**What is “Gopher Wood”?**

http://www.christiananswers.net/goldbar1.gif

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| http://www.christiananswers.net/0.gif | http://www.christiananswers.net/0.gif | Wood. Illustration copyrighted.  The Hebrew word "*gopher*" is used only once in the [Bible](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/home.html), in [Genesis 6:14](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen6.html#14). God told [Noah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/noah.html) to "make yourself an [ark](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ark.html) of *gopher* wood." Because no one knows for certain what "*gopher*" means in this context, the King James Version and the New King James Version simply leave the word untranslated and say "*gopher*" wood.  Most modern English versions of the Bible translate it as "[cypress](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/cypress.html)." This is probably incorrect and is really only a guess supported by very weak evidence. Why cypress? In trying to solve the identity of "*gopher* wood," some guessed that a transliteration might be involved ("*kupar*" into “gopher”). Adam Clarke's Commentary says, "supposing the Greek word *kuparissov*, cypress, was formed from the Hebrew rpg, *gopher*; for take away the termination *issov*, and then *gopher* and *kupar* will have a near resemblance." Another supposed evidence for “cypress” is based on the fact that [cypress](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/cypress.html) trees are large and strong, and in the post-Flood earth, at least, once grew abundantly in [Chaldea](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chaldea.html) and [Armenia](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/armenia.html). Armenia is where the ark is believed to have landed, in the mountains of [Ararat](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ararat.html).  Cypress is far from the only guess made by translators. Other trees and plants include [pine](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/pinetree.html), [cedar](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/cedar.html), [fir](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/fir.html), [ebony](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ebony.html) (Bockart), wicker (Geddes), [juniper](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/juniper.html) (Castellus), [acacia](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/acacia.html) (Religious Tract Society), boxwood, or [slimed](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/slime.html) [bulrushes](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/bulrush.html) (Dawson).   |  | | --- | | [Tree. Photo copyrighted.](http://www.christiananswers.net/eden/home.html) |   **What's wrong with all such guesses that attempt to identify a particular tree or plant with "*gopher* wood?"**  First, if "*gopher*" is a tree or a plant, it is not necessarily one that still exists today. Many plants have become extinct. We know little about the kinds of wood available to Noah in the pre-Flood world. No one today has seen the pre-Flood world; it was destroyed. [See: [Has the Garden of Eden ever been found?](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-aig/garden-of-eden-loc.html)]  Second, we don't know where in the wide world Noah lived; there is little or no evidence, only assumptions. Based on even conservative rates of population growth, Earth could easily have been widely populated in the 2000 years between Creation and the Flood.  Third, the identification of "*gopher*" with “cypress” or any other known tree or plant, based on Noah's supposed [location](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a001.html), ignores the fact that Earth was greatly changed by the Flood. Remember that the Flood devastated the [entire globe](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-c005.html). Here is a quick summary of some of the relevant events and their ramifications…  All the [fountains of the great deep](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-aig/aig-c010.html) broke up (implying massive earthquakes and splitting of Earth's crust) ([Genesis 7:11](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen7.html#11)). [See: [Noah's Flood - Where did the water come from?](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-aig/aig-c010.html)] Such earth movements would produce huge tsunamis in the rising seas, producing further devastation. So massive was the amount of water involved in the Flood that it eventually covered all the highest hills/mountains ([Gen. 7:19](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen7.html#19)).  There is no such thing as a worldwide, tranquil flood. In total, such events would clearly produce major geologic and geographic changes. Massive devastation and erosion would occur: hundreds and even thousands of feet of sediment would be laid down during such a catastrophe (the biblical flood lasted more than a year).  Massive destruction was clearly the point of this judgment: the destruction of all humans on the earth (except those protected by the ark), the erasure of every trace of these extremely evil people and their civilization, starting over with the only remaining Godly family, and leaving Earth changed in ways that would make it more difficult for evil to rapidly spread and dominate the globe—as it had in the physically more paradise-like, pre-Flood world which was much closer to the way God created it.  Based on the size of this historic event and evidence from the geologic record, pre-Flood and post-Flood geography probably do not correspond well. This is another reason why we cannot know the approximate latitude/longitude of the ark’s construction site.  