

# Playing with Noah's Animals

## A Theological Analysis of Four Retro Video Games Called NOAH'S ARK

### Abstract

A special genre has emerged in video games – Bible games. As a subset of the broader genre of Christian games – aimed at providing age- and faith-appropriate content for religious audiences and/or proselytizing non-believers to the Christian faith – the Bible games gamify their inspirational source material. Frequently, these games are considered inferior (“bad”) games, usually because of the ludonarrative dissonance in terms of gameplay and narrative. This article discusses four of these supposedly bad Bible games, all from the 1980s and 1990s and all using the biblical story of Noah's ark as source material: NOAH'S ARK by Enter-Tech (1982), the NES games NOAH'S ARK (as a part of BIBLE ADVENTURES) by Wisdom Tree and NOAH'S ARK by Konami (1992), and finally the SNES game SUPER NOAH'S ARK 3D by Wisdom Tree again. The article provides an overall comparison and analysis of the four in theological terms.

### Keywords

Bible, Noah's Ark, Bible Games, Christian Games, Ludonarrative Dissonance

### Biography

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Well, there's Noah. He moves pretty fast for an old guy. The object's to get the animals in the ark. (*Noah picks up an animal*) Holy shit! You just pick them up? Is that how Noah did it? He did it all by himself by picking the animals up and carrying them in the ark? Well, according to *Bible Ad-*

*ventures*, that's how it happened. So there's where you drop those fuckers off. You just bring them to the door, and let those bastards run in there. You get a checklist of all the animals you need, so it's pretty simple. Go find some more, bring them back. Fun, huh?<sup>1</sup>

Thus spoke James Rolfe, better known as the Angry Video Game Nerd, creator and host of an American retro gaming review-cum-comedy website series on YouTube.<sup>2</sup> His channel *Cinemassacre* with 3.77 million subscribers as of August 2023, and Rolfe himself is hailed for having invented his own genre.<sup>3</sup> With his typical style of an angry, foul-mouthed and beer-drinking sailor, he comments on “bad” video games from the 1980s and 1990s while trying to play them with very varying results.

In 2006, 2009, and 2012, “The Nerd” dedicated three episodes to different “Bible games”, which are – not so surprisingly – games based on biblical stories.<sup>4</sup> During the first of the three episodes, Rolfe discussed a very peculiar game from 1991 called BIBLE ADVENTURES (made by Wisdom Tree). It gave rise to the colourful criticism quoted above. The game actually consisted of three independent games, called NOAH'S ARK, BABY MOSES, and DAVID AND GOLIATH.

While commenting, the Nerd controls a white-clad, older man – apparently Noah – who runs up and down a forest surrounding his ark in order to collect more or less cooperative animals by literally stacking them above his head, up to four animals in total at once. When they have been brought into the ark, Noah checks his list to see what still he has to collect and then off he goes.

The Bible games genre, of which BIBLE ADVENTURES is part, is associated with very low quality *and* game nostalgia, and not only by The Nerd.<sup>5</sup> Bible games like BIBLE ADVENTURES OR EXODUS. JOURNEY TO THE PROMISED LAND (Wisdom Tree, US 1991) are a natural match for The Nerd's show. However, being “bad” and/or “nostalgic” does not prevent Bible games from that era from lacking any and all relevance to history, theology, or game studies. On the contrary. Similar games have been around for a long time: from the

1 AVGN fandom, <https://tinyurl.com/yn5s5am5> [accessed 5 September 2023].

2 Navarro-Remesal 2017, 135–136; Lizardi 2017, 42–43.

3 Carlson 2014.

4 See AVGN on YouTube, <https://tinyurl.com/46kk5jpy>, <https://tinyurl.com/bd44t3ee> and <https://tinyurl.com/3atumh8b>.

5 Iannone 2017; Makuch 2014; Brown 2007.

1980s with games like DANIEL & THE LION’S DEN (BibleByte Software, US 1982) on the TRS-80 and RED SEA CROSSING (Inspirational Video Concepts, US 1983) on the Atari 2600 VCS, through notorious Wisdom Tree games like BIBLE ADVENTURES on NES and SUPER NOAH’S ARK 3D (1994) on SNES, to modern interpretations like the ADAM’S VENTURE series (Vertigo Digital Entertainment, NL 2009–2016) for PC, PlayStation 3 and 4, Xbox One, and Switch, and LOGOS BIBLE VIDEO GAME (TeComprendo, MX 2020) for PC, macOS, and Linux. The genre provides us with examples of and insight into a new stage in the cultural appropriation of the Bible. We can also identify the development of (parts of) Christendom that want to integrate the possibilities of the new medium while negotiating its supposedly problematic characteristics.<sup>6</sup>

In this article, I explore four retro-cum-Bible games, three of which were discussed in The Nerd’s Bible shows (see table 1). They feature as *pars pro toto* for the whole development of Bible games in the last decades, including their theological significance. For the purpose of comparison, I have chosen four games with the same name but developed by three different companies: the arcade game called NOAH’S ARK by Enter-Tech (1982), the NES games NOAH’S ARK (as a part of BIBLE ADVENTURES) by Wisdom Tree and NOAH’S ARK by Konami (1992), and finally the SNES game SUPER NOAH’S ARK 3D by Wisdom Tree again.

Game	Platform	Release	Developer	Publisher
NOAH’S ARK	Arcade	1982	Enter-Tech	Moppet Video
NOAH’S ARK (part of BIBLE ADVENTURES)	NES	1991	Wisdom Tree	Wisdom Tree
NOAH’S ARK	NES	1992	Konami	Konami
SUPER NOAH’S ARK 3D	SNES	1994	Wisdom Tree	Wisdom Tree

Table 1: An overview of the games discussed in this article.

All games featured in this article have been played on an Arcade, NES or SNES emulator. Not included are later (post-1999) Noah-themed games like THE STORY OF NOAH’S ARK (Razorback, UK 2011), NOAH’S BUNNY PROBLEM (Salvation’s Story, US 2015), ALL ABOARD THE ARK (Popsicle Games, PH 2015), NOAH’S ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM (Salvation’s Story, US 2017), and THE CHRONICLES OF NOAH’S ARK (e-FunSoft Games, ID 2018), because their relatively young age means they do not yet qualify as “nostalgic”. Games that appropriate

6 Copier/Kooijman/Vander Stichele 2010.

the theme of the Deluge more indirectly, like BRINK (Splash Damage, UK 2011), MUTANT YEAR ZERO. ROAD TO EDEN (The Bearded Ladies, NO 2018), and METRO. EXODUS (4A Games/Deep Silver, AT 2019), are also excluded from this research.<sup>7</sup>

In this article, I pose the question, What is the “theology” of those four games in comparison to one another? To answer this question, I first discuss briefly some preliminary notions and concepts, like the method used to analyse these video games, the genre of the Christian/Bible Games, and the biblical flood narrative itself. Next, I discuss the case studies, the four games called NOAH’S ARK, in light of their theological traits, and finally I provide an overall analysis of and comparison between the games. This analysis will show the slow secularization of Noah’s story through the games, with growing emphasis on the friendly interaction with various animals and the loss of the darker undertones of the biblical source material.

