

CIM Review #4

Bill Crouse

Review of the movie: *Finding Noah: Witness the Journey*

Director and Screenwriter: Brent Baum

Producer: Matthew Marsden

Length: 97 minutes

Narrator: Gary Sinise

As expected, the documentary, *Finding Noah*, did not disappoint on the technical side. The producers are to be commended. The cinematography, the editing, and the sound, coupled with the backdrop of the scenery of the spectacular 17,000 ft. Mt Ararat made the film a pleasure to behold. One standout scene for this viewer was filmed while an intrepid climber descended into a deep crevasse into one of the glaciers on the mountain. I was struck by the depth of the descent and the exceedingly long icicles. In another scene the crew filmed a very high flowing waterfall. Such flowing water is very rare on this mountain, so it must have been a time of high melting.

The film documents several expeditions of men who were seeking to find the biblical ship of Noah which purportedly landed on this mountain. Because of its altitude, conditions for exploring can be very dangerous to say the least. A mountain of this height creates its own weather. Extreme cold, high wind, snow, hail, lightning, and whiteouts are not uncommon. The film crew not only documents these men endeavoring to carry out their mission in these life-threatening conditions while enduring the same. From firsthand experience, it's amazing there were no casualties.

What did the makers of this film hope to accomplish? I have to be somewhat speculative, but I believe the producers wanted to raise consciousness about the historicity of the flood and Noah's Ark. I think they wanted their audience to be overwhelmed by the evidence that the Ark has been seen in ancient history on into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and that it makes sense to look for it. I also think they wanted the viewers to realize that there are good reasons why it still has not been found. These reasons being: the political situation, the severity of the physical conditions, the altitude of the mountain, and its enormity.

As with most documentaries the film proceeded with soundbites from experts in various fields and extensive interaction with the explorers themselves before, after, and as they were climbing

and carrying out their tasks. All this was well and good. The highlight of the film as it turned out was the testimonies of men who saw this opportunity as a life-changing experience. To a man they testified of deep spiritual experiences from the quest, not to mention the male-bonding among the crew.

So far, we have great scenery, technical excellence, and inspirational stories, but the rest of this review raises some questions that I believe reflect negatively on the film. Let's start with the title of the movie: *Finding Noah*. How in the world did they decide on this for a title? How misleading; they neither find Noah nor the Ark!

I have several beefs with the movie: I think they were negligent in how they presented the evidence of the Ark's continued existence, the alleged eyewitness accounts, and that the Ark landed on that mountain-Mt. Ararat, and I am critical of heightening expectations and then having nothing to show for it at the end.

First, the evidence: early on in the film ancient witnesses were quickly flashed across the screen Star War style. They were Berossus, Hieronymous, Josephus, Theophilos, Epiphanius, Marco Polo, Haithon, etc. Is there a problem here? You better believe it! The majority of the above, I believe, are referring to a different mountain! Berossus, a historian, and high priest of Bel wrote in the third century BC. His account of the flood draws heavily from the pagan Babylonian account.<sup>1</sup> He notes that the Ark landed in the country of the Kurds. This could not refer to Mt. Ararat since the Kurdish people did not take up residence there until the tenth and eleventh centuries.<sup>2</sup> Josephus quotes him and also cites Hieronymous the Egyptian as supporting his contention that the Ark landed in the country of the Kurds. Josephus, the first century historian, mentions the Ark of Noah on four occasions.<sup>3</sup> In three of his citations he is almost certainly referring to a mountain south of Ararat. In a fourth mention it could possibly be Ararat but the Greek is nebulous.<sup>4</sup> Theophilos of Antioch (early second century) says the Ark landed in the Arabian mountains. The Greek word used for "Arabian" may be indefinite and could only mean that the Ark landed on a desert mountain. Epiphanius (fourth century) wrote that the Ark landed in the country of the Kurds. Again, the Kurds did not live at Ararat until the after the 10 century. Haithon and Marco Polo did indeed refer to present-day Mt. Ararat. Both noted the black spot near the summit of the mountain which the locals regaled that it was the Ark of Noah. This black spot can still be seen today. However, the locals now refer to it as the "eye of the bird." It's a volcanic rock formation.

