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## Chiastic Structuring of the Genesis Flood Story: The Art of Using Chiasm as an Effective Compositional Tool for Combining Earlier Chiastic Narratives

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**Abstract:** Steven R. Scott, “Chiastic Structuring in the Genesis Flood Story: The Art of Using Chiasm as an Effective Compositional Tool for Combining Earlier Chiastic Narratives,” argues contrary to David Wenham, who argued that the presence of a chiastic structure for the whole of the flood story points to the story being composed by a single author, that careful structural analysis of the text actually upholds the two-source theory. He finds evidence for two chiastic structures created independently by the Yahwist (J) and Priestly (P) authors, which were later combined by a Redactor (R). He concludes that chiasm as a compositional device was well known by the authors of the various elements of Genesis, and such knowledge aided the final editor(s) to combine effectively two authoritative traditions into a virtually seamless whole while remaining faithful to both.



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# Chiastic Structuring of the Genesis Flood Story

## The Art of Using Chiasm as an Effective Compositional Tool for Combining Earlier Chiastic Narratives

*Steven R. Scott*

### Introduction

The story of the flood is perhaps one of the best-known stories of the Bible, and its chiastic nature has long been recognized by scholars, most prominently by Yehuda T. Radday and Gordon Wenham.<sup>1</sup> These scholars' theses will briefly be discussed before proceeding to a detailed analysis of the text, which will demonstrate that the biblical flood story is two chiasms combined—one by author "J" and another by author "P."

Radday, in his proposal, notes the verbal parallelism in the flood story on either side of the turning point of the narrative where "God remembered Noah" (Gen 8:1), and the flood starts to recede. He proposed the following chiastic structure based on this parallelism:

A<sub>1</sub> Divine monologue (6:3, 7)

B<sub>1</sub> It grieved him in his heart (6:6)

C<sub>1</sub> "I will establish my covenant" (6:18)

D<sub>1</sub> Four stages of entering the ark "as commanded" (6:22; 7:5, 9, 16)

E<sub>1</sub> "Go into the ark" (7:1)

F<sub>1</sub> The fountains of the deep burst forth (7:11)

G<sub>1</sub> Seven verbs of ascent: increased, bore, rose (7:17), prevailed, increased greatly (7:18), prevailed mightily, mountains were covered (7:19)

H God remembered Noah (8:1)

F<sub>2</sub> The fountains of the deep were closed (8:2)

G2 Seven verbs of descent: subsided (8:1), were restrained (8:2), receded, abated (8:3), came to rest (8:4), continued to abate, mountains were seen (8:5)

E2 “Go forth from the ark” (8:16)

D2 Four stages of leaving the ark (once a raven, thrice a dove) (8:7–12)

B2 The Lord said in his heart (8:20)

C2 “I established my covenant” (9:9)

A2 Divine monologue (9:12–16)

Though some of the parallelism may not be especially strong (levels B and D for example), and there is overlap of chiasmic levels (D, E, and F), there is a clear balance on either side of 8:1.

Wenham, on the other hand, offers a more detailed proposal based more on conceptual parallels than direct word parallels:

A1 Noah (6:10a)

B1 Shem, Ham and Japheth (6:10b)

C1 Ark to be built (6:14–16)

D1 Flood announced (6:17)

E1 Covenant with Noah (6:18–20)

F1 Food in the ark (6:21)

G1 Command to enter ark (7:1–3)

H1 7 days waiting for flood (7:4–5)

I1 7 days waiting for flood (7:7–10)

J1 Entry to ark (7:11–15)

K1 Yahweh shuts Noah in (7:16)

L1 40 days flood (7:17a)

M1 Waters increase (7:17b–18)

N1 Mountains covered (7:19–20)

O1 150 days waters prevail (7:21[–24])

P God remembers Noah (8:1)

O2 150 days waters abate (8:3)

N2 Mountain tops visible (8:4–5)

M2 Waters abate (8:5)

L2 40 days (end of) (8:6a)

K2 Noah opens window of ark (8:6b)