## Some Preliminary Remarks

### Communication-oriented Methodology

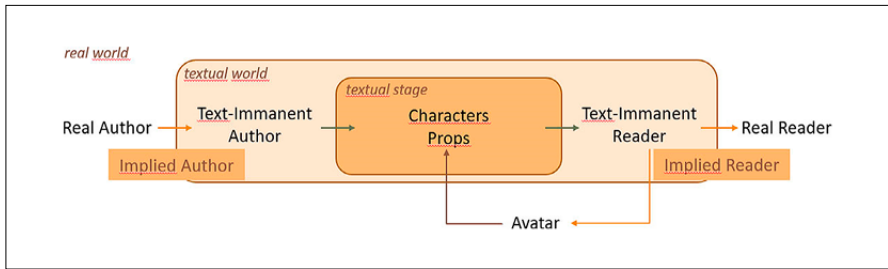
To analyse these video games, I make use of Communication-Oriented Analysis (see scheme 1), differentiating between the real world *outside* the video game text and the world *inside* the game.<sup>8</sup> Outside the textual world of the game, we find the “real author”, the actual developer(s) who made the game in question, including his/her/their creative intentions and religious motivations. In the case of this article we ask, What were the intentions of developers of the games in question?

Another possibility outside the game text is the “real reader” – either historical, from the time the game was released, or contemporary – where we can consider how playing these games influences the individual’s thoughts, emotions, and opinions about the Bible and/or Christianity. In the case of this article we ask, What emotions were/are attached to playing the game by the actual players both earlier and now?

Inside the textual world of the game, we find the game-immanent communication between the “text-immanent author” and “text-immanent

7 Bosman 2022.

8 Bosman/Wieringen 2022.



Scheme 1: The unique property of video games in terms of their communication: the entanglement of the text-immanent reader and its in-game character (avatar).

reader”. This communication, and its interpretation, is somewhat related to, but certainly not confined by, the developers’ intentions or the actual players’ appreciation of the game.<sup>9</sup> In the case of this article we ask, What is the theological meaning of the discussed Bible games *in and of themselves*?

And last but not least, one can focus on the games’ characters, especially the protagonists, with some characters seeming more in demand than others: Noah, Moses, Joshua, and Jesus himself are very popular as titular characters. In this case, all four games focus on the character/avatar Noah.

This last observation is important in the context of video games because of their unique communicative property: the entanglement of the text-immanent reader/player with its in-game character/avatar. The text-immanent player is the one the story is told *to* (by the text-immanent author), the one the story is – partially – told *by* (as far as allowed by the text-immanent author), and the one the story is told *about* (the text-immanent reader’s in-game character/avatar).

## Christian Games versus Bible Games

Christian games are commercially released video games explicitly appropriating the (Western) Christian tradition, including the Bible and its reception, usually (but not exclusively) for the purposes of providing faith-appropriate content for children and young adults and/or proselytizing non-believers. Examples include SPIRITUAL WARFARE (Wisdom Tree, US 1992), DANCE PRAISE

9 Kristeva 1980.

(Digital Praise, US 2005), or LEFT BEHIND. ETERNAL FORCES (Inspired Media Entertainment, US 2006).

Self-proclaimed Christian gamer Zachery Oliver identifies four problems with the genre's popularity.<sup>10</sup> First, games for the faithful have suffered from Wisdom Tree's legendary bad games, riddled with "blatant plagiarism of established game ideas [...] [and] illegal cartridge production/lockout overrides", setting a poor reputation for the whole genre. Secondly, Christian games tend to focus almost exclusively on their narrative dimension at the cost of their ludic quality, often resulting in a ludo-narrative dissonance.<sup>11</sup> Thirdly, Christian games appear to "exist purely for the purpose of evangelizing", sacrificing all subtlety in the zealous effort accompanying this. And fourthly, the explicit religious self-identification of Christian games paradoxically scares away precisely the non-believers it seeks to engage.

The Bible game forms is a subgenre of Christian games. Bible games do share the Christian games' purposes and target audiences, but the latter take their inspiration from the Christian tradition in general (including its reception of the Bible), while the first draw specifically and/or exclusively from the Bible alone (again, as received in Western Christendom). Examples include EXODUS. JOURNEY TO THE PROMISED LAND (Wisdom Tree, US 1991), THE BIBLE GAME (Mass Media, US 2005), or NOAH'S ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM (Salvation's Story, US 2017).

The two genres – Christian and Bible – are conceptually distinct: they are defined by their content (narrative-focused classification) rather than by traditional ludic characteristics, like the action/adventure, side-scroller or puzzle-game genres (ludic or game-mechanics-based classification).

Furthermore, this definition of the Bible game genre excludes (1) games that have not been officially released; (2) games that feature biblical themes, notions, or quotations only as part of their larger narrative and/or world building, like the ASSASSIN'S CREED series (Ubisoft, CA 2007–2020), the METRO series (Deep Silver, AT 2010–2019), or THE TALOS PRINCIPLE (Devolver Digital, US 2014); and (3) games based on apocryphal biblical literature, like EL SHADDAI. ASCENSION OF THE METATRON (Ignition Tokyo, UK 2011).<sup>12</sup>

We should note that the terms "Christian games" and "Bible games" tend to be used interchangeably within popular discourse, especially within the (professional) gamer community online.

10 Oliver 2016; cf. Thompson 2009.

11 Cf. Cogburn/Silcox 2009, 76–77.

12 Bosman 2019.

## The Genesis Narrative

The biblical story of Noah's Ark – in the English world also known by its older name, the Deluge – is found in Genesis 6:1–9:17, and probably consists of two narratives woven into one, causing all kinds of repetitions, interference to the logical order of events, internal contradictions, and the like.<sup>13</sup> In the story – we will take it as one here, as it has been in Christian tradition – God decides to flood the world with water to “reboot” his creation.<sup>14</sup> There are two reasons for God's decision: one mythological, concerning the problematic existence of the Nephilim (6:1–4), and one ethical, concerning the wickedness of humankind (6:5–8).<sup>15</sup> God instructs Noah to build a giant ship, or rather a “box” to be closed from the outside by God himself, in order to save himself and his family together with seven pairs of every clean animal and one pair of unclean ones (6:19–21 and 7:2–3).<sup>16</sup>

After the rains have stopped, Noah sends out a dove to check for dry land (8:8–12): once it returns to the Ark having looked in vain, once it returns with an olive branch, and finally it fails to return. Both the dove and the olive branch have developed into autonomous symbols of peace in the Western world.<sup>17</sup> When Noah, his family, and the animals have set foot on dry land again, God and Noah enter into a covenant with one another. To mark this occasion and stress God's promise never to destroy the world again, God places a “bow in the cloud”, traditionally interpreted as a rainbow (9:13).<sup>18</sup>

Noah and his Ark have become part of Western popular culture, featuring considerably in Western cinema with films like *EVAN ALMIGHTY* (Tom Shydac, US 2007), *40 DAYS AND NIGHTS* (Michael Lehmann, US/GB/FR 2002), and *NOAH* (Darren Aronofsky, US 2014), (satirically) in adult animated sitcoms like *FAMILY GUY*'s episode “Holly Bible” (created by: Seth MacFarlane, US 2020), *AMERICAN DAD*'s “Daesong Heavy Industries” (created by: Seth MacFarlane, Mike Barker and Matt Weitzman, US 2016), *THE SIMPSONS*' “Das Bus” (created by: Matt Groening, US 1998), and (somewhat more seriously) in animated films and cartoons like *OOPS! NOAH IS GONE...* (Toby Genkel and Sean

13 Finkel 2014, chap. 9.

14 Wieringen 2022.

15 Bosman/Poorthuis 2015, 17–40.

16 Good 2011, 78.

17 Werness 2006, 143.

18 Thiselton 2018, chap. 5.



Figs. 1a–c: Playmobil's nameless toy, part of the Wild Life series (above left, fig. 1a), Fisher-Price's "Noah's Ark" (below left, fig. 1b), and Lemax's "Noah's Ark Toys" (right, fig. 1c).

