth or*, literally dresses or coats of skin (Genesis 3:21). Whilst the ordinary interpretation is that God prepared dresses or coats *for* [their] skin, for example, from linen, there is an interpretation that suggests that God prepared dresses or coats *from* skin, i.e., from an animal's skin. In a midrash that is in the mystical book of Zohar (Tikkuney Zohar 10b), it is said that the cloth was of a "snakeskin" in order to "purify [Adam] with what he has sinned." That is to say, the purpose of the cloth is to wrap the body in a

snake's slough as part of the process of repairing the damage caused by the sin associated with the snake. In another mystical tradition (Zohar a: 28b), it is written that these items of cloth were actually tefillin (and tzitzith, another ritualistic garment).<sup>35</sup> Another ancient tradition that precedes the book of Zohar, in Bereishit Rabbah 9:5, determines that the reference is to dresses or coats of light. The Hebrew word “*or*”, which means skin and begins with the letter Ayin, sounds very similar to the Hebrew word “*or*”, which means light and begins with the letter Alef. In various Jewish mystical traditions, the idea that the body of light of the first couple was transformed into a corporeal body after the sin was elaborated. Hence, the clothing that they received from God to replace their original body of light is the human skin, that is the body as we know it today.

Thus, it appears that the filmmakers integrated in a most creative manner elements from various traditions, and above all created a new cinematic midrash, as they depicted an object that was passed on to Noah via his lineage as a reminder of the original sin, an object imbued with a unique quality to radiate light. The snake's slough is indeed not a cloth, though perhaps the English translation of ‘*kothnoth*’ as garments enabled this understanding of the term.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, the likeness of wrapping the snake's slough in the film to tefillin and its presentation as a glowing object – including its connection to the original sin and to the snake – as well as the depiction of Adam and Eve in the movie as glowing bodies of light, an image that interplays with the etymology and the phonetics of the word “*or*” as skin

and light, all these are strongly linked to the prolific traditional discourse in an original and compelling way.

### **2.2. iii. The Miraculous Forest**

Another example of original depictions in the film that were inspired by midrashic works is the miraculous forest that Noah plants from the seed he received from Methuselah - a seed that came from a tree from the Garden of Eden. It is from this forest that Noah cuts down the trees to build the ark. This part of the plot combines, in a highly creative fashion, two different midrashim. One of them is about the cedar forest that is grown in order to build the ark. The midrash, in fact, emphasizes the duration that it takes for Noah to take care of the trees until they grow, and later to cut them down in order to build the ark. This duration allows people around Noah to ask about his intentions, and enables him to warn them of the Flood, and suggest that they repent.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, in the film, the growth of the forest is fast, hence, there is no time for such warnings by Noah.

The other midrash is about the planting, after the flood, of a grape seed from the Garden of Eden, that grows into a vineyard in a single day. Noah drinks from this vineyard and gets drunk, thus indecent events unfold from his drunken state. The events that transpire during drunkenness appear in the biblical story (Genesis 9:21-24) and in the film, but the film does not depict the vineyard, its planting and the original seed that was planted and from

which it grew.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps having used the idea of a miraculous seed of Eden for the forest mentioned above made it impossible to re-use this tradition in the film for the planting of the vineyard. Anyway, it is another innovative interpretation that integrates midrashic traditions into the creation of an entirely new midrash in relation to the seed of the Garden of Eden, its planting, its miraculous growth, etc.

These examples, with their creative and original way of drawing inspiration from existing traditions — as midrash has always done — bring us to the issue of the affinity between the midrashic tradition about the Flood story and the thematic and aesthetic design of the plot.

### **2.3. Continuity and Innovation Juxtaposed with the Jewish Midrashic Traditions**

From its beginnings, midrash has always combined adherence to the biblical text with ingenuity and novelty, sometimes even coming up with a daring innovation that contradicts scripture, as elaborated above. For example, the authors of midrashim discuss the degree of Noah's righteousness, by analyzing the biblical Hebrew word *bedorotav*, "in his generations" (from Genesis 6:9). While some say that he was righteous to a great degree, others criticize him, even saying that he was righteous only in comparison to his own generation, which was particularly wicked.<sup>39</sup> For this reason, one cannot ask whether the film is loyal to the midrashic tradition, since that tradition contains many



stories that do not agree with one another. Therefore, in this section we will present the dialectic in which the filmmakers, on one hand, stick to the biblical tradition or a particular midrash, and on the other hand, create midrash through their own inventive interpretations.