- J<sub>2</sub> Raven and dove leave ark (8:7–9)
- I<sub>2</sub> 7 days waiting for waters to subside (8:10–11)
- H<sub>2</sub> 7 days waiting for waters to subside (8:12–13)
- G<sub>2</sub> Command to leave ark (8:15–17 [22])
- F<sub>2</sub> Food outside ark (9:1–4)
- E<sub>2</sub> Covenant with all flesh (9:8–10)
- D<sub>2</sub> No flood in future (9:11–17)
- C<sub>2</sub> Ark (9:18a)
- B<sub>2</sub> Shem, Ham and Japheth (9:18b)
- A<sub>2</sub> Noah (9:19)

Despite a few lacunas (between B<sub>1</sub> and C<sub>1</sub>, and in O<sub>1</sub>, and G<sub>2</sub>), the conceptual parallelism is clear and, as Wenham notes, goes beyond the natural reversal of a story where there is a flood which rises and then abates.

The above proposals point to there being an overall chiastic design. The following analysis will indicate there are concentric patterns on several levels of the text, which interplay with each other. Also, by paying attention to whether the text seems to be from either the J or the P source, it would seem that both compositions were originally composed chiastically.<sup>2</sup> This is in opposition to Wenham, who argues the overall chiastic design points to one author. However, such a design can also be explained as the combining of two chiastic designs into a final one by a redactor who was likely responsible for the shape of the Torah as we have it. Besides preserving the two-source theory of the flood story, which is widely supported by scholars, such a conclusion would indicate a long tradition of chiastic use by three different authors over a long period of Israelite-Judean history, depending on when one dates the different sources and the final redaction.

We shall begin by analyzing the redactor's chiasm, then the J chiasm, and the P chiasm. For each, we will discuss the emphasis that each chiasm produces.

## **Methodology**

The most important criteria in proposing and judging chiasm is to respect the composition as we have it, unless there are very good reasons to do otherwise. This means that the chiastic units must respect the natural divisions of the composition. If this is done, then a chiasm shaped by the author should become fairly self-apparent. This is the case with the flood story, as will shortly be shown.

In a story, the primary unit is the scene, which occasionally has sub-scenes. The scenes themselves can also be composed chiastically. In this case, depending on the length of the scene, the chiastic units will be stanzas/paragraphs, sentences, and perhaps even clauses. Again, if these natural divisions are respected, then whether an author used chiasm should become relatively self-apparent.

We shall thus begin by breaking the flood story into its main scenes and studying some of these scenes in more detail.

### **The Redactor's Chiasm**

The flood story consists of an introduction and conclusion and 14 separate scenes. These compositional units contain doubles—not only of the chiastic units, but of actual repeated scenes—due to the use of two sources by the final redactor and her/his apparent desire to preserve both versions. The whole story thus becomes doubly “two by two,” which is artistically appropriate and likely intentional.

Below you will see that the seven repeating chiastic elements (A<sub>1</sub>–G<sub>1</sub> and G<sub>2</sub>–A<sub>2</sub>) are clearly demarked. In addition, the fourteen scenes are arranged in the proposed chiasm with their traditional source assignation:

#### **Genealogy: Noah's sons (5:32)**

Introduction: sexual sin and punishment (5:32–6:10) J

#### **Genealogy: Noah's sons (6:10)**

A<sub>1</sub> Scene 1: God tells Noah about the flood, provides instructions for the ark, and makes a covenant with him (6:11–18a) P

#### **Noah will go in ark with his sons (9:18b)**

B<sub>1</sub> Scene 2: God instructs Noah on the animal collection I (6:19–22) P

#### **Statement that Noah obeyed God (6:22)**

C<sub>1</sub> Scene 3: God instructs Noah again on the animal collection II (7:1–4) J