Mccormack, US/GB/IE 2015), CATS DON'T DANCE (Mark Dindal, US 1997), and Disney's Silly Symphonies' FATHER NOAH'S ARK (Wilfred Jackson, US 1933).<sup>19</sup>

Noah's Ark has long been an inspiration for children's toys. The quantity of story books, cartoons, toys, and other Noah-themed entertainment especially aimed at children is significant. Playmobil, Fisher-Price, and Lemax, for example (see figs. 1a–c), have devoted high-quality toys to the Deluge, albeit almost exclusively aimed at children and focussing primarily on the animals within the story, even though this excludes or seriously plays down the story's religious overtones or the horror of an almost total extinction of all human and animal life on earth.

19 Kozlovic 2016, chap. 2.



# Four Times NOAH’S ARK

In this section, I discuss the four case studies: four games called NOAH’S ARK.

## NOAH’S ARK by Enter-Tech

NOAH’S ARK is a 1983 arcade game developed by Enter-Tech and distributed by Moppet Video. Moppet Video released five arcade machine games, all in 1982: DESERT RACE, LEPRECHAUN, PIRATE TREASURE, TUG BOAT, and NOAH’S ARK, with the last being one of the very few religion-themed arcade games.<sup>20</sup> Moppet sold their arcade machines – especially developed for young children both in cabinet size and game content – exclusively to Chuck E. Cheese, an American family entertainment centre and restaurant pizza chain founded in 1977 by Atari co-founder Nolan Bushnell.

An 1983 advertisement for NOAH’S ARK (fig. 2a) tries to nudge parents into allowing their children to play Moppet games:

**NOAH'S ARK™**

NOAH'S ARK™ is a game designed especially for youngsters based on the familiar Biblical theme. The child controls NOAH'S every movement with the 8-way joystick as NOAH attempts to save as many pairs of animals as possible by directing them on to the Ark before the rising water swallows them up.

The player earns points for each set of animals NOAH saves. The player must save a required number of sets on each level to avoid losing a "NOAH". The requirements on each level increase so NOAH must move faster and faster as the game progresses.

The player receives 3 "NOAH'S" per coin. After saving as many animals as possible on each level, NOAH scurries up the ramp and into the Ark. The ramp slopes as the water level reaches the Ark, signaling the end of each level of play.

**Dimensions**  
 Height: 48 1/2" / 114.84 cm  
 Width: 17 1/2" / 44.45 cm  
 Depth: 24 1/2" / 61.51 cm  
 Weight: 119 lbs. / 143 lbs. Crated

**ENTERTECH**  
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**MOPPET VIDEO** introduces games just for the 3 to 8 year old. These youngsters represent a key potential for new earnings and image building in the coin amusement industry.

*“Mommy, Mommy! They have a video game just for me!!”*

**CREATE A KIDDIE VIDEO AREA**  
 Place all four Moppet Videos™, "Pirate Treasure™", "Leprechaun™", "Tug Boat™" and "Desert Race™" together in a special game area for youngsters. Each Moppet Video™ game is geared toward the 3 to 8 year old level of complexity. They are all non-violent themes that the young players can identify with. The games are simple and yet offer rewards for employing skill levels to encourage repeated play. The average young player will enjoy 3 to 5 minutes of entertainment on a Moppet Video™.

**OPEN NEW LOCATIONS**  
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**PROFIT FROM LONGER EARNING LIFE**  
 Moppet Video™ will earn operational income over a long time. They will be comparable to a kiddie ride in earning life because they are not subject to the same "fad" phenomenon as the games for teens and adults.

**BUILD A POSITIVE IMAGE**  
 Parents and their children appreciate the Moppet Video™ games. Moppet Video™ create a positive environment as the young players play these games that are developed to meet their level of complexity as well as age. Remembering the younger children marks a positive image in the community and, therefore, helps to build a better image for your business and the industry.

**Moppet Videos™ are just for You Too.**

To learn more about how these games can work for you, call today!

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 Los Altos, CA 94022  
 (800) 872-7200 (415) 964-0943

**ENTERTECH**  
 Enter-Tech Ltd.  
 1724 W. 4th Street  
 Tempe, AZ 85281  
 (800) 528-1409 (602) 968-7004

Figs. 2a–b: Two 1983 advertisements, one for NOAH'S ARK specifically (fig. 2a) and one for Moppet Videos more broadly (fig. 2b).

20 Gonzalez 2019.

NOAH'S ARK™ is a game designed especially for youngsters based on the familiar Biblical theme. The child controls NOAH's every movement with the 8-way joy stick as NOAH attempts to save as many pairs of animals as possible by directing them on to the Ark before the rising water swallows them up.

Moppet Video tries to negotiate prejudices against arcade machines and arcades in general by offering child-friendly, and therefore parent-friendly, video entertainment, as another advertisement shows (fig. 2b):

Moppet Video™ introduces games just for the 3 to 8 years old. These youngsters represent key potential for new earnings and image building in the coin amusement industry. [...] They are all non-violent themes that the young players can identify with. The games are simple and yet offer rewards for improving skill levels to encourage repeat play. The averaged young player will enjoy 3 to 5 minutes of entertainment on a Moppet Video™ [...] Remembering the younger children marks a positive image in the community and, therefore, helps to build a better image for your business and the industry.

The game itself is pretty simple (fig. 3a), mainly due to the technological restrictions of the 1980s. The player controls Noah, clothed in a grey robe with a white belt, holding a black staff suggesting a relative high age, and sporting white hair and beard. On the top of each level a crude image of the ark is seen: a brown structure with a grey roof over it. In its side is a black hole that allows the animals to enter the ark via a ramp (fig. 3b). As Noah, the player has to gather pairs of animals and lead them back to the ark:



Figs. 3a–c: Screen shots of Enter-tech's NOAH'S ARK: the title screen (left, fig. 3a), some gameplay (middle, fig. 3b), and the level's end screen (right, fig. 3c).

monkeys, giraffes, elephants, camels, lions, deer, and so forth. Eventually, the waters on the bottom of each level will rise, forcing Noah to retreat to his ark.

If Noah fails to bring enough animals to the ark, the player will lose a life. If Noah succeeds before the water reaches him, the ark closes behind him and the whole level will be flooded. A white dove flies from the ark to the right of the screen, only to return quickly at the left side, holding an olive branch in its beak. As soon as the dove lands on the ark, a rainbow appears over it (fig. 3c). Then, the water retreats, the ark opens, and Noah is tasked with collecting another set of animals in time. When all lives have been depleted, the player can enter his/her/their three initials in the top-scorers list, called “Noah’s friends”.

## NOAH’S ARK by Wisdom Tree

It is surely impossible to draw up a list of Bible games without at least one entry from the Wisdom Tree franchise.<sup>21</sup> The history of the company is bizarre but well-documented.<sup>22</sup> In 1989, American game developer Color Dream succeeded in by-passing Nintendo’s “lock out” chip, by means of which the Japanese company could control the international market for their console: only officially licensed third-party games could be played on the Nintendo Entertainment Set (NES). Color Dreams’ solution was technically impressive, but in practical terms somewhat disappointing, in the sense that its cartridges were known to malfunction randomly and the overall quality of the unlicensed games, such as KING NEPTUNE’S ADVENTURE (1990), PESTERMINATOR (1989), METAL FIGHTER (1991), CRYSTAL MINES (1989), and MENACE BEACH (1990), was suboptimal, to say the least.