Fourth, the [location](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a001.html) of the [ark’s landing](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a001.html) is not very relevant. Remember that the post-Flood ark floated around for five months on tumultuous water. It could have traveled far from its construction site.  In summary, if "*gopher*" refers to a type of tree or plant, we lack sufficient evidence to determine its identity.  **It is possible that "*gopher*" refers to a PROCESS or METHOD used to prepare the wood or to construct the ark.**  Examples:   1. The words "*gopher*" and "*ets*" (wood) used in [Genesis 6:14](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen6.html#14) are translated in the [Septuagint](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/septuagint.html) (LXX.) as "squared [beams](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/beam.html)." 2. The Vulgate version translated these same words as “planed wood.” 3. Some researchers have suggested that "*gopher*" may have referred to a lamination process, which might have been necessary considering the [huge size](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-c013.html) of the ark ([450 feet long](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-c013.html) or more). If true, the correct translation would be “laminated wood.”   The Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry suggests that the true meaning of the word "*gopher*" may be found in a modern dictionary, and that forms of the word may still be in use today. "In the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* 1954 edition under the word '*gofer*, *gaufre*, *goffer*, *gopher*, and *gauffer* see also wafer' it speaks of a number of similar things ranging from wafers as in biscuit making (layers of biscuit) or in a honeycomb pattern, to layers of lace in dressmaking, and hence goffering irons to iron the layers of lace."   1. Due to the similarity between a “g” and a “k” in the Hebrew alphabet (both resemble a backwards “C”), some have suggested that the first letter in the word “gopher” could be a scribal error, and that the word should be "*kopher*." *Kopher* is a Hebrew word translated as “pitch” in [Genesis 6:14](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen6.html#$14). Pitch is a waterproof covering. (No one knows for sure what kind of pitch Noah used). But if this scribal error theory is correct, then the verse would properly read, in effect, "Make yourself an ark of pitched wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch."   The bottom-line is that this ancient word remains a mystery. It is just one of many things I look forward to asking Noah about, when I get to Heaven.  Also see   * [Has the Garden of Eden ever been found?](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-aig/garden-of-eden-loc.html) Many Christians naively assume that the Garden of Eden was located near the modern Tigris and Euphrates rivers. * [Does the Bible claim that the Flood of Noah covered the entire Earth?](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-c005.html) Could Noah's Flood have been a large, but localized flood? Learn nine Biblical evidences that the flood was global. * [Could Noah's Ark really hold all the animals preserved in the flood?](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-c013.html) Just how big was Noah's Ark? Learn how how the animals came to the Ark, fit in, and survived the months. * [Where did the flood water come from?](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-aig/aig-c010.html) How could there have been enough water to possibly cover the entire earth? * [Where did the flood water go afterwards?](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-aig/aig-floodwater.html) If the whole Earth was deeply flooded, where did all that water go after the Flood? * [How did various animals get from the Ark to isolated places, such as Australia?](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-aig/aig-c006.html) How can we explain unrecorded events such as post-Flood animal migration patterns to various parts of the world? Learn from this in-depth discussion of the possible explanations for this tough question. * [How did FISH survive the Flood?](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-aig/aig-c037.html) How could freshwater and saltwater fish cope with changes in salinity? * [How did LAND PLANTS survive the Flood?](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-aig/aig-c019.html) * [What about Genesis and ancient Near Eastern stories of Creation and the Flood?](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-c001.html) An up-to-date overview of stories from ancient Mesopotamia regarding the relationship between the early chapters of Genesis and Creation and the Flood. * [Where are all the human fossils?](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-aig/aig-c014.html) Why don't we find thousands of human fossils if the Flood of Noah is true? What happened to all the people who were not on board Noah's Ark? * [How could all the human races come from Noah, his three sons and their wives?](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-aig/race-definition.html) Are the differences in the races justifiable reasons to disprove that all races descended directly from Noah and his family? Learn the truth of the matter. * Also, see our [special section on the Flood](http://www.christiananswers.net/creation/menu-catastrophe.html)   [ If this information has been helpful, please prayerfully consider a [donation](http://www.christiananswers.net/eden/donate.html) to help pay the expenses for making this faith-building service available to you and your family! Donations are tax-deductible. ]  Author: Paul S. 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