#### **Statement that Noah obeyed God**

##### **Mention of date (7:6a)**

D<sub>1</sub> Scene 4: Ark entry I (7:6–9) J

##### **Statement that Noah obeyed God (7:9c)**

##### **Line mentioning flood came in 7 days (7:10)**

##### **Mention of date (7:11a)**

E<sub>1</sub> Scene 5: Flood description I (7:11–12) J

##### **Line mentioning rain fell 40 days (7:12)**

F1 Scene 6: Ark entry II (7:13–16) P

**Line mentioning flood lasted 40 days (7:17)**

G1 Scene 7: Flood description II (7:17–24) mostly P

**Line mentioning flood lasted 150 days (7:24)**

G2 Scene 8: Flood abatement I (8:1–5) mostly P

**Line mentioning 40 days had passed (8:6)**

F2 Scene 9: Ark exit I (6–12) J

**Mention of date (8:13a)**

E2 Scene 10: Flood abatement II (8:13–14) P

**Mention of date (8:14)**

D2 Scene 11: Ark exit II (8:15–19) P

**Noah does as God instructs (8:18–19) P**

C2 Scene 12: Animals sacrificed as food for LORD (8:20–22) J

**God blessed Noah and his sons (9:1)**

B2 Scene 13: Animals as food for humans (9:2–7) P

**Then God said to Noah and his sons (9:8)**

A2 Scene 14: God makes covenant to never end all flesh again (9:9–17) P

**Genealogy: Noah's sons (9:18)**

Conclusion: sexual sin and punishment (9:18–10:1) J

**Genealogy: Noah's sons (10:1)**

The scenes are demarked, for the most part, with a statement concerning either Noah and his sons (i.e., that he obeyed God) and/or a statement of time (i.e., a date or how long an event lasted). The clearest example is the genealogical information surrounding the introduction and conclusion. These lines that demark the scenes thus function as inclusios, and this seems to be the intention of the author. It is of note that where the inclusio statements change from being about Noah to time statements at scene D1 when Noah first enters the ark, both types are used. It is as if the author is indicating this change of use.

This type of demarcation is least clear between A1, God's covenant with Noah, and B1, the first set of instructions to collect animals, and between C2, B2, and A2, which describes Noah's sacrifice and following blessing and covenant. Both A1–B1 and B2–A2 consist of a single speech by God, and thus each is technically a single scene. However, in each there is clear separation of topic: A1 describes how God will make a covenant with Noah, B1 the instructions on how to build the ark, B2 that humans can now eat flesh, and A2 the rainbow as the sign of God's covenant with Noah.

B<sub>1</sub> and C<sub>1</sub>, the two sets of instructions to collect animals, could also be seen as part of one scene. However, both end with a statement that Noah obeyed God. They are thus clearly separated from each other as separate scenes, with the second set of instructions becoming a second speech by God. Likewise, D<sub>2</sub>, the full debarkation from the ark, concludes by describing Noah obeying God's instructions to leave, which provides separation from the following scene where Noah sacrifices to God, which could be considered part of the debarkation scene.

In the above cases, the lines of demarcation divide what would have been a singular scene into separate scenes, creating clear structural function.

The parallelism between the chiasmic units will now be discussed along with some of the internal structures. The last is necessary because the internal structures help define the contours of the larger scene units.

We shall begin with the introduction and conclusion:

### **Introduction**

#### **A1.1 Noah's descendants (5:32)**

Noah's age given and his sons are listed

##### **B1.1 Sexual sin (6:1–4)**

a<sub>1</sub> Sons of God take wives—b<sub>1</sub> LORD limits human life—a<sub>2</sub> On the children born to the sons of God

##### **B1.2 Punishment due to sin (6:5–8)**

a<sub>1</sub> LORD sees wickedness of humans—b<sub>1</sub> LORD sorry he created humans—c<sub>1</sub> Lord decides to blot out humans and animals

#### **A1.2 Noah's descendants (6:9–10)**

Noah finds favor with LORD and is righteous and his sons are listed

### **Conclusion**

#### **A2.1 Noah's descendants (9:18–19)**

Noah and his sons are listed

##### **B2.1 Sexual sin (9:20–23)**

Introduction: Noah plants a vineyard and gets drunk

a<sub>1</sub> Ham sees Noah's nakedness—b<sub>1</sub> Ham tells brothers—a<sub>2</sub> Shem and Japheth do not see nakedness as they cover Noah

##### **B2.2 Curse because of sin (9:24–27)**

a<sub>1</sub> Noah awakes and knows what Ham did—b<sub>1</sub> Noah curses Ham's son Canaan—c<sub>1</sub> Noah blesses Shem and Japheth

#### **A2.2 Noah's descendants (9:28–10:1)**

Noah's death dated and his sons are listed

In the above outline, the internal structures of the B-units are shown using miniscule letters. Thus, both B1.1 and B2.1 have internal chiasms (a1-b1-a2) and B1.2 and B2.2 have linear structures (a1-b1-c1). Consequently, there is structural parallelism on the B-level as well as content parallelism—here sexual sin and the consequences of sin.

