

Article

Space and Place: A Geocritical Study of Genesis 6–9

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Abstract

Spatial studies play a significant role in navigating the actions, experiences, and interactions happening in a specific place and context. The intersection of spatiality and theology will expand the scope of relating the biblical elements to contemporary relevant issues. Genesis 6–9, often termed the flood narrative, is considered a major biblical evidence in terms of environmental vulnerability and divine faith. By incorporating geocriticism alongside the other spatial theories of Tuan, Bachelard, and Tally, this study offers a critical, exegetical textual analysis of Genesis 6–9 to understand the dynamics of mobility, spatial agency, and re-habitation as shown in the narrative. The paper's primary argument is that the ark functions as an affective space and an architectural structure of protection, belonging, and preservation during and after the flood. Secondly, it focuses on how the flood narrative negotiates between the real, imagined and textual spaces of spatial re-creation and how it resonates with contemporary environmental concerns by interpreting it as an instance of environmentally induced displacement while retaining its theological significance.

Keywords: biblical flood narrative; spatial theory; exegesis; environmental humanities; geocriticism

1. Introduction

Environmental disasters and associated human mobility have become a central concern for humanity in the twenty-first century, due to accelerating climate change, ecological collapse, rising sea levels, and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events. Climate change is not merely a political or scientific concern, but one that has a profound, cultural, psychological, and social impact on communities experiencing loss and displacement. Such catastrophes create significant spatial consequences by displacing communities, disturbing habitation, and destabilizing relationships between territory, identity, and belonging. Therefore, it demands critical approaches in examining the interconnectedness between human mobility, space, and environment. In this context, narratives that engage with the themes of enclosure, destruction, survival, and renewal acquire significance in the contemporary world. One such narrative is Genesis 6–9, which reflects themes of spatiality, catastrophe, displacement, and the reconstitution of life after ecological devastation.

Scholarly interpretations of Genesis 6–9 have primarily focused on the traditional approach in understanding the flood narrative through ethical and theological lenses. As quoted by Menning (2022), the description of the biblical flood narrative is given as “an ethical and ecological horror story”, a tale of wilful divine destruction (p. 2), foregrounding grief and divine responsibility. The phrase places the flood not just as a theological event but as a catastrophe that frames the elements of both environmental devastation and moral collapse. This helps in understanding the biblical text to be read with a focus on



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contemporary climate issues and the associated migration happening around the world. The study approaches the flood not just as a theological event, but as a spatial narrative shaped by mobility, enclosure, and the development of an inhabitable space after the catastrophe. Despite this wide body of scholarship focusing on theological and environmental perspectives, less attention has been given to the spatial perspectives and their implications on the flood narrative. Major questions related to space, displacement, enclosure, and transition in the inhabited environment can be analyzed using geocriticism in the reading of Genesis 6–9. Even though the narrative is read as a story of judgement and covenant, it also shows how the flood creates and transforms spaces that are submerged, confined to refuge, and reimagined. This makes geocritical analysis significant for understanding disaster and restoration in the text.

By analyzing the ark as a constructed artifact and architecture and the floodwaters as transformative and destructive spaces, this study will investigate how Genesis 6–9 functions as a spatial text. Using geocriticism and spatiality, it analyses how Noah’s ark acts as an interpretive framework and intervenes in current scholarship by bringing the biblical architecture that symbolizes protection, belonging, and refuge within the frames of climate catastrophe. Based on Westphal (2011) and Tally (2012), the study will analyze how the flood narrative resonates with contemporary experiences of displacement and spatial crisis. Tally focuses on how literature acts as a form of “mapping” that shapes experience through spatial imagination: “narrative, which is a means of giving expression to experience and of representing reality, responds to, and is affected by, these differing spatial organizations” (Tally 2012, p. 75). Thus, the Book of Genesis acts as a foundational scriptural model for understanding how space is suspended, destabilized, and restored through the divine action. From this perspective, the flood narrative traces the transition of the uninhabitable space to an inhabitable place.

2. Theoretical Framework

This research paper adopts geocriticism as its primary methodological framework to analyze Genesis 6–9 as a spatial narrative. Spatial humanities critically examine how space is produced, experienced, and depicted in texts, rather than considering space as a passive background. Bertrand Westphal’s major work, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (2011), provides a strengthened approach to the study of spatial representation and literature, helping to understand how real and imagined spaces are framed based on the spatial perspectives shown in a narrative. He explains, “Geocriticism, insofar as it studies the literary stratifications of referential space, can play an important role, since Geocriticism operates somewhere between the geography of the “real” and the geography of the “imaginary”...two quite similar geographies that may lead to others, which critics should try to develop and explore” (p. 170). Applying this approach to Genesis 6–9, one can interpret the story of the flood not as an isolated event of a theological nature but rather as a text where actual physical factors, such as the destruction of living areas, the construction of the ark, and the retreat of floodwater, cannot be separated from the narrative’s meaning. Robert Tally, in his *Spatiality* (2012), discusses how literary cartography and geocriticism view a text as a map for navigating the spatial experience and meaning in literature, showing how these approaches can be used to understand the interconnection between narrative meaning and spatial relations.