### **2.3. i. Noah, his Family and Generation**

Noah is the son of Lamech, who is in turn the son of Methuselah, the tenth-generation descendant of a dynasty of righteous people that goes back to Adam. The name of Noah's wife in the film, Na'ameh, was taken from the midrash. According to scripture and subsequent midrashic accounts, Noah had three married sons who entered the ark with their wives. In the film, Noah's family comprises of three unmarried sons and a foster daughter who becomes Shem's wife. Noah refuses to find wives for his other sons or allow them to search for wives themselves. Midrashic tradition also recounts that the major sins of Noah's contemporaries were sexual corruption, theft, and idolatry.<sup>40</sup> The film, however, places its emphasis upon human violence and cruelty both against one another and against nature (animals and the earth). Moreover, human beings are depicted as indifferent or defiant toward God.

One topic that does not appear in the film, not coincidentally, is the punishment of the earth. This theme first appears in scripture (Genesis 6:11-13): "And the earth was corrupt before God, and [...] filled with violence. [...] And God said unto Noah: 'I will destroy them [humanity] with the earth.'"

The earth is cursed by God in the biblical story, because of the sins of men, to grow thorns and weeds, making it difficult to grow food (3:17-18). Later, following the murder of Abel by Cain, God punishes Cain so that the earth will not yield its power to him as he fed it with the blood of the murdered (4:11-12). This theme is developed in the midrashim. The midrash tells that the sins of the earth began with its incomplete disobedience to God's commandment on the third day in which the plants were created.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps these ideas as to the earth's sins and God's punishment do not appear in the film due to its context that weaves together eco-feminist and environmental values that revere the earth along with the protection of nature and children.

Eco-feminist sensibility is denoted in the film through the women in Noah's family. Both Na'ameh and Ila express a feminine-maternal perspective that advocates life and is pro-humanity. This perspective is typical of eco-feminism that identifies the feminine and the maternal with nature, and sees patriarchal culture as a social construct and order of domination that oppresses both alike.<sup>42</sup> Accordingly, eco-feminism is critical of viewpoints that are hierarchical and establishment-orientated, nationalist, misogynist, violent and harmful to nature. While the film does not express this view through elaborate verbal expression, it depicts it through the acts of Na'ameh and Ila, and also of Ham. This mode of depiction appears to emphasize a feminine-spiritual approach that prioritizes actions and physical-material embodiment over ideology and theoretical abstractions. It recalls the notion of the "embodied self"<sup>43</sup> that characterizes feminine spirituality, eco-feminist's sense and

ideology of embodiment<sup>44</sup> as well as New Age spiritualities.<sup>45</sup> This tendency and viewpoint, which Noah adopts gradually, unfolds throughout the plot as the only way to preserve proper values — spiritual, ecological, social, family, and interpersonal — while at the same time ensuring the continuity of human existence. Eco-feminism broadly declares that humanity's survival depends upon proper values as well as upon people who express love and compassion to one another. In this approach, human actions and choices embody the will of God in practice — an idea that integrates very well with the immanent, as opposed to transcendent, eco-feminist theological approach.<sup>46</sup> The same kind of love that might be seen as inferior, as discriminating between one person and another out of a maternal, subjective perspective, is the love that the film portrays in the end, as the hope of the human species. In the film's penultimate scene, Ham speaks with Ila, who represents the compassionate-maternal, eco-feminist viewpoint, expressing hope for the future of humanity that is embodied in her image: "I'm glad it begins again with you. Maybe we'll learn to be kind." (2:04:03-2:04:38)

In addition, the opportunity that has been given to Noah to function optimally as a family man — a father and a grandfather — is an expression of the desirable and compassionate mode of functioning for humanity as a whole, which elevates the prioritization of interpersonal relationships as a way to repair the world (2:06:53 – 2:06:2:07:14):

He has given us a second chance. Be a father. Be a grandfather. Help us to do better this time. Help us start again.

These statements by Ila, which are actually directed toward present-day humanity, are an expression of the maternal and eco-feminist sensibility. In contemporary life, they refer to the same voices (including single people, mothers among them) and groups in alternative culture, liberal spirituality, the women's movements and social activism that act out of human compassion and a desire to ensure the future of humanity or at least their own children's future.

### **2.3. ii. The Ark and the Flood**

The midrashic accounts state that when the Flood began, hundreds of thousands of wicked people gathered around the ark,<sup>47</sup> shouting for Noah to let them inside. When he refused, they tried to break in and were killed by the wild animals who were trying to do the same.<sup>48</sup> The film depicts a similar scene in which the wicked people try to fight Noah in order to capture the ark from him. When the surging waves reach them, their cries can be heard outside the ark. Ila and Noah's sons consider assisting them, but Noah says that they cannot save them. (1:18:00 -1:23:05) Clearly, the film's version differs from the midrashic account in several ways.