As mentioned above, the genealogical listings of Noah’s sons form clear inclusios around these two stories of sexual sin. In neither story are we told explicitly why the incidents are considered sin. However, the mixing of the sons of God with humans breaks the clear desire of the LORD in the J tradition to keep the godly and human spheres separate. For example, Adam and Eve are punished for eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge and becoming like the LORD (Gen 3), and the nations are given different languages to prevent them from building of the Tower of Babel and becoming like the LORD (Gen 11).

The children of the mixing of heaven and earth, the heroes of yore, seem to be the cause of the wickedness the LORD sees, and thus the cause of the flood. However, the nature of the sin is not exactly clear. Likewise, in the story where Ham and his son Canaan are cursed, we are told that Ham saw his father’s nakedness, and this in the context of the story is clearly seen as something wrong. Again, it is unclear exactly what the sin is, though it is clearly of a sexual nature.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, in both the introduction and conclusion, it can be argued there is a story concerning sexual sin with resulting punishment surrounded by genealogical inclusios. From this perspective, the structural parallelism could hardly be clearer, and consequently two seemingly unrelated stories become connected. This clear structural parallelism indicates that the story of Noah in his vineyard should be considered a part of the flood story.

Turning to the flood story proper, the beginning, middle, and end units with their internal chiastic and linear structures are as follows:

**A1 Scene 1: God decides to end all flesh, but makes a covenant with Noah (6:1–17) P**

- a1 Gods sees corruption and violence and decides to destroy all flesh
  - b1 Noah to build ark
- a2 God will bring flood
  - b2 God will make covenant with Noah and family



**G1 Scene 7: Flood description II (7:17–24) mostly P**

*a1 On the flood*

(a1) flood continues for 40 days

(b1) waters raise ark

(c1) mountains are covered

*b1 On humans and animals*

(a1) All flesh dies

(a2) Only those in ark saved

*c On the flood*

(a1) Flood continues for 150 days

**G2 Scene 8: Flood abatement I (8:1–5) mostly P**

*b2 On humans and animals*

(a1) God remembers those in ark

*a2 On the flood*

(a1) Waters turned off

(b1) After 150 days the ark rests on Ararat

(c1) mountains are uncovered

**A2 Scene 14: God makes covenant to never end all flesh again (9:8–17) P**

a1 God establishes covenant

b1 covenant is that flood will not destroy again

c1 sign of covenant (*a*) is the rainbow (*b*) which is sign of covenant (*a*)

b2 Rainbow will remind God of covenant not to destroy

a2 Rainbow will remind of covenant

a3 Rainbow is sign of covenant

The conceptual parallelism between these scenes is multiple and clear. First, in A1, God decides to destroy all flesh by a flood, and then in G1 all flesh is destroyed by flood. In A2, God promises never to destroy all flesh by flood again. Second, in A1, God instructs Noah to make the ark so that Noah and those with him will be saved, and in G2, Noah and those in the ark are saved. Third, in both A1 and A2, God makes covenants with Noah regarding destroying flesh with a flood. Fourth, in G2, God remembers Noah, and the covenant made in A1. In A2, God sets up the rainbow so he will remember this covenant. Finally, in G1, the flood comes, raises the ark, and covers the mountains. In G2, it abates, the ark rests on land, and the mountains are uncovered.

The above structural proposal also explains the odd placement of the announcement of God's covenant with Noah in A1, which comes after the instructions to build the ark. One would expect the announcement of the covenant and then the instructions. However, by having the announcement at the end of A1, clear parallelism is created with the beginning of A2, which contains a very similar worded announcement concerning a covenant with Noah. The placement creates chiastic structural balance.