In 1991, Color Dream reinvented itself as Wisdom Tree, focussing exclusively on Christianity-related games. This move was partially intended to avoid Nintendo’s wrath: even though the Japanese company had not sued Color Dreams – a claim that would likely have eventually failed – Nintendo forced its retailers into selling only licensed products. Wisdom Tree was a means to wiggle the company’s unlicensed products into a brand new mar-

21 See, for example, Hill 2014; Iannone 2017; Geek History, *The History of Christian Video Games* [show], 18 September 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/mrxsfuhp> [accessed 27 December 2021]; Monastery Studios, *Evolution of Christian Video Games (1982–2021)*, 21 September 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/49tv373b> [accessed 27 December 2021].

22 Durham 2017; Gard/Gard 2017, 10–12; Kent 2001, 399–400.

BC-3  
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# Bible Adventures




Be a part of Bible stories as exciting characters come to life. Help Noah bring the animals into the ark before the big storm, pretend you are David battling the giant Goliath; and help save baby Moses from the Pharaoh's overwhelming forces. Assisted by scores of direct quotes from the Bible, your adventures is going to be fun and educational.

**NOAH'S ARK**  
Noah is feverently preparing for the long journey. To complete the quota of animals and food for the ark you must search through multiple worlds of forest, caverns and mountainous terrains. Interesting and unique behaviors challenge you to find a different solution to capture each type of animal.

**SAVE BABY MOSES**  
The Pharaoh's soldiers are out in full force with orders to find and kill baby Moses. You must outsmart their persistent search and rescue Moses. As you progress through each level there are more and more soldiers and obstacles to test your determination and will.


**DAVID AND GOLIATH**  
As a shepherd, young David has to keep and defend his family's flock. After you are successful in rounding up the scattered sheep, you will then face Goliath and his shield bearer. Be bold, for God is with you.

**3 ADVENTURES  
IN  
1 CARTRIDGE**



1999 WISDOM TREE  
Brea, California, U.S.A.

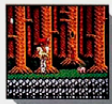
**A GAME THAT EXCITES THE MIND**



9 789901 630004  
SPCN-9-9016-3000-2

## Noah's Ark

**Story**  
God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt. So God asked Noah to make an ark of cypress wood and bring into the ark two of every living thing of all flesh; they shall be male and female. Help Noah gather animals and food for his long journey before the flood arrives.



**Object**  
The idea behind this wonderful adventure is simple. As Noah, it is your duty to make sure the ark is filled with animals and food. The animals have already found their way into the general area of the ark, and now it is time to start gathering. In each level, Noah must complete a checklist of animals which calls for a pair of every unclean animal, and seven pairs of every clean animal. Once the check list is complete, you advance to the next level. After all four levels are completed, a reward screen shows you the flood.

Every level's layout is similar. The ark is in the middle of forest. In the middle of the ark, near the top, is where you'll find the door (look for the flashing arrow). This door is where you want to bring the checklist's requirements of animals and food. When you reach the door, simply press UP to enter the ark.

**Stone Tablets and Strength**  
When you first start the game, Noah's current strength is shown in the upper left of the screen. Every time Noah gets hurt or bumped he loses some of his strength. To replenish his strength, pick up Stone Bible Tablets found scattered among the levels. Each tablet contains either a quotation from the Bible or a game hint. If you pick up enough tablets to make your Strength Status Bar reach five, all additional tablets will be stored in memory, even though you can only see five at a time.

Figs. 4a–c: From left to right: the reverse side of Wisdom Tree's NOAH'S ARK's box (fig. 4a), a page from the game's manual (fig. 4b), and a still from the game's commercial (below right, fig. 4c).



ket: Christian (book) stores. This approach had two advantages: Christian retailers would not sell official games anyway, and legal or public backlash from Nintendo against a Christianity- and Bible-focused publisher would make for very bad publicity.<sup>23</sup> This tactic, motivated by religious and/or commercial motives, resulted in a number of commercial (but univocally unlicensed) releases by Wisdom Tree.

In 1991, Wisdom Tree released one of its first unlicensed NES Bible games, called BIBLE ADVENTURES.<sup>24</sup> It actually consisted of three separate games – a feat that Wisdom Tree would repeat with THE EARLY YEARS OF THE KING OF KINGS (also released in 1991) – namely, NOAH'S ARK, SAVE BABY MOSES, and DAVID AND GOLIATH. On the reverse of the box (fig. 4a), the games are introduced as follows:

23 Gard/Gard 2017, 12.

24 Scullion 2019, 221; Weiss 2011, 56; Steffen 2017, 69.

Be a part of Bible stories as exciting characters come to life. Help Noah bring the animals into the ark before a big storm; pretend you are David battling the giant Goliath; and help save baby Moses from Pharaoh's overwhelming forces. Assisted by scores of direct quotes from the Bible, your adventures is [sic] going to be fun and educational [sic].

Below, the introduction for NOAH'S ARK reads as follows (including some major spelling and grammatical errors):

Noah is feverently preparing for the long journey. To complete the quata of animals and food for the ark you must search through mulitple worlds of foresr, caverns and mountainous terrains. Interesting and unique behaviors challenge you to find a different solution to capture each type of animal.

If one thinks that God is absent from the game, look again. In the accompanying manual (fig. 4b), the game is introduced as follows:

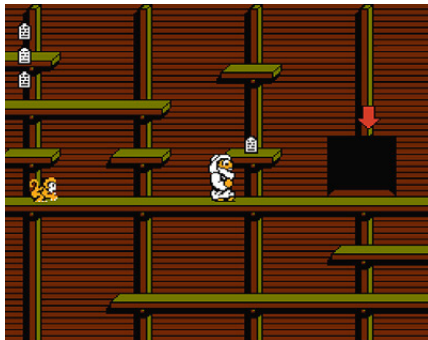
God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt. So God asked Noah to make an ark of cypress wood and bring into the ark two of every living thing of all flesh; they shall be male and female. Help Noah gather animals and food for his long journey before the flood arrives.<sup>25</sup>

For the release of the game, a commercial was created stressing its child-friendly nature (fig. 4c). We see children playing with a Nintendo. Two women, clearly two mothers, discuss their children's game behaviour. The first says, "Do you ever worry that they play too much Nintendo?" To which the other replies, "Oh, not anymore. See, Matt has BIBLE ADVENTURES. They are actually learning Bible stories while they're playing Nintendo." One of the children reacts to his friend, without appearing to be responding to his mother's conversation, "Quick, get that Bible quote!" A voice-over closes the sell: "BIBLE ADVENTURE features three games [...] a must for every family with Nintendo."<sup>26</sup>

The game itself (fig. 5a) revolves around, as the introductions have suggested, Noah being tasked to bring missing animals to the Ark, which is situated

25 See manual at <https://tinyurl.com/rmt46a5t>.

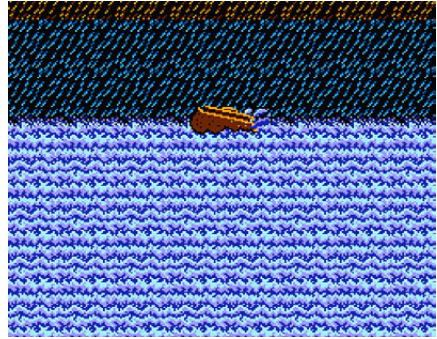
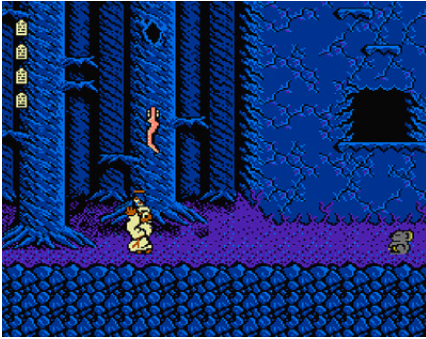
26 Courtesy of Pat the NES Punk, <https://tinyurl.com/496wckxu>.



