

WHAT WAS LOST: THE CHRONICLES OF JAPETH BOOK I  
STEVEN J BYERS, Infinity Publishing.Com, West Conshohocken, PA, \$21.95,  
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Who built the Arc? Noah. It's one of the most recognizable stories from the Old Testament. But how was it built? How long did it take? And how did Noah collect all those animals? In his novel "What Was Lost," Steven Byers attempts to answer some of these questions through a fictional retelling of the story of Noah's Arc from the perspective of Noah's eldest son, Japheth.

The world thinks Noah is a madman. He claims to be God's prophet and predicts a future for the world that is simply too dire to imagine. For Noah's family, standing together with Noah means standing alone.

In a lineage of seers, Japheth is not blessed with the ability to prophesize. That gift went to his younger brother Shem. Instead, Japheth's ability is to communicate with animals. "What Was Lost" chronicles his adventure as he prepares for the catastrophic future predicted by his father.

Taking on the Book of Genesis is no mean feat, but Steven Byers does so with an imaginative flair. Although Byers stays as true as possible to the Bible, he is quick to point out that "What Was Lost" is not a strict factual treatment of the Book of Genesis. Byers himself believes Genesis to be historically accurate, and as a result of logically extending the facts and concepts found in Genesis, he describes a pre-flood era much different than our own modern time.

At the center of the story is man's ability to communicate with animals. Most readers will have no trouble suspending disbelief on this point. After all, Eve had a lengthy discussion with a snake in the Garden of Eden. What may be more difficult to accept is Byers' approach to time and biological development. The characters in his book have an average lifespan of 912 years, but Japheth and his brothers act like teenage boys through much of the novel, despite having the physical characteristics and abilities of full-grown men.

Byers is to be commended for adroitly managing the task of fictionalizing Noah's life while showing absolute respect for the Book of Genesis. There is much to like in this story. However, his writing style is somewhat flat and doesn't always rise to the level of the lofty and challenging subject he chose.

Steven Byers is a lifelong resident of western Missouri. He has spent the last 18 years of his professional career as the senior director of development with the Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City. He resides in rural Nevada, Missouri with his wife Anita and their two teenage children, Matthew and Alyssa.

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