The biblical story of Noah in Genesis 6-9 inter-mingles two different traditions of the Flood story. According to the biblical story, Noah gathered two of each kind of animal (Genesis 7:9). Nahmanides writes in his

commentary to Genesis 6:20 that the animal pairs came to the ark on their own, with no need for Noah to bring them there.<sup>49</sup> The film shows the animals arriving at the ark at the proper time, and on their own. However, scripture also states (Genesis 7:2) a different tradition in which in addition to the animals that entered the ark in pairs, Noah brought seven pairs of animals of the pure kind into the ark, and sacrificed some of them at the conclusion of the Flood (Genesis 8:20).<sup>50</sup> The film ignores the scripture's narrative of the seven animals, and makes no mention of sacrificial offerings. The concept of the animals' sacrifice does not accord with the modern Western view of vegetarianism, which is adopted in the film.

However, the notion of vegetarianism is not all new, but already appear in the biblical story, since humanity received God's blessing for eating food from vegetation (Genesis 1:29). It was only after the Flood that God permits to eat meat (Genesis 9:3). Furthermore, in the vision of Isaiah, there is a depiction of a future vegetarian world that resumes its Edenic state. Then, even predatory animals will return to become vegetarian, the ancient hostility between humanity and the snake will be forgotten (Isaiah 11:6-7), and all of humanity will know God and refrain from evil deeds (Isaiah 11:9-8). Hence, the vegetarian ideal is already apparent in some fragments of the bible, combined with a vision of peace and faithfulness to God. This righteous vegetarian ideal is developed in the film as well as in a wide range of exegeses, amongst them the renowned essay, "A Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace".<sup>51</sup>

Vegetarianism is elaborated and prominent throughout the plot as a moral and religious directive, as we see the wicked people that hunt animals for their flesh. In one scene (0.06:13-0.07:50), Noah fights hunters in order to defend an animal, when it is evident that many animals were extinct. The animal appears as an unfamiliar creature, and this suggests that it was made extinct by man's deeds. This is a statement which goes further than vegetarianism and points to human damage to species diversity. It is yet another innovative way of linking Noah's story to contemporary environmental concerns by critically addressing the preservation of species that are under threat in their natural habitat. Moreover, the focus on a single, unfamiliar creature, artificially created for the film, allows the filmmakers to highlight their commitment to animal rights, and animal ethics in entertainment, as they refrain from depicting real animals on.<sup>52</sup> What is more, Noah invests himself in saving the animals and not in "saving innocent babies." Additionally, Aronofsky explains that the vegetarian ideal that Noah embodies is in line with environmental issues, since according to the book of Genesis, animals lived with one another in harmony and carnivores did not exist at that time. This changed only after the Flood, though the desire to return to an Edenic situation, including the vegetarian ideal, remains.<sup>53</sup>

### 2.3. iii. The Nephilim

The traditional story of the Nephilim is complicated. Just before the story of the Flood (Genesis 6: 1-4), the Bible mentions the story of the “sons of God” who lay with the daughters of men and their offspring, the Nephilim, became legendary heroes who won worldwide fame. Midrashic literature expanded upon the sons of God and the Nephilim (sometimes identical to each other), describing them as angels who rebelled against God and descended to earth, where they were tempted by the beautiful human women. Certain midrashic accounts tell of the fallen angels’ appearance, and here we find that among other things, they “became clods of earth like flesh and blood.”<sup>54</sup> It is likely that the meaning of the midrash is that they wore flesh like human beings who come from earth, but the cinematic interpretation and aesthetic depiction of the midrash was that these creatures were made from actual clods of earth. Many traditions state that the Nephilim were giants of extraordinary height and in the film they were also portrayed in this way.

The film selectively adopted these midrashim, which of course are full of contradictory versions, and added to them. It depicts the Nephilim as gigantic, twisted creatures, angels who chose to help and teach humanity. When these angels disobeyed God’s command, God punished them by imprisoning them on earth and covering their bodies of light with clods of dirt. The Nephilim in the film are loyal to God and repent of their sin. They are hostile toward human beings due to the latter’s betrayal of God (0:20:42 -

0:23:01). They help Noah to build the ark and protect it from the angry mob surging toward it at the beginning of the Flood. The bodies made of light, which belong to those Nephilim who fell in battle against the wicked ones, return to God, a detail that does not appear in the midrashic accounts (1:13:31-1:16:40).

Midrashim recount that the fallen angels teach humanity various secrets, such as the sciences (botany and astronomy, to name two examples), as well as practical things that led to the degeneration of humanity, such as how to fashion weapons and use sorcery. Of one leader of the fallen angels, Azazel, it is said that “he showed them metals and how to work them.”<sup>55</sup> The film utilizes these traditions when it shows the men – headed by Tubal Cain – occupied making weapons out of metals, and using them to kill and terrorize women, animals and one another. In another scene, one of the Nephilim regrets trying to help humanity by teaching them of creation, since “they turned our gifts to violence” (0:20:38 -0:22:02). The film mentions nothing as to the Nephilim’s sins and forbidden sex, and suffices in laconic reference to their disobedience of God.<sup>56</sup>

### **2.3. iv. Fertility and Procreation**

A major theme of the film is Noah’s conclusion that God wishes to destroy humanity completely so that only Noah’s family survives in order to enable a new beginning for the world *without* human beings. Expecting that his family



will die without leaving offspring, he even prevents his two sons from finding wives in order to father children. When Shem, his first-born son, takes Ila, Noah's adopted daughter, as his wife, Noah does not oppose the match because he believes that Ila is infertile (0:20:13 – 0:20:18). Methuselah heals Ila (1:06:33-1:08: 05), whose subsequent pregnancy becomes apparent during the Flood, and Noah threatens to kill her newborn twin daughters.