Figs. 5a–c: Screen shots of Wisdom Tree's NOAH'S ARK: the title screen (left, fig. 5a), gameplay outside the Ark (right, fig. 5b, fig. 5b), and gameplay inside the Ark (below left, fig. 5c).

in the middle of a forest (fig. 5b). During a total of four stages, Noah has to look to the right and left of the Ark to find supplies (bananas, pears, grapes, coconuts, bales of hay, and wheat), and pairs of animals (horses, monkeys, snakes, pigs, oxen, turtles, pandas, raccoons, blue jays, black birds, eagles, toucans, tigers, panthers, lions, leopards, koalas, coyotes, owls, and ducks) to bring them safely inside (fig 5c). Cows are the exception: Noah has to catch not one but seven pairs of them, a reference to the division between “clean” and “unclean” animals in Genesis 7:1–5. The game’s manual confirms this designation: “In each level, Noah must complete a checklist of animals which calls for a pair of every unclean animal, and seven pairs of every clean animal.”

Other animals – very confusing for the uninitiated player, since they are partially the same as the ones the player is trying to catch – try to hinder Noah: those opponents are tree snakes, parrots, swooping eagles, hungry pigs, woodpeckers, and some large cats. The fourth level is severely darkened, lit only by lightning – foretelling the imminent deluge – or by a firefly in a jar Noah can carry (fig. 6a). When all animals have been collected, the



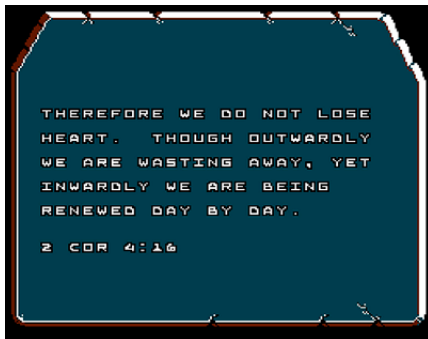
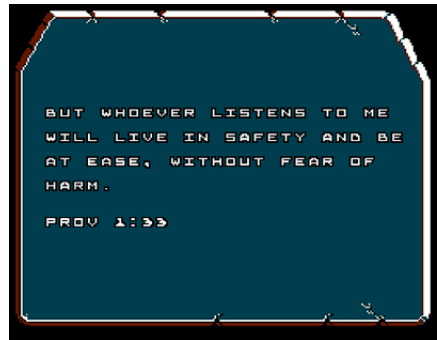
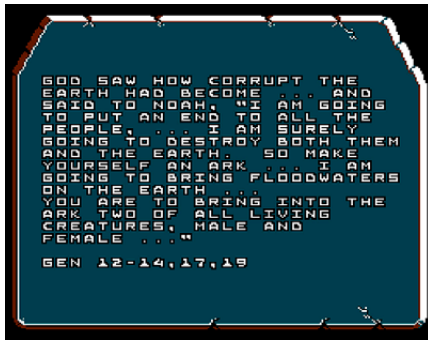
Figs. 6a–c: Screen shots of Wisdom Tree’s NOAH’S ARK: gameplay from level 4 (left, fig. 6a), the end, part one (above right, fig. 6b), and the end, part two (below right, fig. 6c).

rain and floods set in (fig. 6b), only to deposit the Ark on the peak of a mountain (fig. 6c). In contrast to Enter-Tech’s earlier rendering of the story, no doves or rainbows are shown.

After the title screen, the player is provided with a quotation from the New International English translation of Genesis 6:12–14, 17, 19 (although the game omits the chapter number), apparently and suggestively carved into a stone tablet (fig. 7a):

God saw how corrupt the earth had become... and said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all the people, ... I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark... I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth... You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female...”

The idea of the stone tablets also plays a role when Noah is hurt: he loses some of his “strength”, measured in stone tablets (as the manual explicitly



Figs. 7a–c: Screen shots of Wisdom Tree's NOAH'S ARK: introduction of the game quoting Genesis 6:12–14, 17, 19 (left, fig. 7a), and two examples of other inspirational quotations, Proverbs 1:33 (right, fig. 7b), and 2 Corinthians 4:16 (below left, fig. 7c).

identifies). To get strength back, the player has to find other tablets scattered through the world. When picked up, the tablets provide tips (the first couple of times) and inspirational quotes from the Bible (see figs. 7b and 7c as examples). The stone tablets seem to be a reference to the Ten Commandments, which were also carved on stone tablets, to the Mosaic Law (the first five books of the Torah), and/or to the Old Testament in general. This identification has old roots within Christianity; see for example Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:1–18.<sup>27</sup>

The tablets provide inspirational quotes from Genesis (6:21, 7:2), Proverbs (1:33, 8:18–19, 13:25, and 15:15), Ecclesiastes (3:13), Psalms (147:14, 111:15, and 31:24), Job (5:22), 2 Corinthians (4:16), and Hebrews (10:36). The majority of the quotes proclaim the reward that awaits the righteous, that is, those who stay loyal to the Lord. The evocation of these “faithful” texts in the context of Noah's actions and also the unique communicative property of video games mean that the text-immanent player of the game is bestowed

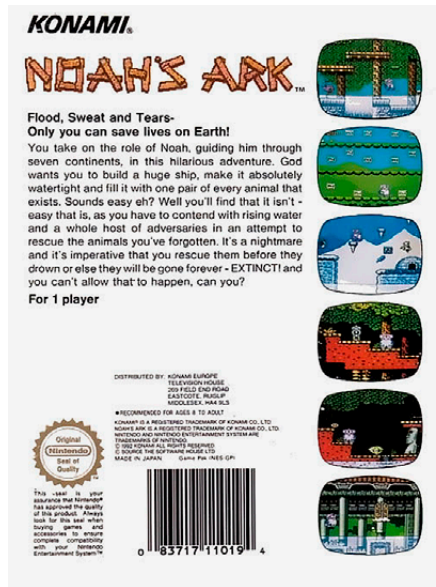
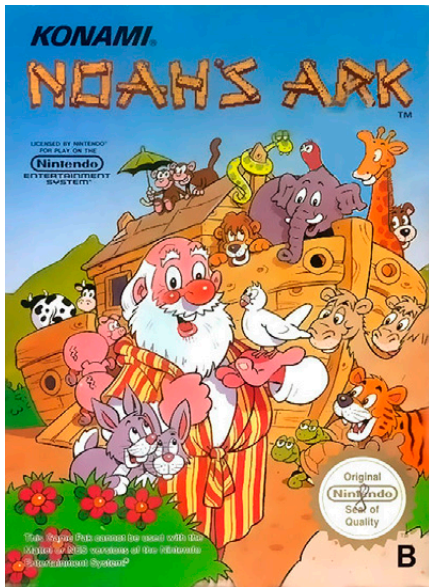
27 Thielman 2005, 335–336.



with this righteousness: if the (immanent) player acts as Noah did, the player is the righteous one to whom the Bible promises wealth and happiness.

## NOAH'S ARK by Konami

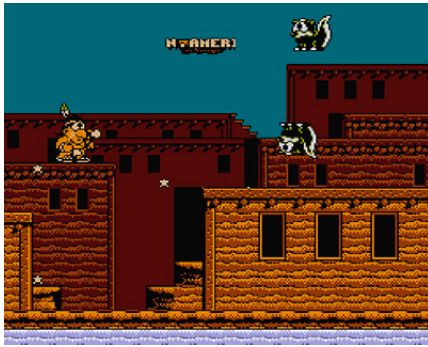
In 1992, the Japan-based game company Konami released NOAH'S ARK for the NES.<sup>28</sup> The game is a one-of-a-kind within the history of gaming. It was only released in Europe (not in Japan or the USA) *and* it was the only explicitly religion-themed, officially licensed NES game.<sup>29</sup> Nintendo has very strict guidelines governing in-game depictions of religious iconography, sex, nudi-



Figs. 8a–c. The front of the box (above left, fig. 8a), the back of the box (above right, fig. 8b) for Konami's NOAH'S ARK, and the title screen (below right, fig. 8c).