The internal structures of A1 and the two central G-units will now be analyzed, because they help delineate the outlines of these structures. We shall begin with the G-units, whose stanzas form a simple micro-chiasm: *a1-b1-c-b2-a2* where *a1* and *a2* have parallel internal linear structures (a1)-(b1)-(c1).

G1 begins with a three-level description of the flood: it continued for 40 days (a1), which caused the ark to float high above the earth (b1), and the water covered the mountains (c1). In turn, (b1) and (c1) have internal chiasms:

**(a1) Description of the Flood (single line, J tradition)**

7:17 And was the flood forty days on the earth;

**(b1) Fate of the Ark (chiastic structure, P tradition)**

*a1* and increased the **waters**,

*b1* and they lifted up the *ark*,

*c1* and it rose thus above the earth.

*d* 7:18 And swelled the **waters**

*c2* and they increased greatly on the earth;

*b2* and floated the *ark*

*a2* on the face of the **waters**.

**(c1) Fate of the Mountains (chiastic structure, P tradition)**

*a1* 7:19 The **waters swelled** mightily,

*b1* Mightily on the *earth*

*c* And covered all the mountains high

*b2* That (were) under all the *heavens*

*a2* 7:20 fifteen cubits deep above **swelled the waters**,  
and they were covered.<sup>4</sup>

Here we have a single isolated line describing the coming of the flood (a1) from the J tradition, which is followed by two chiastic stanzas

from the P tradition describing the flood's effect on the ark (b<sub>1</sub>) and the mountains (c<sub>1</sub>). The lack of structural connection between (a<sub>1</sub>) from J and (b<sub>1</sub>) from P indicates it should be treated as a separate structural unit, a scene-demarcation line. The different sources are thus distinguished not only by their use of language (i.e., the J use of 40 days), but also by the lack of structural connection.<sup>5</sup>

The threefold sequence of flood description (a<sub>5</sub>)—ark (a<sub>6</sub>)—mountains (a<sub>7</sub>) is repeated in *a*<sub>2</sub> at the end of G<sub>2</sub>:

**(a<sub>2</sub>) Description of the Flood Recession (chiastic structure, P tradition)**

*a*<sub>1</sub> 8:1b And caused God a wind over the **earth**,

*b*<sub>1</sub> and subsided the *waters*;

*c* 8:2 And were closed the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens,

and was restrained the rain from the heavens,

*b*<sub>2</sub> 8:3a and receded the *waters*

*a*<sub>2</sub> from over the **earth** they left and returned.

**(b<sub>2</sub>) Fate of the Ark (linear structure, P tradition)**

*a*<sub>1</sub> 8:3b And had abated **the waters** by the end of one hundred fifty days;

*b*<sub>1</sub> 8:4 and rested the ark in *the seventh month*,

*c*<sub>1</sub> *on the seventeenth day of the month*,

*d*<sub>1</sub> Upon the mountains of Ararat.

**(c<sub>2</sub>) Fate of the Mountains (linear structure, P tradition)**

*a*<sub>1</sub> 8:5 And **the waters** became gone,

*b*<sub>1</sub> and (they) abated until *the tenth month*;

*c*<sub>1</sub> *on the first day of the tenth month*,

*d*<sub>1</sub> appeared the tops of the mountains.

In (a<sub>2</sub>), instead of the coming of the flood being described, the opposite, its departure, is described. As Radday notes, there are seven verbs of increase in (a<sub>1</sub>)–(c<sub>1</sub>) and seven verbs of decrease in (a<sub>2</sub>)–(c<sub>2</sub>).<sup>6</sup> The first stanza, (a<sub>2</sub>), is a full stanza with a chiastic structure as opposed to the one line of (a<sub>1</sub>). This imbalance seems to be due to the combining of the J and P accounts as we shall see below. The next two stanzas describing the fate of the ark and the mountains are in linear form. Thus, in G<sub>1</sub>, the pattern presented is linear—chiastic—chiastic, and in G<sub>2</sub>, it is chiastic—linear—linear. This type of structural reversal for stanzas is quite common in Hebrew poetry.