The innovation in the plot, wherein Ila has a pair of twin girls, is unfounded in the bible or midrash. It fits perfectly with the other innovative idea in the script in which Shem and Japheth had no wives, which is in contradiction to the biblical tradition. The birth of the twins in the film seems to imply a divine plan that expresses God's will to secure the continuation of humanity, and in this way, dispel Noah's conclusion that humanity must end. In this manner, the plot indicates on God's involvement without presenting an actual revelation. It appears that Noah concludes from this development that he was wrong.

In the end, Noah relents and lets them live. This dilemma regarding humanity's moral right to existence and continuity disturbs him for the rest of his life, yet the film ends with Noah somewhat coming to term with this outcome. The idea that procreation is forbidden in the story of the Flood appears in various versions of the midrash, though in a very different manner than that portrayed in the film. One midrash states that the corruption of his generation made Noah consider refraining from siring offspring because he knew that a flood would come to destroy humanity and did not want to bring

children into the world only to have them perish. Noah agrees to procreate only when God assures him that his offspring will be protected.<sup>57</sup> Other traditions tell that the prohibition against procreation was in effect only during the time of the Flood, since it was inappropriate to have sexual relations in the ark while the whole world was suffering. Several midrashim attribute this prohibition to God, while others attribute it to Noah. Of all the inhabitants of the ark, only three violated this prohibition: the dog, the raven, and Noah's son, Ham. All three had sexual relations in the ark, and all three were punished for it.<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, in the film, Ham is the son who tries the hardest to find a wife for himself while Noah opposes his efforts.

We see, then, that the filmmakers relied upon various midrashic traditions about procreation, but gave the story a color and interpretation of their own. In the film, the more Noah becomes privy to God's intentions, the more he adopts the fundamentalist point of view. He develops a growing hatred of humanity in his identification with God's will. Noah's stubbornness and growing cruelty recalls two perspectives in contemporary Western culture. One perspective is that of conservative clergy members who see themselves as expressing God's own protests against humanity's sins, as they warn of an apocalypse and even justify it as it draws near, with the cruel punishments it has in store for sinners and unbelievers.<sup>59</sup> The second perspective is that of members of the environmental movement described by Bookchin in his critique of the deep ecology movement,<sup>60</sup> in particular those affiliated with extreme trends of deep ecology. These radical environmentalists emphasize

the environmental damage caused by humans and the latter's cruelty towards all beings including microorganism and viruses. They describe a magical, utopian situation of harmony in nature after the majority of human beings have been wiped off the face of the earth. This ideology is fundamentally anti-human and very similar to Noah's standpoint when he plans to kill his granddaughters. Bookchin compares this ideological stance to the "eco-brutalism" of Hitler and the Nazi's method of "population control" that was executed through the extermination camps and other schemes. Decreasing the world's population is indeed a high priority agenda of the deep ecology movement and an integral part of its ethics and politics as explicated by Devall and Sessions in the publication *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered*.<sup>61</sup>

### **2.3. v. Sex and Violence**

In general, violence in the film is downplayed<sup>62</sup> and parts of the severe sexual sins that can be found in the tradition around the Flood story were censored. We mentioned the context of the absence of the sexual intercourse of the Nephilim with women, as well as the sinners in the ark. Stories of forbidden sex that are widespread in midrash literature – the ones mentioned above, bestiality within humanity (Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 105a), the story of the castration and rape of Noah by Ham,<sup>63</sup> the crow's suspicion of Noah's lust for its wife (Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 108b) – all these are far removed from the plot. As a result Ham's character, tainted in the tradition because of the sex in

the ark and the sexual scene with his drunken father, remains a lot more positive and interesting. He is portrayed as being hurt by Noah, and not as a wicked person like in the many traditions about him.

The violence that characterizes humanity is portrayed in a pivotal and visually engaging scene in which Noah gives an abridged account of humanity's sins, in the form of violent acts, from Creation to the Flood (1:27:00-1.27:37):

Since Adam, sin has walked within us. Brother against brother. Nation against nation. Man against Creation. We murdered each other. We broke the world. We did this. Man did this. Everything that was beautiful, everything that was good, we shattered.