28 Scullion 2019, 139.

29 Gard/Gard 2017, chap. 2; Prescott 2021.



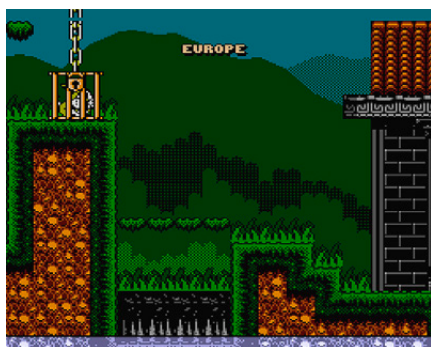
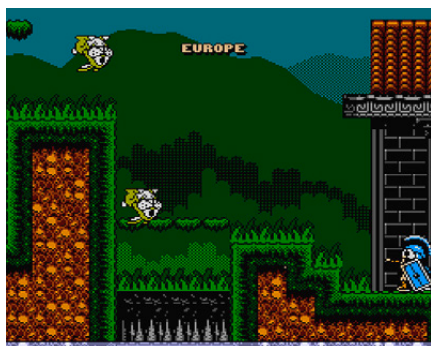
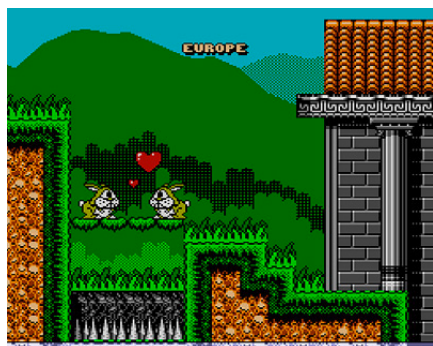
Figs. 9a–c: Screen shots of Konami’s NOAH’S ARK: the starts to the North American (left, fig. 9a), Oceanian (right, fig. 9b), and Asian (below left, fig. 9c) levels.

ty, racial stereotypes, controlled substances, profanity, violence, and political incendiary content, especially for its North American products.<sup>30</sup> However, this policy has not been enforced completely, since there are examples of games featuring religious imagery, like, for example, the cross painted on Link’s shield in *THE LEGEND OF ZELDA* (1986) and the use of holy water from a bottle with a cross on its lid in *CASTLEVANIA* (1986) and *SIMON’S QUEST* (1987).

NOAH’S ARK seems to be a double exception. First, there are references to religion in the game’s name, its obvious source material, and the description on the box’s reverse, which explicitly mentions “God” (figs. 8a–8c):

Flood, sweat and tears – Only you can save lives on Earth! You take on the role of Noah, guiding him through seven continents, in this hilarious adventure. God wants you to build a huge ship, make it absolutely watertight and fill it with one pair of every animal that exists. [...] It’s a

30 Altice 2015, 110; Fahey 2010.

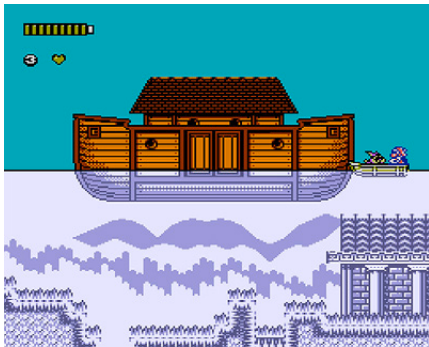
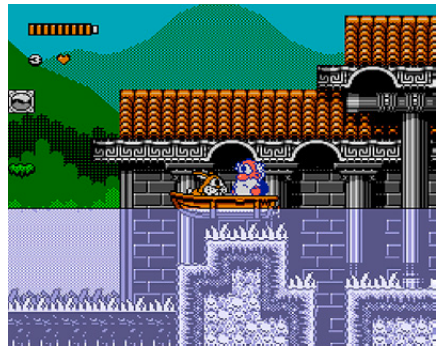
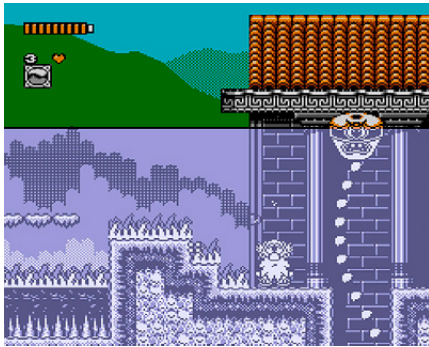


Figs. 10a–c: Screen shots of Konami’s NOAH’S ARK: the two rabbits symbolizing Europe (level 1) are in love (left, fig. 10a), when one of them is killed, in this case by a Roman soldier (above right, fig. 10b), and the other is imprisoned (below right, fig. 10c).

nightmare and it’s imperative that you rescue them before they drown or else they will be gone forever – EXTINCT! and you can’t allow that to happen, can you?

Secondly, there are multiple racial stereotypes within the game itself. For example, the depiction of indigenous peoples from North America, Oceania, and Asia is problematic (figs. 9a–c). Besides the stereotypes, the use of indigenous people trying to stop Noah from fulfilling the commandment of the Lord suggests that they – as heathens – are the enemies of God and are deserving of their untimely death. Noah’s aesthetic on the game’s box is heavily Westernized: he looks like a combination between your favourite grandpa in his pyjamas and an incognito Santa Claus (fig. 8b).

The inclusion of ancient Egyptian and Roman soldiers (fig. 10b), representing Africa and Europe, contributes to this idea, since Egypt and Rome are prime enemies of the Israelites in the Old and New Testaments, at least in Christian reception (although Egypt is also portrayed in the Bible as a



Figs. 11a–c: Screen shots of Konami's Noah's Ark: the "normal" stage boss, a giant plug (left, fig. 11a), Noah's escape with the animal connected to that specific level (right, fig. 11b), and Noah arriving at the Ark (below, fig. 11c).

place of refuge).<sup>31</sup> This kind of stereotyping could lead to antisemitic imagery, as is the case in another Wisdom Tree game, *THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT* (part of the game set *THE EARLY YEARS OF THE KING OF KINGS*, also from 1991), where Joseph, Mary, and Baby Jesus are hindered as they flee from King Herod (Matthew 2:13–23) by – among others – rabbis.

The game is divided into seven continents, each consisting of three levels, making a total of 21 stages to beat. All stages begin with a pair of animals, clearly in love; one is killed by a native of each continent and the other is imprisoned (see, for example, figs. 10a–c). Noah has to mow down countless numbers of hostile animals in order to free the one he needs and evacuate it to the Ark. (What Noah is going to do with only half of each pair of animals to repopulate the earth is a question the game seems to overlook.)

In every stage the water is slowly rising, suggesting an imminent flood, but also hindering the player significantly, since manoeuvring in the water is

31 Green 2010; Beale 2008; Galvin 2011.



Figs. 12a–c: Screen shots of Konami’s NOAH’S ARK: the Inca sun god who is the level 3 end boss (left, fig. 12a), a devilish version of Noah, the level 7 end boss (right above, fig. 12b), and the game’s end screen (below right, fig. 12c).

much harder than on dry land. To add to the sense of imminent danger, the screen moves sideways even if Noah is standing still, forcing the player to keep going, without the possibility of a moment of rest. (The real player can pause the game anytime he/she/they want, but the text-immanent player cannot.)