Geographers and critics of spatiality have emphasized how space is not a mere background but a lived dimension of human experience. Yi-Fu Tuan’s foundational text *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977) differentiates between the concepts of space and place and defines them as “Space has temporal meaning in the reflection of a poet, in the mystique of exploration, and in the drama of migration. Space also has temporal mean-

ing at the level of day-to-day personal experiences” (Tuan 1977, p. 126). Tuan’s framework helps in the construction and understanding of Noah’s transition from an inhabited space to a hostile space with flood water and boundless space. Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space* (1969) deals with the affective and imaginative elements of spatial representation through enclosed spaces, shelters, and nests. This offers insight into how the home functions as a symbol in navigating and shaping one’s own space of daydreaming, memory, and protection. These frameworks are not used merely as independent theories but rather as nested approaches whereby Tuan’s experiential geography explains the disturbance of Noah’s environment, while Bachelard’s notion of the poetics of enclosure explains the symbolic meaning of protection inside the ark as part of the catastrophe.

Ecological hermeneutics mainly deals with how cultural, religious, and philosophical texts are analyzed through an environmental lens (Horrell et al. 2008). Scholars such as Paul J. Schutz in “Theology of flourishing” emphasize the primacy of embodied and relational existence, where human and non-human life are understood as mutually sustaining within a divinely ordered creation (Schutz 2025). This helps in understanding the reading of the narrative not just as destruction but as a reconfiguration of conditions necessary for the restoration and continuity of life. Ibita in the paper titled, “The Great Flood in Genesis 6–9: An Ecological Reading of the J and P Traditions” (2020) looks into how the flood narrative can be viewed as an ecological triangle of God-human-non-human relationships and states that “The model explores the interrelationship between God and humans, between God and non-human creation, and between humanity and non-human creation by asking three background questions” (p. 69). This aligns with the interpretation of Genesis 6–9 as a spatial text and with the examination of the ark as a spatial enclosure, as well as how coexistence occurred among the selected lives. Bergmann, in the paper titled “Theology in its Spatial Turn: Space, Place and Built Environments Challenging and Changing the Images of God” (2007), discusses how space and place were neglected for long periods in history and highlights the significance of applying spatial perspectives in divine narratives. Apart from reading the flood solely as judgment, it foregrounds the questions of responsibility and renewal. In spatial terms, the flood narrative showcases the ecological collapse that transformed the inhabited space into an uninhabitable space.

All the above-mentioned research and theory outputs show how the Bible can be overlooked through a spatial lens in understanding and exploring the real and imagined elements portrayed in the narratives. Considering all the above theoretical and research perspectives, Genesis 6–9 can be analyzed as a spatial text for understanding the chaos and disorder of space during and after the flood. This research study mainly focuses on applying geocriticism and spatiality in understanding flood narrative as a spatial text with emphasis on the present-day environmental crisis.

3. Methodology: Historical-Critical Exegesis and Contextual Reading

This research paper uses a qualitative textual analysis of the Book of Genesis chapters 6–9 (NIV), with a close thematic reading of the thematic interpretation. The study examines textual elements such as spatial representations, architectural descriptions, and ecological relationships using the above-mentioned theoretical framework. The respective study not only applies a geocritical reading of Genesis 6–9 but also adopts a cultural studies approach to biblical interpretation. Understanding Noah’s flood narrative from this perspective will enable the study to investigate the present-day climate crisis happening around the world. Drawing on Fernando Segovia’s ideological and socioeconomic criticism, the study focuses on how a reading is socially located and engages with contemporary concerns rather than historical construction alone (Segovia 1999). Within this framework, Genesis 6–9 is analyzed as a spatial narrative that showcases displacement, enclosure, catastrophe, and renewed habitation, while

at the same time engaging with theoretical constructs on environmentally induced forced migrations. Agosto and Hidalgo's contribution in *Latinxs, the Bible, and Migration* (2018) demonstrates how biblical texts contribute as major cultural resources to communities in understanding the environmental issues (Agosto and Hidalgo 2018). Migration in the present study goes beyond its use as a contemporary analogy to become an analytic category that sheds light on the very text in question, with Noah's family comprising refugees who are subjected to migration as a consequence of crisis, confinement to the ark and subsequent resettlement in newly reclaimed territory. Thus, the biblical narrative can be considered not only a theological story from times long past but also a framework for comprehending community relocation amidst ecological disasters.