However, despite the emphasis on violence, the latter in the film is relatively weak. Clearly, this is an evaluation relative to violence in other contemporary films. The actual fact that humanity is destroyed is a very violent idea, and it is understandable that the audience is expecting violent happenings in biblical films,<sup>64</sup> and especially in this film.<sup>65</sup> However, in relation to other biblical films (*Exodus: Gods and Kings*, *The Passion*) and also other contemporary films, the violence on screen is reduced. McGeough even terms it as “weak violence” that is utilized to induce kinetically impressive though light battle scenes that are mythological in nature.<sup>66</sup> However, McGeough indicates that intensive violence in Noah is primarily psychological, for example, when Noah ponders whether to murder his granddaughters.<sup>67</sup>

The violence, being psychological, diverts the attribution of violence from God to Noah. This idea lessens the violence, as it is not necessarily justified by the master-narrative: if Noah is violent, it does not necessarily mean that this is the will of God. As aforementioned, the audience anticipates the destruction of humanity in such a film, but Noah's violent tendency surprises the audience and requires that they engage with the consequences of the extermination of humankind.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, the cinematic midrash generates a moral discourse where it could have been absent, e.g., had the biblical story been reconstructed without innovation. The filmmakers, in this fashion, probably refer to criticism of fundamentalist trends that ascribe violent actions to the will of God in order to justify it. Moreover, in this manner, the film may denote that tendencies to activate violence in the name of God are not necessarily the expression of his will. Another interesting link that Aronofsky creates is between war and ecology, as he sees in war a double damage, toward both human beings and the environment.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, the onslaught on the natural environment and living creatures, human and non-human, through the violence of war is a prevalent theme in eco-feminist thought.<sup>70</sup>

### **3. In Between Justice and Mercy: The Psychologization of God**

The characterization of God undergoes a modern psychologization in the cinematic midrash. The questions are human, and the development of the plot relates directly to human choices – does humanity damage the environment,

and how the matter will influence the earth's future, and so on. The questions of good and evil are the focus of the film's plot,<sup>71</sup> as well as God which is positioned at the center of Noah's character's development and moral quest. According to Aronofsky, the central process depicted in the film is finding the balance between justice and mercy, which is the very process that Noah undergoes throughout the plot.<sup>72</sup> The film implies that this process remains uncompleted in Noah's case.<sup>73</sup> Noah's values develop in the film to the point in which he realizes that humanity's survival depends upon proper principles expressed through love and compassion to one another (1:56:50-2:00:23). Thus, human actions and choices are the embodiment of the will of God in practice — a notion that highlights the immanent theological approach, which as explained in Section 2.3.i., is typical of eco-feminist thought including a wide range of New Age and alternative spiritualities.

When Ila speaks later to Noah (2.06:16-2.06:49), she actually explains the relation between God and humanity:

He chose you for a reason, Noah. He showed you the wickedness of man and knew you would not look away. But then you saw goodness, too. The choice was put in your hands because He put it there. He asked you to decide if we were worth saving. And you chose mercy. You chose love.

In her words, Ila emphasizes the process that underlines Noah's development and his awakening to his own role of negotiating the divine's plan for humanity. Handel also emphasizes that Noah's story is actually a suggestion that since we are living a "second chance" after humanity was almost

destroyed, it is important that we respect it.<sup>74</sup> We can see even the absence, in the film, of God's promise in the Bible that the Flood would never recur as the filmmakers' hint of the current eco-ethical challenge as something pending. The film concludes with Noah's call to continue humanity's existence. Intriguingly, the film places God's blessing in the Bible in Noah's mouth, verbatim: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth," which God says to Noah and his family after they leave the ark (Genesis 9:1).

### **3.1. Conclusions: The Cinematic Midrash of *Noah***

As Aronofsky says, this is not a "kids' story" or "your grandmother's Bible." Instead, the filmmakers strive to continue the midrashic tradition, i.e., to tell the biblical story while addressing current issues. They adhere to the original text as well as rewrite the traditions of the past. Aronofsky states, "The idea was to re-invent them for the twenty-first century," which is certainly evident in the film.<sup>75</sup> The filmmakers' exegetical intent is indeed in relation to the cultural context in which they live and operate. Biblical films, since the beginning of the 20th century, were utilized to transmit current messages of their era.<sup>76</sup> In our case, contemporary values and issues shape the film's narrative and visual design as well. Therefore, for the purpose of fully comprehending the cinematic interpretation, it is necessary to observe not only the midrashic tradition that was adopted or rejected in the film's framework, but also the variety of contemporary cultural contexts – the environmental

movement, including vegan discourse, eco-feminism, alternative spiritualities, fundamentalism, and more.<sup>77</sup>

In addition, the choice to refer to a variety of contemporary cinematic genres in the making of a biblical film – to the post-apocalyptic genre and to the ecological genre<sup>78</sup> – impacts the film's interpretation and its cultural implications.<sup>79</sup>