At the end of every stage, there is a giant animated plug (fig. 11a), which has to be defeated in order to lower the water level and proceed to the next stage. At the end of every third stage, so the end of each level, Noah also has to fight against an end boss. The boss is usually a giant animal (fish, spider, lobster or wasp), but it is also a floating image of an Inca sun god (level 3, fig. 12a), a giant snowman (level 5) and even a giant, demonic version of Noah himself (level 7, fig. 12b).

The idea of the game’s protagonist having to face its negative counterpart is also found in other NES games, as for example at the end of ZELDA II. THE ADVENTURE OF LINK (1987). The level boss has to be fought either in the air (Noah gets wings) or in the water (Noah is changed into a fish). During

Noah's fight with the sun god, if he is touched by it, he loses his wings and thus the ability to fly. While this happens in the whole game – if touched, Noah loses his special ability – this instance evokes a probable reference to the Greek legend of Icarus's deadly flight too close to the sun.

When the level's end boss has been defeated, Noah and the rescued animal in question quickly travel by motorboat (speaking of anachronisms...) over the now rapidly falling water level to the Ark (figs. 11b–c). After defeating the last level boss – the devilish version of Noah – the hero returns to his Ark together with the panda, representing Asia. Then, a last screen is shown (fig. 12c): Noah smiles and waves to the camera, while in the background the Ark is seen in silhouette resting on a mountain top, while a rainbow shines over it. Left of the Ark, a small silhouette of a dove holding an olive branch is seen. The screen congratulates the player with “great!” and a score is shown.

## **SUPER NOAH'S ARK 3D by Wisdom Tree**

SUPER NOAH'S ARK 3D (SNES and DOS 1994), alternatively SUPER 3D NOAH'S ARK due to the design of the game's cartridge, is a clear conversion of WOLFENSTEIN 3D (id Software, US 1992) (see figs. 13a–c).<sup>32</sup> The story of this perhaps best-known Wisdom Tree game – the only unlicensed game for the SNES ever – starts with the game company's founder, Dan Lawton, and his appreciation of the 1987 supernatural horror film HELLRAISER (Clive Barker, GB 1987).<sup>33</sup>

After Lawton saw “kabbalistic implications” in the film, Color Dream acquired both the license for a NES HELLRAISER game for €50,000 and the WOLFENSTEIN source code for an unspecified amount of money. According to a now-debunked Internet myth, id Software handed Wisdom Tree their source code for free because of their supposed anger with Nintendo, which forced id Software to censor the SNES version of their game heavily in order to get the Japanese seal of approval.<sup>34</sup>

The HELLRAISER NES game was never released because Color Dream failed to engineer their “super cart”, with whose help the older console would be able to run far superior games, because id Software published their next

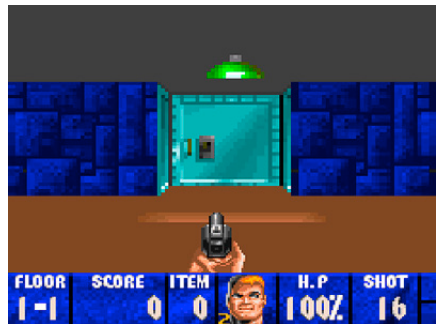
32 Scullion 2020, 187.

33 Nutt 2015; Durham 2017.

34 Matulef 2014.



Figs. 13a–c: Screen shots of SUPER NOAH'S ARK 3D's title screen (left, fig. 13a) and beginning of level 1 (right, fig. 13b), which can be compared WOLFENSTEIN 3D (below right, fig. 13c).

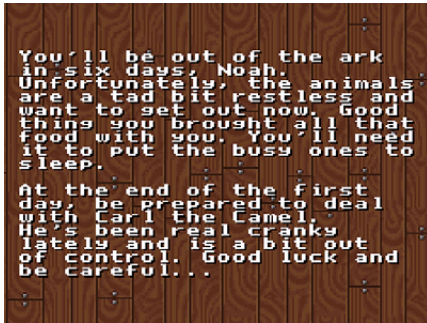


mega hit DOOM (id Software, US 1993), and because the whole HELLRAISER idea would conflict with the company's new family-friendly and Christian image. What Wisdom Tree produced instead was not an original HELLRAISER NES game but a Christian conversion of WOLFENSTEIN 3D for SNES.

At the beginning of the game, the player is briefed (fig. 14a):

You'll be out of the ark in six days, Noah. Unfortunately, the animals are a tad bit restless and want to get out now. Good thing you brought all that food with you. You'll need it to put the busy ones to sleep. At the end of the first day, be prepared to deal with Carl the Camel. He's been real cranky lately and is a bit out of control. Good luck and be careful ...

It is unclear who is talking here to Noah (as a character) and/or the player (as the immanent reader of the game). It could be an anonymous voice-over (as the text-immanent author), nudging Noah and the player into doing what the game wants them to do, or it could be God, who is instructing Noah/the player how to fulfil God's divine commandment. The same idea



Figs. 14a–c: Screen shots of SUPER NOAH'S ARK 3D: briefing (left, fig. 14a), putting goats to sleep (right, fig. 14b), and level 1's end boss, Carl the Camel (below left, fig. 14c).

could be found in the case of the stone tablets of Wisdom Tree's NOAH'S ARK. In both instances the game seems to suggest that the player plays the Bible itself, instead of a paraphrase of it.

Noah has to maintain order on board amongst the gradually rampaging animals. Apparently all the animals have lost their marbles, and they run around the maze the ark is made from, trying to kick Noah in the face as soon as they see him. To soothe the animals, Noah shoots fruit to them, which immediately, if inexplicably, puts them in a deep sleep (fig. 14b). The "normal" animals include goats, sheep, antelopes, ostriches, and oxen – of which more than one or even seven pairs are on board apparently – and six larger ones, acting as level bosses: Carl the cranky Camel (fig. 14c), irritable Ginny the Giraffe, Melvin the tricky Monkey, Kerry the Kangaroo, Ernie the Elephant, and finally Burt the Bear. When all have been put to sleep – putting aside the association with euthanasia – the end screen just shows all the bosses in chronological order, without any narrative conclusion.



## Being Noah. An Analysis

Now the four games called NOAH’S ARK have been described, we can compare them (see Table 2). For the sake of convenience, I have divided the comparisons over five categories: the aesthetics of the Ark, the animals aboard the Ark, the threatening and/or repeating nature of the Deluge, the post-Deluge appearance of the rainbow and the dove, and the positioning of God within the games.

Game	Ark	Animals	Deluge		Post Deluge		God
			<i>threatening</i>	<i>repeating</i>	<i>rainbow</i>	<i>dove</i>	
NOAH’S ARK (Enter-Tech)	brown box	African	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
NOAH’S ARK (Wisdom Tree)	wooden boat / interieur	Mixed	no (yes)	no	no	no	yes (quotes)
NOAH’S ARK (Konami)	wooden boat	Mixed	yes	yes/no	yes	yes	yes (box)
SUPER NOAH’S ARK 3D (Wisdom Tree)	interieur only	Mixed	no	no	no	no	no

Table 2: Comparison of narrative elements in Enter-Tech’s, Wisdom Tree’s, and Konami’s NOAH’S ARKS and in SUPER NOAH’S ARK 3D.