4. Exegetical Analysis of Genesis 6–9

This section shows how the historical-critical exegetical foundation is used in the reading of Genesis 6–9 with the close reading of the narrative sequence and the textual moments of the flood account. The flood narrative shown in Genesis 6–9 focuses on the complex interplay between the disintegration of the inhabited world and human moral corruption. Apart from functioning as a story of divine judgement, the narrative functions on ecological, theological, and spatial levels. The selected chapters show how corruption played a crucial role in the world's confrontation with divine judgement and in the disruption of the created order. It will also highlight how the selected verses construct movement, space, and enclosure within the conditions of the ecological disruption. The selected approach also focuses on narrative progression by critically examining how spatial transitions are presented within a theological context, highlighting the dynamic interconnection between environmental reconfiguration and divine agency.

The flood narrative in Genesis 6–9 shows the interplay between moral collapse and the disintegration of the inhabited land. These chapters showcase how the world was corrupted and how it prompted divine judgement to wipe away the corrupted. In Genesis, corruption is seen as a moral flaw that draws divine judgment. Yet, this study interprets that failing as both a moral and an environmental breakdown, disrupting the ordered relationship between humanity, creation, and God. A geocritical reading does not negate the narrative's moral dimension; instead, it situates it within a broader environmental framework. Thus, ethical decline and ecological disorder are understood as interconnected expressions of the same crisis. This process of instability can be interpreted from a geographical perspective, where the disintegration of moral order is linked to the disintegration of living space. In Genesis 6, the story starts with the divine declaration: "Then the LORD said. 'My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years'" (Genesis 6:3, NIV 2011). This verse signals the divine limitation on human life, showing both God's setting of a temporal boundary before and after the divine judgement. Later in the chapter, the narrative depicts divine grief in response to human evil, culminating in the announcement of judgment through the flood: "So the LORD said, 'I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them'" (Gen. 6:7). The destruction of life signifies the collapse of the inhabited order of creation as a response to human corruption. Therefore, the concept of the "face of the earth" becomes a significant spatial indicator, emphasizing the importance of both physical landscape and the space of lived experience, which is susceptible to erasure. This phrase echoes throughout the story of the flood, beginning with a world that is ordered, moving into disappearance, and ending with a land that has been recomposed.

Noah was chosen by God to carry forward the preservation of life through obedience to divine command. God found him as the "righteous" one to execute the journey in the

ark: “a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God” (6:9). His righteousness does not remove him from the catastrophe; instead, he believed and obeyed the divine instruction. His righteousness, therefore, functions not as an exemption but as a determination that situates him as the figure through whom the ruptured order of creation is carried forward into a post-judgement world (Pfeiffer 2025). This makes the ark more than just a simple vessel of survival; it becomes the carrier of a reconstituted humanity and ecology. God instructed Noah to build the ark: “make yourself an ark of cypress wood” (6:15). The ark shown in the narrative is a divinely constructed structure that functioned as a refuge for preservation during the flood. Therefore, the ark can be considered a constructed micro-environment, which acts as an enclosure in the midst of ecological disintegration. In spatial terms, the ark is a transitional space between the end of one world and the beginning of another. The ark does not fit into the world that is dying away, and it also does not fit into the world that is going to be created. It is a confined space existing amid catastrophe and restoration. In the midst of chaos, the ark is constructed in accordance with very specific guidelines on what should and should not be allowed inside it.

In order to preserve life on Earth, Noah was commanded to collect pairs of each species as instructed by God: “Take with you seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and one pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, and also seven pairs of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth. Seven days from now, I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made” (Genesis 7:2–4). Noah obeyed the instruction and organized everything before the judgement unfolded. This act of gathering and ordering species reflects an attempt to reconstitute creation within a bounded space, highlighting the tension between preservation and destruction. Inside the ark, species are arranged on purpose, mirroring the sequence laid out in Genesis 1. This pattern hints that preservation extends beyond living forms to include the framework of creation. Rather than functioning simply as a vessel for survival, the structure carries something deeper, an ordered reflection of the world’s beginning. God informed Noah about the impending flood that would last for forty days and forty nights and instructed him regarding the preservation of life. The distinction between clean and unclean animals, reflected in the preservation of seven pairs of clean animals and one pair of unclean animals, together with male and female counterparts (Gen. 7:2–3), mirrors the ordered classification of living creatures established in the creation narrative (Gen. 1:21, 24–25). So what is preserved is not just biological life but the structured order that makes the world intelligible. The ark protects more than just inhabitants; it safeguards the ‘spatial grammar’ of habitation itself (Westphal 2011, p. 170). Noah, along with his family and the selected living creatures, entered the ark. The flood started after seven days, and it lasted for forty days. The time periods shown in the text serve to structure the story even further, underlining the methodical approach to the ecological disaster through the lens of divine sustenance. The forty days of rain have significance beyond the mere weather condition. It symbolizes a time of testing and creation, giving meaning to the time frame of the flood in such a way as to make it seem redemptive rather than purely devastating.