According to the Bible, the story of Noah is history's first apocalyptic story. Aronofsky goes further, claiming that we cannot consider the biblical story of Noah without paying attention to its ecological aspect. In contradiction to post-apocalyptic ecological epics (e.g., *The Day After Tomorrow*), in *Noah* the Flood is, explicitly, a direct punishment from God, not a natural disaster directly caused by human deeds. While the film emphasizes human responsibility for harm to the environment (the exploitation of natural resources and the abuse of animals), it also points to other sins in the moral-social-religious sphere. Accordingly, the punishment comes directly from God. On this point, the film closely follows the biblical text, which deviates from the conventional viewpoint of the ecological apocalyptic genres. Moreover, the environment that engulfs the characters in the film does not merely signify ecological devastation or human transgression. The epic mythic scenery portrays the intricate and imaginative legendary aspects of the environment, which is typical of midrash literature. The midrashic style gives rise to the viewers' involvement with extraordinary happenings as well as with disputed creatures such as the Nephilim alongside severe religious, ethical and



environmental discourse, which questions Noah's moral integrity and ponders on the will of God in relation to the Flood and its consequences. Thus, the narrative framework of the cinematic midrash allows the viewers to engage with Noah's cathartic transition from justice to mercy, from the depths of despair and cruelty to compassion and hope, through which his role as the mediator of the will of God becomes apparent.

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<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgment: this paper's preparation was supported by Zefat Academic College.

<sup>2</sup> "Noah (screenplay, 2014)," Darren Aronofsky and Ari Handel, accessed April 6, 2016, [http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/movie\\_script.php?movie=noah](http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/movie_script.php?movie=noah).

<sup>3</sup> Jacob Neusner, *The Midrash: an introduction* (London: Jason Aronson, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Hayim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky, *The Book of Legends (Sefer ha-Aggadah)*, trans. William G. Braude (New York: Schocken Books, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 1 (New York: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969).

<sup>6</sup> Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co, 1964).

<sup>7</sup> Wojciech Kosior, "The Crimes of Love. The (Un) Censored Version of the Flood Story in Noah (2014)," *Journal of Religion & Film* 20.3, article 27, (2016), available at: <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol20/iss3/27>.

<sup>8</sup> Tyler Huckabee, "Noah's Co-Writer Explains the Film's Controversial Theology" (2014), accessed January 11, 2016, <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/culture/noah%E2%80%99s-co-writer-explains-film%E2%80%99s-controversial-theology#FjzVbddYZMh6zQTy.99>.

<sup>9</sup> ScreenSlam, "Noah: Director Darren Aronofsky — On Set Movie Interview" (2014), accessed April 6, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGIPUVyGIfc&nohtml5=False> (part 1), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvmiOf3BQkE&nohtml5=FalsePart> (part 2).

<sup>10</sup> Andrew B.R Elliot, ed. *The Return of the Epic Film: Genre, Aesthetics and History in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

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- <sup>11</sup> Andrew Johnson, "Pain as the Pathway to Epiphany in the Films of Darren Aronofsky," in *Faith and Spirituality in Masters of World Cinema*, vol. 3, eds. Kenneth R. Morefield and Nicholas S. Olson (UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 111–123 and Jadranka Skorin-Kapov, *Darren Aronofsky's Films and the Fragility of Hope* (New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 1-20, 43-62.
- <sup>12</sup> Center for American Progress, "Noah and the Nexus of Faith and Environmentalism," streamed April 23, 2014, accessed April 6, 2016, [https://youtu.be/4eVr\\_kbfQog](https://youtu.be/4eVr_kbfQog).
- <sup>13</sup> ScreenSlam, "Noah: Director Darren Aronofsky — On Set Movie Interview".
- <sup>14</sup> Wikipedia, "Noah (2014 film)," accessed April 6, 2016, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noah\\_\(2014\\_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noah_(2014_film)).
- <sup>15</sup> Danny Pegg, "Noah," *Journal of Religion & Film* 19.1 (2015), 1-4, available at: <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol19/iss1/47>.
- <sup>16</sup> In the bible, Noah's wife's name is not mentioned, while various traditions ascribe different names and lineages. It is a common tradition that her name is 'Na'amah,' (Bereishit Rabbah 23:3) but in the script she's called 'Na'ameh.' In the paper, we utilize the latter. Similarly, we write 'Lamech,' as appears in the script, not 'Lemech' as written in the bible.
- <sup>17</sup> Kosior, "The Crimes of Love. The (Un) Censored Version of the Flood Story in Noah (2014), 1.
- <sup>18</sup> Jadranka Skorin-Kapov, *Darren Aronofsky's Films and the Fragility of Hope* (New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 136-137.
- <sup>19</sup> Center for American Progress, "Noah and the Nexus of Faith and Environmentalism".
- <sup>20</sup> Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "New Age Religion," in *Religions in the Modern World – Traditions and Transformations*, eds. Linda Woodhead, Paul Fletcher, Hiroko Kawanami and David Smith (New York: Routledge, 2002), 287-304.
- <sup>21</sup> Alan Dundes, ed. *The flood Myth*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1988).
- <sup>22</sup> Constance, A. Jones and James D. Ryan, *Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (New York, USA: Infobase Publishing, 2006).
- <sup>23</sup> Susana A.Galle and Hassan-Schwarz, "Hypnosis, Yoga, and Psychotherapy," in *Transpersonal Hypnosis*, ed. Eric D. Leskowitz (Boca Raton London, New York, Washington, D.C.: CRC Press, 2000), 55-70.
- <sup>24</sup> See, for example, Section 18 of Reps 1957. We wish to thank Professor Jacob Raz for his assistance.
- <sup>25</sup> Benny Shanon, *The Antipodes of the Mind: Charting the Phenomenology of the Ayahuasca Experience* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