Wisdom Tree’s and Konami’s NOAH’S ARKS both feature a “traditional” Ark, that is, a round ship for the animals with some sort of house on top for the humans. Enter-Tech’s version of the Ark is square, almost like a brown wooden box. Probably as a result of the technical limitations of the Arcade machines, the form of this Ark is more like the “coffin” of the Genesis narrative: “The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD shut him in” (Genesis 7:16).<sup>35</sup> The other games’ Arks look less like coffins and more like cosy ships drawn by children. SUPER NOAH’S ARK does not show the outside of the Ark, only the inside, a feature only the first Wisdom Tree game shares. In both cases the Ark is rather empty, with large wooden walls and pens to place the animals in.

35 Wieringen 2022.

The animals aboard the four Arks are at the centre of the four games, both in terms of gameplay and narrative. In the first three games, the player, as Noah, has to collect animals for the Ark, while in the last one, the animals are already there but have to be tended during the 40-day trip of the Ark. Except for the Enter-Tech game, the animals are from “mixed” origins, that is, they are from different parts of the world. Konami’s version, in particular, deliberately portrays the animals as native to all the continents of the world. Enter-Tech’s NOAH’S ARK is the only one to draw its animals exclusively from the African continent. Only Wisdom Tree’s NOAH’S ARK negotiates the differentiation of clean and unclean animals ludologically. There is one more (narratological) exception, found in later versions of SUPER NOAH’S ARK 3D: the elaborate in-game manual speaks of both categories.

The fixation on the collection of the animals before the Flood and their governance during it, an element left blank by the Bible’s narrator, ties in with the traditional juvenile context of these early video games. In the early days, games were primarily thought of as entertainment or toys for children, as the Moppet Video’s and Wisdom Tree’s commercials aptly testify.

The reasons for this fixation are many: (1) the fact that the Genesis text is silent about these elements allows “others” to fill in the blanks themselves, whether with video games or with physical toys like those of Playmobil or Fisher-Price; (2) the animal scenes in the Noah narrative are highly ludic-adaptable; and (3) these scenes have a certain religion-neutral quality that makes them acceptable for a wide variety of children and parents. One can enjoy Noah’s animal-catching and animal-caring without having to negotiate the religious system they are traditionally a part of.

The Fisher-Price, Playmobile, and Lemax’s toys have no reference to God or any divine reality, which makes them attractive to so many consumers, atheist, agnostics, and theists alike. The Bible games by Wisdom Tree do mention God explicitly. Enter-Tech’s game refrains from doing so, while Konami’s version only mentions God once, and on the box, not inside the actual game.

When it comes to the Deluge, the four games differ from one another in terms of whether they depict the Deluge as an imminent threat and in the uniqueness of the Deluge event. In Enter-Tech’s NOAH’S ARK, the Deluge is both threatening and repeating in the sense that in every level the water levels slowly rise again, putting Noah/the player under time pressure. In Wisdom Tree’s version, the Deluge is a one-time event, only visible as impending in the fourth level of the game, when the world turns ominously dark.

In Konami's NOAH'S ARK, the Deluge is both threatening and repeated throughout the stages and the levels. Noah is constantly hindered by the slowly rising waters in the levels, which can be stopped, even though only temporarily, by battling smaller and larger living plugs and end bosses. After the conclusion of every level, it is flooded: Noah could only postpone the inevitable, and after the last level, the Deluge is complete. In SUPER NOAH'S ARK 3D the Deluge is neither threatening or repeating: it is ignored completely.

All four games connect the symbols of the dove-cum-olive and the sign in the sky-cum-rainbow: if you have one, you have the other too. Enter-Tech and Konami feature both in their end screens, while the two by Wisdom Tree lack both. The two games by Wisdom Tree, however, make a very interesting communicative point: both games suggest that God is talking to the player, or in more technical terms, that God is the text-immanent author of the game's narrative.

God's communication becomes especially visible in NOAH'S ARK, through the use of the stone tablets. The "whoever listens to me will live in safety" (Proverbs 1:33) and the "we" that "do not lose heart" (2 Corinthians 4:16) are both applicable to the figure of Noah – who is righteous in God's eyes – and to the (immanent) player of the game, who is called to identify with Noah. Playing the game becomes a way in which the player acts "divinely". The communicative entanglement between the avatar character and the immanent player results in an identification between the blessed and righteous one from the inspirational quotes and the player. Playing the game makes the player righteous.<sup>36</sup>

In SUPER NOAH'S ARK 3D this suggestion is even stronger, since the "voice-over" at the beginning of every level explicitly addresses Noah, and therefore the text-immanent player. Since God is the only one directly addressing Noah in the biblical story about the building and oversight of the Ark, the suggestion is that the text-immanent author of both voice-over and the rest of the game is God too. So, again, if the text-immanent player plays the game as the text-immanent author intends, the player is doing God's will. Ironically, this may be best voiced by Konami's game, where its box tells the player: "only you can save lives on Earth! You take on the role of Noah [...] God wants you to build a huge ship [...] it's imperative that you rescue them."

Perhaps the most interesting result of the analysis of these four Bible games concerns the position of God: his presence is not univocally ac-

36 Bosman 2019, 76–100.

counted for. God is mentioned in NOAH'S ARK (Wisdom Tree) and NOAH'S ARK (Konami), but not in the other two games. And even then, NOAH'S ARK (Wisdom Tree) only mentions God in the form of in-game biblical quotations, while Konami's only speaks about God outside of the game: on the back of the box. None of the games feature God as a visible character.

One could argue that this omission is a result of religious considerations (concerning the monotheistic sensitivity about depicting the supreme being), commercial concerns (hoping to avoid offending anyone with such a depiction), or the more general rise of secularism in Western society in combination with the cultural persistence of the Christian narrative complex, although in deinstitutionalized, non-dogmatic forms. The old stories of the Hebrew Bible (in its Christian reception), including the Noah narrative, are still culturally relevant but, they are usually stripped of any explicit form of or reference to a transcendent reality or entity.

Within the four games, a secularization process seem to be taking place. The biblical story from Genesis about God's wrath killing every living being on the face of the Earth with only a handful of exceptions, the coffin ship in which Noah and his crew have to survive, and God's solemn promise never to do so again stands in sharp contrast to the rather innocent contextualization in the four games (with the possible exception of Konami's game, which features terrible creatures to fight against). Noah-cum-the-player is occupying himself primarily with collecting and caring for the animals (again with Konami's game as an exception).

Paradoxically, the only game maintaining some of the horror of the original story is the only one not produced within a Christian context, while the Christian ones forsake this aspect of the biblical story entirely. In a (post) Christian context, there is a certain effort to take the sting out of the harsher parts of the biblical narrative, especially of the Old Testament, in order to make it more appealing to both modern Christians and their criticasters. Modern Christian missionaries of all forms are sensitive to the occurrence of death and destruction in the Bible, often divinely provoked or inspired, and as a result tend to focus on the more spiritual and pacifist biblical stories.

As a result of the lack of a Christian presence historically and therefore culturally, the Japanese context does not have to negotiate these sensitivities. In a contemporary Western context that is culturally (still) a Christian one, "playing" with the Bible is surrounded by religious taboos, even though this hesitation is rapidly declining in the West because of secularization and deinstitutionalization. Konami's rendering of Noah's story is less constrict-

ed by its source than the Western ones (to say the least), and the Japanese game does not have to sweeten the original's horror.

In line with the aforementioned children's toys by PlayMobil, Fisher-Price, and Lemax, the four video games discussed are clearly marketed towards and designed for either children themselves or their parents, suggesting a suitable and safe entertainment. For the three Christian Bible games (Konami being the exception again), such appropriateness requires the games to be acceptable not only socially but also from a religious point of view. In all cases it is understandable why the producers decided to "go easy" on the darker elements of the Genesis narrative while focussing on the more light-hearted element of collecting and tending animals in a big boat, ready to set sail. In the end, the four games are primarily about playing with Noah's animals.

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