“Every living thing that moved on land perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.” (7:21–23)

The complete eradication of all living things, from a critical perspective, can be viewed as the conversion of occupied spaces into an unoccupied emptiness, where the ecological order is rendered null by divine action. The rhetorical power here derives from the complete enumeration; the continuous list of all the groups of creatures functions in terms of syntax in the same way that the destruction described takes place. There is nothing outside the list that has not been obliterated, and there is nothing outside the ark that has survived. The statement “only Noah was left” therefore has immense spatial significance. The release of the birds is not only an act performed for a specific purpose but also serves to probe the concept of space and establish relations through movement. The successive flights of the raven and then the dove, totaling three, serve as the spatial embodiment of the healing earth: each flight acts as a mode of ecological perception to determine whether the barrier separating water from the land has been rebuilt. The dove’s return with the olive leaf showed that the earth is ready to sustain life again. This is a turning point from environmental degradation to environmental regeneration, where the olive leaf serves as a spatial marker of regeneration and restoration of land that can sustain life. Hence, the revival of the earth is accomplished not by way of the withdrawal of water, but rather by the revival of vegetation.

God instructed him to release the living creatures in the ark to occupy the land again. This act can be understood as a reinstitution of life within space, where the enclosed entities are released to an open and rejuvenated ecology. From enclosure to open land, this reversal serves as an analogy to the first step into the ark, wherein what was collected and confined for its protection is dispersed and allowed to settle, thus concluding the progression from restriction to liberation that the story has carefully crafted. In return, Noah worshipped God for his help and protection amidst the divine judgement. He also made a covenant saying that he would not destroy humans using water again. The covenant acts as a framework, both ethically and ecologically, which helps to maintain the interconnection between nature and divine act. Later, it is shown how Noah and his sons started to expand and flourish as a family: “Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth” (9:8–11). The covenant therefore extends beyond humanity and encompasses the broader community of creation, reinforcing the understanding that the restored world is ordered towards shared flourishing rather than solely human benefit. It is important to understand that this is not an agreement that rests on human superiority but rather one of stability amongst creatures. This shows how the covenant provided an assurance to those who trusted the divine judgement and enabled them to settle in their renewed land. Therefore, it creates an assurance that reflects the continuity and permanence of the space in signifying the ability to flourish further. Hence, rather than simply ending the story of the flood, the covenant reinterprets the whole narrative: the disaster itself is now seen as less a cataclysmic ending than a necessary prelude to a more durable arrangement of residence.

5. Geocritical Reading of Noah’s Flood Narrative

The flood narrative, shown in Genesis 6–9, offers a theological exploration of the catastrophic mobility due to the divine action of God. Even though this is not an example of forced migration in the contemporary context, the story can be read as the theoretical equivalent of environmentally induced migration, where survival depends on moving. The flood narrative can be understood through the lens of mobility because it involves displacement from an established dwelling place, confinement within a transitional space,

and eventual resettlement on renewed land. Although Noah's movement differs from contemporary migration experiences, the narrative nevertheless presents mobility as a necessary response to environmental catastrophe. The analogy is more than just a simple comparison; the story itself embodies the essential elements of displacement: loss of place, relocation, confinement within an enclosed area, and resettlement of new territory, thus providing a theological framework for understanding environmental displacement. Reading the flood narrative from the contemporary perspective of "spatial turn" shows how space is not a mere backdrop but an active theological element through which divine judgement and renewed life are articulated (Bergmann 2007; Palma 2023). The narrative portrays the destruction of spatial borders during the flood, confinement of life in the ark, and restoration of life on the renewed land, signifying the reconstitution of space, life, and creation. It mainly shows three major movements: the collapse of the inhabited space, life within the ark, and the restoration of life on the new habitable land. The three phases do not operate as individual stages but rather serve to form part of a theological grammar that works by reforming the relationships between humans, nature, and the divine in each stage. Within the spatial collapse, the ark functions as a space of preservation and life-sustaining refuge. Ecological hermeneutics identifies such flood narratives as "deluge texts" that simultaneously destroy and preserve creation, exposing the tension between environmental vulnerability and divine order without reducing the narrative to an account of the modern ecological crisis (Ibita 2020; Kavusa 2019). This section will focus on how the narrative frames and depicts the loss of the inhabited space, the ark as a refuge, and how the emergence of the renewed space is a place capable of sustaining life.