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<sup>26</sup> It is interesting to note, that similar inspirational sources that derive from the Native American culture, also appear in another film by Aronofsky, *The Fountain*. This film's hero is a scientist in search for a cure for his sick wife, the Tree of Life's seed in central America. He finally plants the seed in his wife's grave. Later, he is seen floating in outer space where he is practicing meditation and Tai Chi, growing mushrooms and cutting pieces of a tree trunk in order to prepare an elixir which he drinks. In another reincarnation, the hero is revealed as a fighter of the Mayan indigenous culture of Mexico embarking on a journey after the Tree of Life. In yet another reincarnation, he lives as a solitary monk in outer space, which is perceived in Mayan culture as a limbo of the death gods. For more information about this movie, see Dorene Sue, Koehler, "Techno-Eden: Fantasies of Death and Rebirth in The Fountain." *Mythological Studies Journal* 3 (2012): 1-14, accessed November 10, 2017, [http://journals.sfu.ca/p\\_gi/index.php/pacificamyth/article/view/50/77](http://journals.sfu.ca/p_gi/index.php/pacificamyth/article/view/50/77)  
 Skorin-Kapov, *Darren Aronofsky's Films and the Fragility of Hope*, 43-62.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Graves and Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis*, 107 section h.

<sup>28</sup> See Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 1, 117,119.

<sup>29</sup> See Rashi's commentary on the verse, Genesis 6:16-17, available at: [https://www.sefaria.org/Rashi\\_on\\_Genesis.6.16-17?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Rashi_on_Genesis.6.16-17?lang=bi).

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Graves and Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis*, 119 section i.

<sup>31</sup> Bialik, Hayim Nahman, and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky. *The Book of Legends (Sefer ha-Aggadah)*, Trans. William G. Braude (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), 27 section 121.

<sup>32</sup> It is worth mentioning that the term Zohar became known and appealing in the current spiritual circles that disseminate the Kabbalistic teachings that are written in the book of Zohar, one of the most important writings of Jewish mysticism. One of the major distributors of these teachings and of Zohar books are the branches of Kabbalah Centre (where Madonna and other celebrities learn).

<sup>33</sup> See Tefillin available at <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12125-phylacteries>.

<sup>34</sup> See Huckabee, "Noah's Co-Writer Explains the Film's Controversial Theology".

<sup>35</sup> See Tzitzith available at <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6397-fringes>.

<sup>36</sup> See Huckabee, "Noah's Co-Writer Explains the Film's Controversial Theology".

<sup>37</sup> Bialik and Ravnitzky, *The Book of Legends (Sefer ha-Aggadah)*, 27 section 120.

<sup>38</sup> Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 1, 153, 153-155, footnote no.57.

<sup>39</sup> Bialik and Ravnitzky, *The Book of Legends (Sefer ha-Aggadah)*, 27 section 118.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 1, 138.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 76.

