

Below are two short sections from a chapter entitled "The Flood," written in 1990 by Phillip Eichman, a conservative Christian professor in Ball State University, in Indiana. (The book or manuscript of which this chapter forms a part is unpublished, as of July 1991.)

These two sections are written in order to show that the wording of the Biblical story of the Flood, in chapters 6-8 of Genesis, does not declare that the waters of the Flood completely covered all the continents of the earth. In my estimation, the explanations given in these two sections are acceptable; though, I do not feel that we should use the term "local flood," as the commentator C. M. Woods does at the end of the second section. Eichman himself agrees with me that the size and force of the Biblical Flood were so great that it must have affected all continents, at least to some extent.

--D. E. Wonderly

[erets, earth--as in Gen. 7:21]

This Hebrew word may also be translated in other ways. Young's Analytical Concordance lists the references for eretz as follows: [erets]

"country"	140 times
"ground"	96 times
"earth"	677 times
"land"	1458 times

Custance⁵ has stated that of the 677 times that the word was rendered "earth," about 100 of these could be translated as "land." Also, there are other more specific Hebrew words to denote the earth. The word, tebel, for example, meaning "earth" or "world" is typically used in regard to the entire earth (see Psalms 24: 1).

Based upon these language considerations some scholars have concluded that eretz might also be translated as "land" in the passages regarding the flood. The flood then, could be seen as localized rather than universal. That is, the flood would have been limited to the geographical region known to mankind at that time.

Another question which has been raised in regard to the language of Genesis is the use of hyperbole (figures of speech which are exaggerated for emphasis). There are numerous examples of the use of hyperbole in the Bible.⁶ The phrase "under the whole heaven" for example, may be considered as a hyperbole. This in no way should be seen as a negative or skeptical view of Scripture. Much of the Bible was written in figurative language and our understanding of these passages may be increased if we look at them as figurative rather than literal. In this case, the phrase "under the whole heaven" is interpreted as meaning all of the world that was known by persons at that time.