5.1. *The Ark as an Affective Architecture and Space of Refuge*

The ark plays a significant role in the flood narrative. It arises as a spatial response to the environmental threat, functioning as both a symbolic refuge and a material structure. The ark portrayed in the flood narrative is not merely an artifact, but the first purpose-built structure of survival in the Bible. The distinction between the ark and the mere structure lies in the purposefulness of the former within its theology; rather than being created solely through human intelligence, it is designed in accordance with God's commandment, thus making the spatial structure a divine order imposed on ecological disorder. The ark acts as a lived, enclosed, and affective space that protected life during the flood. Apart from functioning as a space of relocation, it carried life amidst the catastrophe. The ark suspends the spatial connection that existed in the previously inhabited space. From a geocritical perspective, the ark functions as an enclosed spatial system and an affective architecture during the flood. The narrative presents the ark as a "purpose-built architecture" that carried Noah, his family, and the selected ones in it. This places the ark as a spatial interface for what Westphal termed heterogeneous space, which takes shape due to the spatial collapse and its reconstruction. As said by Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space*, "The house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace" (Bachelard 1969, p. 6). He argues that lived enclosures, such as the house, function as a site of protection and imagination against the vulnerable conditions outside. Similarly, the ark becomes an affective space that embodies the memory, hope, and fear during the flood.

When the divine judgement was conveyed to Noah, he started to build it as a strong structure that would preserve the lives essential for the land after the flood. God commanded Noah to use the cypress wood that could facilitate both preservation and movement during the flood. The spatial reconfiguration begins with construction, where survival emerges through ordering, enclosure, and restraint. While Genesis 6:14–16 describes the building of the ark with well-defined architectural details, these are not just pragmatic

considerations but imply that the continuation of organized life is a divine duty. The construction of the ark parallels the structure of the created world it seeks to continue. As Menning observed, the ark's construction reflects the ethical responsibility toward a fragile future, highlighting the focus on choosing what is best for survival and preservation during spatial collapse (Menning 2022, p. 12).

Another significant part of the narrative is how the ark emerges as a stratified and contested space. Amidst the flood, God commanded Noah to bring the divinely designated creatures into the ark for preservation. The command to identify the “clean and unclean animals” shows that an ordered survival strategy is made to structure life in the enclosed space of the ark (7:8). The taxonomical division is not merely a rational one but rather an ideological construction in which the interior space is subjected to a pre-existing system of morality and ritual, thus suggesting that the ark protects not only life in its purest sense but also life according to a hierarchically organized plan decreed by God. This intensifies the deliberate differentiation made to present the ark as a more affective space for preservation and protection during the judgement. As the narrative progresses in Genesis 7, it shows the violent outburst of the flood, where “In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month, on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights” (7:11–12). This imagery shows how life outside the ark collapsed and how it disrupted the spatial stability. As mentioned by Ibita, the ark enclosed the selected lives inside it, but the external world became the site of loss (Ibita 2020, p. 72). The flood lasted for forty days and caused a disturbance in the previous space. As the flood continued, it destroyed all the lives that existed and the place turned into an undifferentiated space. Those who doubted the flood not only lost their lives but also the sole site of affection, memory, and belonging. The flood continued and the ark was able to carry the selected people throughout the journey: “For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased, they lifted the ark high above the earth. The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water” (7:17–20). Thus, the ark is an affective structure that provides a space of resistance and protection. As an affective space, the ark acts as a mediating element between the deconstruction and construction of the space during the divine action.

5.2. Floodwaters as Chaotic Space and Ecological Power

In biblical cosmology, water is portrayed as primordial chaos, “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Genesis 1:2). This verse shows water as a state of disorder that precedes the habitable space. The flood story found in Genesis 6–9 can be seen as an inversion of the story in Genesis 1. In Genesis 1, creation brings order out of chaos by making a clear separation between water and land. In Genesis 6–9, the flood destroys this distinction and brings the earth back into a state of primordial chaos. The ark occupies a radical spatial position where it is neither connected to land nor to landmarks. From a geocritical perspective, the movement of the ark breaks all the familiar spatial relations by transforming the space into a disrupted geography with a fluid medium where borders, direction, and orientation lose their significance. Tuan's differentiation between space and place highlights this condition as:

“Place is a special kind of object. It is a concretion of value, though not a valued thing that can be handled or carried about easily; it is an object in which one can dwell. Space, we have noted, is given by the ability to move. Movements are often directed toward, or repulsed by, objects and places. Hence space can be variously experienced as the relative location of objects or places, as the distances

and expanses that separate or link places, and—more abstractly—as the area defined by a network of places.” (p. 12)

He clearly states that place is filled with meaning and value that helps one dwell and feel rooted, but it is related to openness and movement. In the flood narrative, the spatial structure collapses under divine judgement. Because of this, the ark is the only meaningful place where both value and life are preserved during spatial uncertainty. The function of the ark is not just survival but a continuation of the place that persists in the midst of destruction. This place is one of the few places in the story of the flood where the creation of space does not get washed away by the destruction of the geography surrounding the ark. While Menning argues that the flood narratives often reflect human vulnerability and limits in Genesis 6–9, the flood primarily signifies the theological reordering of the space through divine judgement (p. 2). It shows the spatial disruption that led to the renewal of space. As the narrative progresses, in Genesis 8–9, it reflects on how the flood gradually faded away, signaling the possibility of a new beginning and place-making. It is depicted as:

“But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded. Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens had been closed, and the rain had stopped falling from the sky. The water receded steadily from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days, the water had gone down, and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. The waters continued to recede until the tenth month, and on the first day of the tenth month, the tops of the mountains became visible.” (Genesis 8:1–5)

The phrase “God remembered” signals the divine action in granting renewed living space to the chosen ones in the ark. However, this remembrance by God does not constitute mere recall but action; it causes the water to retreat and marks the turning point between destruction and salvation. Consequently, the story portrays ecological restoration as reliant on divine awareness rather than nature’s processes, stressing the religious role that is fundamental to the transformation of space. As the water started receding, Noah maintained hope and patience to know whether the flood had completely vanished. The gradual restoration of the space started the return to spatial stability to make a renewed place. In order to check the reliability of the weather, Noah used a raven and a dove to understand the external weather conditions. The symbols of both the dove and the raven in estimating and understanding the condition of the flood outside the ark: “it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth” (8:6). This shows the intensity of the flood and how the raven signifies hope and survival here in the narrative. Secondly, the dove gives the signal that the renewed space is ready to be inhabited. The successive release of birds is an analogy of the recovery of the Earth. Every flight is a test for the restoration of the line dividing the two habitats, water and land, and the return of the dove with the olive branch confirms not just the presence of dry land, but its ability to produce vegetation. Thus, the floodwater is not a mere backdrop of destruction but also emerges as a transformative spatial element in recreating life and stability during divine judgement. The floodwater acts as an interface in preserving as well as destroying those differentiated by the divine order.

5.3. *Post-Flood and the Re-Making of Place*

The Book of Genesis, Chapters 8–9, shows the major spatial transition from a chaotic to a more stable place after the flood. The land that was once flooded with water is re-emerging as a space of resettlement and renewal. In chapter 8, it is described as:

“By the first day of the first month of Noah’s six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry. By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry.” (8:13–14)

Noah’s release from the ark helped him witness the restored land again, which was absent during the flood. The Earth turning to “completely dry” signals the return of spatial reliability, where the land turned into an uninhabitable land. The transition from the state of flooding to that of aridity is much more than a mere alteration of conditions in the environment. It entails a restoration of space needed to dwell. The opening of the cover of the ark by Noah is symbolic of the first encounter between those few survivors and the ground that is laid bare, marking their transition from mere survival to prosperity. This signifies the reconstitution of the space, turning it into a place with meaning and life. It has brought a renewed space with human and non-human presence who took refuge in the ark. Noah brought every creature that he took inside the ark as per the instructions given by the Lord. They came to a space that had undergone spatial transformation after the great flood.

“All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds—everything that moves on land—came out of the ark, one kind after another.” (8:19)

This verse shows that the reactivation of post-flood land takes place after the rupture. Spatial differentiation and ecological coexistence begin again as abstract space is transformed back into a real, livable place. The expression “one kind after another” is significant in that it reflects how the species were arranged when they came aboard the ark. It is an association between collection and distribution. What used to be preserved is now released to thrive anew. The systematic arrival of living creatures is a testament to the fact that post-flood existence was not haphazard; rather, it was deliberate. The divine inspiration and prayers make Noah build an altar, and it shows how the sacred dimensions took over the newly reclaimed place. God promises and makes a covenant that he will not destroy the living ones with water again.

“Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.” (8:21)

This signifies temporal and spatial stability, making the earth function as a place of belonging and continuity. Continuous lived experiences make a place more vulnerable to the actions of living creatures on the planet. This assurance comes with divine instructions assigning responsibility to Noah and his descendants. God commands them to “be fruitful, increase in number, and fill the earth” (Gen. 9:1). Also, he includes all living creatures in the covenant (Gen. 9:8–17), showing that they are expected to help maintain and flourish the renewed world. However, when the space is continuous, it becomes more vulnerable to human actions. Instead of showing a tension between what God promises and what people must do, the covenant shows these elements working together. God ensures the world stays stable (Genesis 9:11), while humans are told to populate and take care of the Earth (Genesis 9:1–7). Considering Genesis 6–9, as a spatial text, it shows how the narrative shapes the imagined, represented and lived spaces to the real and imagined ones. Similarly, Tally also emphasizes how space can be reinterpreted through the “rereading of space” (Tally 2012, p. 12). Therefore, the covenant is not just a promise but a spatial guarantee on the land. It reassures the sense of order and continuity, which is essential for placemaking. A place becomes meaningful through continuous interactions and experiences. Therefore, the connection between human responsibility and divine restraint shown here makes it relevant for the readers to reflect on how the lived spaces are damaged or sustained through human actions over time.

5.4. Contemporary Environmental Vulnerability and the Biblical Flood Narrative

The Book of Genesis, Chapter 9, shows the transition of Noah during the flood and the selected ones to a renewed space of land. Followed by the flood and spatial collapse, God blessed Noah with a blessed life, and it is shown in the text as:

“Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands. Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.’” (Genesis 9:1–3)

From a spatial lens, the above verse shows how Earth is a space that should be occupied without fear. God’s command to “fill the earth” signals the transition from life within the ark to active involvement with the land. This is an echo of the initial creative command found in Genesis 1:28, and the parallel drawn between the first creation and the recreation after the flood is quite obvious in that the survivors are not just going back to earth but are recreating their role as stewards of earth. This resonates with Bachelard’s emphasis on how lived space is never neutral and how it is emotionally shaped: “space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain an indifferent space subject to the measures and estimates of the surveyor. It has been lived in, not in its positivity, but with all the partiality of the imagination” (Bachelard 1969, p. xxxii). Here, Earth is no longer an abstract space, but a livable space for the survivors to imagine and hope for a better settlement. God encourages the living creatures to multiply, move, and reconnect on the land. God’s covenant has further encouraged them to prosper and be fruitful.

The covenant functions as a spatial-ethical framework in understanding the response to the present environmental crisis. On the other hand, this ecological covenant carries the ethical responsibility of having a shared space. Even though humans are given the authority to preserve and nurture the earthly space, it can also be understood that the habitable space can be shared with other living creatures as well. The covenant refers to “every living thing” (Genesis 9:10), and that is highly theological. The message in this context shows that God’s loyalty was not only towards humankind but towards all creatures in general. Following the flood story, the earth becomes a common environment where all living things live, and all living things are within God’s promise and not under humankind’s control. This has significant relevance in the contemporary world as it is experiencing a major environmental crisis. This leads to the displacement of people in search of a better livable space with resources. This can be well aligned with contemporary displacement studies. As noted by Gozdziaik and Shandy, “Despite the diversity of religious and spiritual beliefs and practices that sustain many refugees and forced migrants in their processes of displacement, migration, and integration into the host society, contemporary considerations among both researchers and policymakers tend to neglect the role of religion and spirituality as a source of emotional and cognitive support, a form of social and political expression and mobilization, and a vehicle for community building and group identity” (Gozdziaik and Shandy 2002, p. 129). This shows how spiritual and religious frameworks can be spatially studied to understand the importance of sustaining displaced communities and spaces. Therefore, Noah’s covenant can be considered an early spatial ethic in collectively sharing the responsibility of land preservation and reassurance of space. From the above statement, it is important to understand how Noah’s ecological covenant emphasizes the role and importance of spiritual and ethical resources; “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth” (8:17). Therefore, the flood story can be said to reflect the modern-day theory of climate change migration, where environmental damage forces people to leave their homes for temporary housing

(Tarusarira et al. 2025). In this analysis, the ark can be seen to bear resemblance to the temporary shelters or areas that the displaced individuals occupy. Nevertheless, the analogy is merely symbolic in nature, while using the theological nature of the story presented in the book of Genesis. Scholars like Paul Schutz emphasize the interdependence of human and non-human life, challenging exploitative attitudes towards nature (Schutz 2025). In that context, the flood displacement is not just a mere displacement but a theological response to the environmental disruption. Getting more into migration studies helps with this analysis. Groody (2009) says a theology of migration shows how biblical stories of displacement can reveal moments of encountering God, vulnerability, and strength. Trinka also points out that looking at migration and refugee studies is a great way to read biblical tales about moving around and settling. Using this idea, Noah's story of crisis, being stuck in the ark, and starting over fits these patterns of forced movement, temporary safety, and rebuilding. When seen this way, the ark means more than just survival as it becomes a transition space between an old world and a new beginning (Trinka 2025a, 2025b).