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- <sup>42</sup> Karen J. Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.: 2000).
- <sup>43</sup> See, for example, Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury, eds. *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).
- <sup>44</sup> Richard T. Twine, "Ma (r) king Essence-Ecofeminism and Embodiment," *Ethics & the Environment* 6.2 (2001), 58-31.
- <sup>45</sup> Mary Farrell Bednarowski, "The New Age Movement and Feminist Spirituality: Overlapping Conversations at the End of the Century," in *Perspectives on the New Age*, eds. James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton. (Albany, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 167-178.
- <sup>46</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether. "Ecofeminism: The challenge to Theology." In *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*, edited by Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether, (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University Press, 2000), 97-112.
- <sup>47</sup> Aronofsky says that the dimensions and shape of the ark used in the film were taken exactly from the measurements provided in the Bible (ScreenSlam "Noah: Director Darren Aronofsky — On Set Movie Interview"). This demonstrates the amount of effort that was put into adhering to the original story.
- <sup>48</sup> See, for example, Graves and Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis*, 119 section h.
- <sup>49</sup> Nahmanides' commentary to Genesis 6:20, available at: [https://www.sefaria.org.il/Ramban\\_on\\_Genesis.6.20-7.1?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org.il/Ramban_on_Genesis.6.20-7.1?lang=bi). [Hebrew]
- <sup>50</sup> Graves and Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis*, 117 section c.
- <sup>51</sup> Abraham Issac HaKohen Kook, "A Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace," in *Lachai Ro'I*, ed. David Cohen (Jerusalem: Merkaz HaRav, 1961).
- <sup>52</sup> Brad Brevet, "Darren Aronofsky Discusses the Complicated Visual Effects in 'Noah'," accessed April 6, 2016, <http://www.comingsoon.net/movies/news/584652-darren-aronofsky-discusses-complicated-visual-effects-noah>; and Randy Malamud, *An Introduction to Animals and Visual Culture* (The Palgrave Macmillan Animal Ethics Series) (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
- <sup>53</sup> Center for American Progress, "Noah and the Nexus of Faith and Environmentalism".
- <sup>54</sup> Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 1, 119.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid., 119.
- <sup>56</sup> Kosior, "The Crimes of Love. The (Un) Censored Version of the Flood Story in Noah (2014)," 4-8.

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<sup>57</sup> Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 1, 144, 150.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>59</sup> Malise Ruthven, *Fundamentalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>60</sup> Murray Bookchin, "Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology: A Challenge for the Ecology Movement," *Green Perspectives: Newsletter of the Green Program Project* 4-5 (1987), accessed April 6, 2016, [http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/bookchin/socecovdeepeco.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/socecovdeepeco.html).

<sup>61</sup> Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs M. Smith, Inc., Peregrine Smith Books, 1985).

<sup>62</sup> Kosior, "The Crimes of Love. The (Un) Censored Version of the Flood Story in Noah (2014)," 17.

<sup>63</sup> See Avigdor Shinan and Yair Zakovitch, *From Gods to God: How the Bible Debunked, Suppressed, or Changed Ancient Myths and Legends*, trans. Valerie Zakovitch (USA: University of Nebraska Press, 2012).

<sup>64</sup> Hector Avalos, "Film and the Apologetics of Biblical Violence," *Journal of Religion & Film* 13.1, article 2 (2016), available at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1507&context=jrf>  
Bryan Stone, "Religion and Violence in Popular Film," *Journal of Religion & Film* 3.1, (2016), available at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol3/iss1/5>.

<sup>65</sup> Kosior, "The Crimes of Love. The (Un) Censored Version of the Flood Story in Noah (2014)," 34.

<sup>66</sup> Kevin M. McGeough, "The Roles of Violence in Recent Biblical Cinema: The Passion, Noah, And Exodus: Gods and Kings," *Journal of Religion & Film* 20.2 (2016), 9, 21.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>69</sup> Center for American Progress, "Noah and the Nexus of Faith and Environmentalism".

<sup>70</sup> Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters*.

<sup>71</sup> Center for American Progress, "Noah and the Nexus of Faith and Environmentalism", Huckabee, "Noah's Co-Writer Explains the Film's Controversial Theology".

<sup>72</sup> ScreenSlam, "Noah: Director Darren Aronofsky — On Set Movie Interview."

<sup>73</sup> For further criticism over this point, see Erin Runions, "The Temptation of Noah: The Debate about Patriarchal Violence in Darren Aronofsky's Noah," in *The Bible in Motion: A Handbook of the Bible and its Reception in Film*, Part 2, ed. Rhonda Burnette-Bletsch, (Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 827 -843.

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- <sup>74</sup> Center for American Progress, “*Noah* and the Nexus of Faith and Environmentalism.”
- <sup>75</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>76</sup> Adele Reinhartz, *Bible and Cinema: An Introduction* (Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2013).
- <sup>77</sup> See, e.g. Paul Heelas, *Spiritualities of Life: New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism* (Malden & Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009); Ruthven, *Fundamentalism: A Very Short Introduction*
- <sup>78</sup> Cynthia Erb, “A Spiritual Blockbuster: Avatar, Environmentalism and New Religions,” *Journal of Film and Video* 66.3 (Fall 2014), 3-17; E. Ann. Kaplan, *Climate Trauma: Foreseeing the Future in Dystopian Film and Fiction* (New Jersey, USA: Rutgers University Press, 2015); Bron Raymond Taylor, *Ecological Resistance Movements: The Global Emergence of Radical and Popular Environmentalism* (SUNY Series in International Environmental Policy) (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995).
- <sup>79</sup> Philip Solomon Hart and Anthony A. Leiserowitz, “Finding the Teachable Moment: An Analysis of Information-Seeking Behavior on Global Warming Related Websites during the Release of The Day After Tomorrow,” *Environmental Communication* 3.3 (2009), 355-366.

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