The remaining unit on the flood, unit *c*, is at the center of the micro-chiasm that covers G1 and G2. It, like (a1), is a single line: “And swelled the waters on the earth one hundred and fifty days” (7:24), which describes the number of days (here 150 as opposed to 40) and picks up the language of b1 (waters on the earth) and c1 (swelled). Thus, it could also be considered part of the a-level, but due to its central position is labeled *c*.

The *b*-level units of the G1-G2 chiasm refer to Noah and the animals. They are as follows:

*b1 On Humans and Animals*

**(a1) On Humans and Animals not in Ark (chiastic structure: 7:21–22 P tradition; 7:23a–c J tradition)**

- a1 7:21 And all flesh died that moved on the **earth**,
- b1 *birds*,
- c1 domestic animals, wild animals, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth,
- d1 and all **human beings**;
- e1 7:22 everything on dry land
- f1 in whose nostrils was the breath of life died.
- f2 7:23 He blotted out every living thing
- e2 that was on the face of the ground,
- d2 **human beings**
- c2 and animals and creeping things
- b2 and *birds* of the air;
- a2 they were blotted out from the **earth**.

**(a2) On Humans and Animals in Ark (P tradition)**

- a1 7:23d And he spared, however,
- b1 Noah and those
- c1 with him in the ark.

*c: On the flood: 7:24: And swelled the waters on the earth one hundred and fifty days*

*b2 On Humans and Animals*

**(a3) On Humans and Animals in Ark (P tradition)**

- a2 8:1a And remembered God
- b2 Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals
- c2 with him in the ark

The first *b*-level stanza forms a very tight chiasm with clear word parallelism, and the last two stanzas are parallel linear stanzas with the structure a<sub>1</sub>–a<sub>2</sub> reference to God—b<sub>1</sub>–b<sub>2</sub> reference to Noah and animals—c<sub>1</sub>–c<sub>2</sub> reference to ark. These last two stanzas are separated by the short *c*-level reference to the flood swelling for 150 days.

While the above proposal is not a perfectly balanced chiastic structure in regards to content—two *b*-units describing the fate of humans and animals, (a<sub>1</sub>) and (a<sub>2</sub>) are opposite a single unit, (a<sub>3</sub>)—there is nevertheless a clear concentric pattern in G<sub>1</sub>–G<sub>2</sub> that alternates between descriptions of the flood (*a*<sub>1</sub>, *c*, and *a*<sub>2</sub>) (A) and descriptions of the fate of humans and animals (*b*<sub>1</sub> and *b*<sub>2</sub>).

Also, if one looks at the structural nature of the stanzas, then the following perfect chiastic structure emerges:

(Lord shuts Noah in: end of previous main unit F<sub>1</sub>)

a<sub>1</sub> 40 days (single line)

b<sub>1</sub> Two chiastic stanzas (ark lifted and mountains covered)

c<sub>1</sub> 15 cubits (end of description of mountains covered)

d<sub>1</sub> Chiastic stanza (life on earth destroyed)

e<sub>1</sub> Linear stanza (life in ark saved)

f 150 days (single line a<sub>4</sub>)

e<sub>2</sub> Linear stanza (God remembers life in ark)

d<sub>2</sub> Chiastic stanza (flood turned off)

c<sub>2</sub> 150 days (beginning of description of ark resting on mountain)

b<sub>2</sub> Two linear stanzas (ark rests on mountain and mountains uncovered)

a<sub>2</sub> 40 days (opening clause of next main unit F<sub>2</sub>)

(Noah opens window: continuation of opening clause of F<sub>2</sub>)

Here the mention of numbers is used to divide the four pairs of stanzas (b<sub>1</sub>, d<sub>1</sub>–e<sub>1</sub>, e<sub>2</sub>–d<sub>2</sub>, b<sub>2</sub>). These pairs of stanza have a reverse order in the second half of the chiasm in regards to whether they have a linear or chiastic structure: chiastic-chiastic, chiastic-linear, linear-chiastic, linear-linear.

