

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־מֵאֲכָל “As for you, take for yourself food.”

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3. The ark

תֵּבָה *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 θῖβις [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־תֵּבָה): 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 תֵּבַת 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” (מִיַּם 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: **בוֹא** *bo* 7×:

1. Yhwh commands Noah (1-5): *Enter* the ark, you + family; take the animals.
2. Entrance (6-9): Noah *entered* the ark + family; the animals *came* to Noah to the ark.
3. Entrance (10-16): Noah + family *entered* the ark; the animals *came* to Noah to the ark; those *entering entered*.

The Flood began in Noah's 600th year, M2D17 (11).

Poetic couplet: all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened (11). The waters below and the waters above (1:7) invade the living space.

Note specificity: on that day rain...on the very same day Noah + family entered the ark...(11-13).

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

The waters increased (**רַבָּה** *rbh* 2×) and prevailed (**גָּבַר** *gbr* 4×):

- the waters *increased* and lifted the ark and it rose high above the earth
- the waters *prevailed* and *increased* greatly upon the earth and the ark moved on the surface of the waters
- the waters had *prevailed* greatly upon the earth and all the mountains were covered
- 15 cubits the waters had *prevailed* and the mountains were covered.

Death:

- all flesh perished: animals and all humans (21)
- everything with the breath of life died (22)
- He (Yhwh) wiped out all existence: man and beast; they were wiped out (23)
- Remnant: only Noah + those with him in the ark (23)

Duration: the waters prevail 150 days (24).

3. God remembers Noah (8:1a)

Turning point: Then God remembered Noah and all with him in the ark.

Does God forget?

When God remembers (**זָכַר** *zkr*), he focuses his attention on the one he remembers, initiating action.

“to act upon a previous commitment to a covenant partner” (Waltke, *Genesis*, 140).

“‘remembering,’ particularly on the part of God, is not the retention or recollection of a mental image, but a focusing upon the object of memory that results in action” (Sarna, *Genesis* 56).

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

God's actions:

1. Spirit-wind: he made a wind (*ruah*) blow over the earth, the same *ruah* spirit/wind that was present at the first creation (1:2).
2. Plugging the water source: the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed,

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the rain from heaven was restrained—presumably by God.

In M7D17, 150 days after the Flood started, the ark rested (*nuah*) on the mountains of Ararat. Ararat: ancient Urartu. Mt Ararat c. 5000 m/17000 ft. Mountain tops not visible until M10D1.

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

The Raven and the Dove (6-12)

1. Raven: symbol of death; feed on carrion; unclean and detestable (Lev 11:15). Death still reigned on earth.
2. Dove: symbol of life and peace; clean, hence suitable for sacrifice. Sent three times:
 - a. Finds no resting place (*manoah*) so returns to Noah.
 - b. Returns with an olive leaf: life has returned to earth.
 - c. Doesn't return: has found a resting place; the first to recolonize the earth.

Y601 M1D1 waters have dried (**הִרְבַּח**) from the earth.
M2D27 earth has dried (**יָבֵשׁ**).

6. Disembarkation (8:15-19)

God commands Noah to exit the ark (15-17).

Noah exits the ark (18-19): he didn't exit until God told him to do so.

Many parallels between God calling Noah out of ark and Abram out of Ur (Sailhamer, EBC, 91):

Gen 8:15–9:9	Gen 12:1–7
Then God said to Noah (8:15)	The Lord has said to Abram (12:1)
Come out from the ark (8:16)	Leave your country (12:1)
So Noah came out (8:18)	So Abram left (12:4)
Then Noah built an altar to the Lord (8:20)	So [Abram] built an altar there to the Lord (12:7)
Then God blessed Noah (9:1)	“And I [God] will bless you” (12:2)
“Be fruitful and increase” (9:1)	“And I will make you into a great nation” (12:2)
“I now establish my covenant with your descendants” (9:9)	“To your offspring I will give this land” (12:7)

Noah, like Abram later, is a new beginning, a new Adam.

D. Noah worships (8:20-22)

Noah built an altar to Yhwh, took some of the clean animals and birds, and offered burnt offerings. Yhwh smelled (**וַיַּרְחֵם**, *vayyarah*) the pleasing aroma (*reah hannihoah*). Yhwh is put at rest by Noah's offering. Yhwh said to himself: “Never again.”

Never again will I curse	the ground (<i>ha-adamah</i>)	because of man (<i>ha-adam</i>)
Never again will I smite	all life	as I have done.

Between these two parallel lines is inserted “the evil thought clause” (Moberly, *Theol. of Genesis*): “because/although the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth.”

Man's evil heart is grounds for both judgment (6:5) and grace (8:21); cf. Exod 32:9-10; 34:9
Commitment to the earth (22):