Later in the documentary several more recent eyewitness accounts are cited. These alleged accounts have been thoroughly discounted, and it sorely questions the integrity of the producers of the film. The first was the account of the Russian pilot during WWI who claimed to see a large submerged vessel in a frozen lake. Immediately a large number of Russian soldiers undertook to climb to the spot to verify the sighting. After two weeks of hard climbing (it actually only takes 2 or 3 days) they succeeded in locating the vessel. After exploring the inside, taking photos and measurements, the information was sent to the Czar. But alas, the documents

were seized by the Bolsheviks during the Russian Revolution. This story first appeared in a newsletter then published in tract form and literally read and repeated around the world. However, the story is one hundred percent fictitious. The author admitted to me by phone and letter that it was entirely made up and was never inspired by Russian immigrants who rented one of the apartments he owned.

Another story in the film was one spun by a young college student who worked in the Smithsonian museum who allegedly heard about a discovery of Noah's Ark as he witnessed them bringing in crates of artifacts. This story again is totally bogus as the teller flunked a lie detector test and a failed a cross-examination. In the movie it was the Duckworth story.<sup>5</sup>

The most controversial story was that of Ed Davis, a soldier stationed in Iran during WWII. The most complete account of his story can be found in the book: *The Painful Mountain*, by Don Shockey.<sup>6</sup> Many hours were spent reviewing the details of his account and due to numerous inconsistencies one has to seriously doubt its veracity. I personally had access to a video tape of his first debriefing which differs significantly after arkhunters put words in his mouth.<sup>6</sup>

A fourth account included was really discouraging, and forces one to conclude that the researchers simply included material for its sensational effect. It has to be obvious that they simply took these stories from one of several books and never bothered to question the stories by submitting them to some standard of credibility. I refer here to the account of the mysterious *Mr.X*. I happen to know his real name, and spent several hours checking the truthfulness of his tales. He was in the military during the Viet Nam War and held a highly classified position. Since he had unusually keen eyesight (according to him) his assignment was to interpret high altitude and satellite photos of enemy positions. Now many years after that, he still claims to have access to classified military satellite data even though it has been several decades after his discharge from military service! He has confided to several Ark searchers that there is an object on the mountain which is unnatural. Problem is: he has given several locations of this object! In my background check on this person I found that he also claims that with his access to this classified satellite data, he can see exactly the path the Children of Israel took out of Egypt!

That the producers of this film included these accounts seriously denigrates the integrity of their project. Once again we have an Ark film which engenders hope for a discovery that will once and for all verify the Bible story. This undoubtedly won't be the last Ark film. The producers are keen to sense the interest out there. It was reported that the documentary opened (for one night only) in over 600 theaters. The DVD is to be released early in 2016.

I do sincerely applaud the producers for their honesty in the film that the quest was not successful. No Ark was found despite stupendous efforts. It was not a positive conclusion, but something was accomplished: we now can be fairly certain where on Mt. Ararat the Ark did not land.

(There are good ancient historical references and tradition for another location for the Ark's final berth. For more information check the author's website at:

<http://www.christianinformationministries.com/>

Endnotes:

1. For a more detailed discussion of Bersossus see my article: *Five Reasons....*  
[http://www.noah2014.com/docs/five\\_reasons\\_bill\\_crouse.pdf](http://www.noah2014.com/docs/five_reasons_bill_crouse.pdf) p.11ff.
2. Sargis Haroutyunian, "Armenian Epic Tradition and Kurdish Folklore," *Iran & the Caucasus* (1997): p.88.
3. [http://noah2014.com/docs/geography\\_of\\_genesis\\_8\\_4\\_bill\\_crouse.pdf](http://noah2014.com/docs/geography_of_genesis_8_4_bill_crouse.pdf) p.8ff.
4. The Greek simply says the Ark landed on a "great mountain."
5. See: Noorbergen, Rene, *The Ark File* (London: New English Library), 1974. See Chapter 7, and note that he uses a pseudonym for Duckworth.
6. Shockey, Don. *The Painful Mountain*. (Fresno, CA: Pioneer Publishing Co.), 1986
7. For our critique of the Ed Davis Story, see:  
<http://www.christianinformationministries.com/2013/02/04/the-search-for-noahs-ark/>