

7. The Flood (6:9–9:29)

I. Structure

The Flood Narrative is a part of two larger overlapping units:

- the account (תולדות *toledot*) of Noah (6:9–9:29).
- narrative insertion (6:1–9:27) into the genealogy of Adam through Seth to Noah (5:1–32; 9:28–29).

A. Chiastic arrangement

A flood, with waters advancing and receding, has an inherent chiastic structure.

The Flood Narrative, which was long regarded as the prime example of the Documentary Hypothesis, indeed has a chiastic structure. This is most evident in the numbers of days:

- 7 days waiting for flood (7:4)
- 7 days waiting for flood (7:10)
- 40 days rain (7:12)
- 150 days waters prevail (7:24)
- 150 days waters abate (8:3)
- 40 days till Noah sends raven (8:6)
- 7 days wait to send dove (8:10)
- 7 days wait to send dove (8:12)

Gordon Wenham (1978, cf. Kikawada and Quinn 1985) discerns a very elaborate chiastic structure, in which the turning point is “But God remembered Noah” (8:1):

- A Noah (6:10a)
- B Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10b)
- C Ark to be built (14-16)
- D Flood announced (17)
- E Covenant with Noah (18-20)
- F Food in the ark (21)
- G Command to enter ark (7:1-3)
- H 7 days waiting for flood (4-5)
- I 7 days waiting for flood (7-10)
- J Entry to ark (11-15)
- K Yahweh shuts Noah in (16)
- L 40 days flood (17a)
- M Waters increase (17b-18)
- N Mountains covered (19-20)
- O 150 days waters prevail (21-24)
- P God remembers Noah (8:1)
- O' 150 days waters abate (3)
- N' Mountain tops visible (4-5)
- M' Waters abate (5)
- L' 40 days (end of) (6a)
- K' Noah opens window of ark (6b)
- J' Raven and dove leave ark (7-9)
- I' 7 days waiting for waters to subside (10-11)

H'	7 days waiting for waters to subside (12-13)
G'	Command to leave ark (15-17)
F'	Food outside ark (9:1-4)
E'	Covenant with all flesh (8-10)
D'	No flood in future (11-17)
C'	Ark (18a)
B'	Shem, Ham, and Japheth (18b)
A'	Noah (19)

II. Analysis

A. Noah and the Earth

6:9-12 present a contrast between Noah and his contemporaries.

1. Noah

Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. (6:9)

- “Noah was a righteous man” (נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק):
- “blameless he was among his generations” (תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו):
- “it was with God that Noah walked” (אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֵּךְ־נֹחַ):

“It seems clear from the way the author begins the account that the main purpose of the story of the Flood is not to show why God sent a flood but rather to show why God saved Noah” (Sailhamer 1990, 81).

Four times we are told of Noah’s obedience: 6:22; 7:5, 9, 16. His obedience was the working out in practice of his character described in 6:9.

2. The Earth

The earth is ruined (שָׁחַת 3× in 6:11-12) in God’s sight.

B. God’s Response (6:13-22)

God shares his heart with Noah, informing him of what he is about to do.

1. General determination

- the end of all flesh (humans and animals)
- cause: humans should have filled the earth with people; instead they have filled it with violence ().

2. Specifics

a1 Imminent action (6:13b): וְהִנְנִי מִשְׁחִיתֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ “Behold, I am about to destroy the earth.” God will ruin (שָׁחַת) the earth and all flesh.

a2 Command to Noah (6:14-16): עֲשֵׂה לְךָ תֵּבַת “make for yourself an ark.”

b1 Imminent action (6:17-19): וְאֲנִי הִנְנִי מְבִיא אֶת־הַמַּבּוּל “As for me, behold, I am about to bring the Flood.”

b2 Command to Noah (6:21): וְאַתָּה קַח־לְךָ מִכָּל־מִאֲכָל “As for you, take for yourself food.”

7. The Flood (6:9–9:29)

3. The ark

תֵּבַחַ *tebah*, 7× in 6:13-20. LXX κιβωτός, Vg *arca* (chest, coffer < *arcēre*, to safeguard).

A unique structure: the only other *tebah* is Moses' basket (Exod 2:3-5; LXX θίβις [Hebr. translit.], Vg *ficella* [small wicker basket]). No relation to the ark of the covenant (אָרוֹן *aron*, LXX κιβωτός, Vg *arca*).

“In both cases there is to be saved from drowning one who is worthy of salvation and is destined to bring deliverance to others; here it is humanity that is to be saved, there it is the chosen people” (Cassuto 1964, 59).

General instructions (14)

1. of gopher (גֹּפֶר *gopher*) wood: unknown
2. *qinim* make the ark (קִנִּים תַּעֲשֶׂה אֶת־תֵּבַחַ): what are *qinim* ?
 - a. pl. of קֵן *qen* “nest”; elsewhere always sing. of bird's nest. Assumed to be nest-like cubbyholes on ark. Most translations: e.g. “Make rooms in the ark” (ESV).
 - b. קִנָּה *m.*, pl. קִנִּים “reeds.” Fits context better. Moses' basket is of גֹּמֵא *gome* papyrus reed. cf. wordpair: קִנָּה וְגֹמֵא *qaneh+gome*, reeds and rushes (Isa 35:7).
3. covered (כִּפֶּר *kpr*) inside and out with pitch (כֹּפֶר *kopher*).

Wooden frame, perhaps with planks; covered with reeds or with gaps between boards plugged by reeds; sealed with pitch.

cf. Moses' basket: mother took וּבִזְפֹת בַּחֲמֶר וּבִזְפֹת תֵּבַחַ גֹּמֵא וַתַּחְמְרָהּ בַּחֲמֶר וּבִזְפֹת “a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch” (Exod 2:3).

Specific instructions (15-16)

וְזֶה אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה אֹתָהּ “This is how you are to make it”

1. dimensions: 300 × 50 × 30 cubits; 450 × 75 × 45 ft.
2. צֹהַר *zohar*: roof, skylight, window.
3. one-cubit gap: vertical space or horizontal overhang between walls and roof.
4. doorway (פֶּתַח)
5. three decks

Though this ark has the correct dimensions for a ship, it has no means of steering (rudder) or locomotion (sail, oars). It is more like a box.

4. The Flood

מַבּוּל *mabbul*, gen. with article הַמַּבּוּל *ha-mabbul*, the *Mabbul*, The Flood. Used only of this event.

LXX κατακλυσμός [*kataklyzo* wash down], Vg. *diluvium* (< *diluere*, to wash away, dissolve).

God will bring *The Flood*, a unique event. It is so unique that the meaning has to be given: “waters upon the earth” (מִיָּם עַל־הָאָרֶץ) (6:17; 7:6).

5. Noah's Obedience (6:22)

C. The Flood

1. Embarkation (7:1-16)

Three sections, each ending with Noah's obedience (7:5, 9, 16).

The focus is on entering the ark: אִיבָּוֹ 7×.

2. The Flood prevails (7:17-24)

3. God remembers Noah (8:1a)

4. The Flood recedes (8:1b-5)

5. The Flood ends (8:6-14)

6. Disembarkation (8:15-19)

D. Noah worships (8:20-22)