Biblically, the flood narrative shows how spaces are turned into places of adaptation and resilience (Jordan 2023). Chuvieco and Karnawalski talk about how religion plays a significant role in spreading awareness of the climate crisis; "Religious motivations have been identified as one of the most prominent incentives for behavioural change. Therefore, developing religious arguments that establish a strong link between environmental concern and action, and the core beliefs of a particular religious tradition should increase the commitment of those who identify with that tradition" (Chuvieco and Karnawalski 2025, p. 1). In this way, the reading of Genesis 6–9 goes beyond that of an ancient historical text and becomes a hermeneutic tool for modern times. The story contains reflections on the theological consequences of the destruction of the environment, the need for displacement, survival, and covenant restoration. These issues are very relevant to modern-day environmental refugees. This insight shows how Genesis 6–9 functions as a spatial text in understanding the present-day environmental crisis through divine and spiritual frameworks. Two contemporary compelling environmental crisis examples are the Bangladesh flood of 2025 and the Kerala flood of 2018–2019 that occurred in India. These can be considered a spatial analogue to the biblical flood narrative. The large-scale destruction due to the intense monsoon, sea-level rise, and river overflow led to the devastating condition. The floating homes and temporary shelters resonate with the ark in the flood narrative, where it provides enclosure and survival in spatial limitations. In both examples, the enclosed temporary structure serves as the threshold between the ruined world and the still unpopulated newly formed world, and it marks the process by which identity, society, and possession of the land are rebuilt after leaving that space. This is why understanding Genesis 6–9 remains relevant to analysis beyond religion. This spatial reading aligns well with Segovia's socioeconomic approach to understanding the contemporary realities rather than historical ideas (Segovia 1999). This makes it a significant contemporary site for reading Genesis 6–9 as a relevant spatial text. The text reminds us that a space turns into a place through shared lived experiences, keeping the moral and ethical responsibility towards nature.

6. Conclusions

This research paper has examined Genesis 6–9 as a spatial text in exploring how space is destroyed, portrayed, and renewed during the divine action. The study demonstrates Genesis 6–9 as a "theology of space" in showing how the flood functions as a spatial recreation and results in placemaking. The ark shown in the narrative acts as both an affective space and a temporary protective home during the flood. Bachelard mentions the house as "our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first

universe” (Bachelard 1969, p. 4). It acts as a structure of refuge during the flood, thereby carrying the emotions and continuity of life. The flood narrative constructs and renews the inhabited space through divine action and response. The way we perceive and understand myths and stories also helps in the evaluation of present-day problems. Similarly, the ark becomes a small space that sustains continuity and relationships during the crisis. It provides a pause from the external world to recover and inhabit the renewed space.

With the incorporation of the theories of spatiality, geocriticism, and ecological hermeneutics, the research paper has shown how the flood narrative deeply questions the idea of place and survival. The loss of the land, ark construction, and the remaking of the post-flood space framed and resonated with modern climatic experiences and displacement. Sacred texts are not just spiritual or religious texts but are vital resources of real and imagined experiences that are shaped by the writers. This can be understood through Bergmann as he states, “Theology’s reflection about space and place provides, as we have seen, not simply a new theme on the current agenda. They do, instead, represent a deep challenge and an urgent necessity for theology to become aware of its embeddedness in the existential spatiality of life” (Bergmann 2007, p. 374).

This shows how theology is deeply engaged in addressing present-day problems. The exegetical reading of the flood narrative collectively shows how divine actions establish the ethical responsibility in preserving nature and living beings within a space. The reconstitution of land and the establishment of the covenant show the transition from a confined space of the ark to a stable habitation. The narrative focuses on how space transitions to place through sustained responsibility and patience. Thus, the text can be a geocritical narrative map for guiding the readers through restoration and spatial collapse, revealing how space becomes a carrier of theological meaning. Therefore, this research paper shows how the flood narrative remains relevant in addressing the concerns as it models ways of imagining responsibility, space, and continuity during the crisis. Reading the narrative as a spatial text offers a theological vision for reordering the shared space in the present society. Therefore, this research study contributes to the emerging discussion on the intersection between migration studies and theology. Thus, this interdisciplinary study positions the narrative to be responsive to the most important humanitarian and ecological challenges of the century.

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