One can thus see the high degree of compositional thought that has gone into these central units. There is also overlap with the previous and following main textual units, F<sub>1</sub> and F<sub>2</sub>. The second mention of the forty days is an introductory clause to the story opening the window of the ark and sending out the birds. This story begins with Noah opening a window, which breaks and reverses the LORD shutting Noah in at the end of F<sub>2</sub>.

Finally, as with the priestly creation account, there is hidden number symbolism: there are seven verbs of increase, seven words of decrease, and ten textual units in the combined G1 and G2 (7 a-level units and 3 b-level units).<sup>7</sup> This is combined with the clearly significant numbers of 15 cubits and 150 days, the symbolism of which is not known.

From the above analysis, it is clear that G1 and G2 are a single compositional unit. However, from the perspective of the compositional structure of the whole flood story, they should be considered two separate, though interconnected, units. This is because these two units are part of the double scene nature of the whole composition: there are two descriptions of the collection of animals (B1 and C1), entry into the ark (D1 and F1), the coming of the flood (E1 and G1), the flood abating (G2 and E2), leaving the ark (F2 and D2), and two descriptions of animals as food (C2 and B2). From this perspective G1 and G2 should be treated as two scenes that are divided by mention that the flood lasted 150 days. This line also marks the halfway point of the entire story where the first half describes the reasons for the flood and its coming, and the second half describes its abating and God's promise not to do it again.

The above analysis also slightly contradicts Radday's and Wenham's proposals in regards to the exact center of the flood story. They both place God remembering (b3 above) at the center. Wenham's chiasm for the central part of the story is as follows:

- K1 Yahweh shuts Noah in (7:16)
  - L1 40 days flood (7:17a)
    - M1 Waters increase (7:17b-18)
      - N1 Mountains covered (7:19-20)
        - O1 150 days waters prevail ([7:21-]24])
          - P God remembers Noah (8:1)
            - O2 150 days waters abate (8:3)
              - N2 Mountain tops visible (8:4-5)
                - M2 Waters abate (8:5)
                  - L2 40 days (end of) (8:6a)
                    - K2 Noah opens window of ark (8:6b)

Wenham's proposal places too much emphasis on the word parallelism concerning 150 days rather than looking at the structure of the stanzas of this section. His proposal also does not take into account 7:21-23, the account of the perishing of all life besides Noah (b1 and b2

of the chiasm proposed here) nor 8:2, the description of the flood being turned off (a<sub>5</sub> above). He thus fails to notice the A<sub>1</sub>-B<sub>1</sub>-A<sub>2</sub>-B<sub>2</sub>-A<sub>3</sub> alternating pattern between descriptions of the flood and descriptions of the animals and Noah. As argued above, the second mention of 150 days is actually chiastically opposite the mention of 15 cubits. However, though God remembering Noah and those in the ark is not the exact chiastic center, because it begins G<sub>2</sub>, it does mark the turning point in the narrative. From this perspective Radday and Wenham are correct in noticing its central position. However, this position is shared with the mention of the flood lasting 150 days, the end of G<sub>1</sub>.

As one can see, paying attention to the smaller structural levels helps to determine the precise demarcation of the larger structural levels. This does not mean that such determination is always easy; it can be quite difficult, as in the case of the dividing line between A<sub>1</sub> and B<sub>1</sub>:

**A<sub>1</sub> Scene 1: God decides to end all flesh, but Noah to make Ark (6:11–18)**

- a<sub>1</sub> Gods sees corruption and violence and decides to destroy all flesh (11–13)
  - b<sub>1</sub> Noah to build ark (14–16)
- a<sub>2</sub> God will bring flood to destroy all life (17)
  - b<sub>2</sub> God will make covenant with Noah (18a)

**B<sub>1</sub> Scene 2: Animal collection I (6:18b–22)**

- a<sub>1</sub> Noah is to take family into ark
  - b<sub>1</sub> Noah is to take animals into ark

As mentioned above, these two scenes are actually part of the same scene—namely, a single speech by God. However, from the perspective of the schema of double scenes, the animal collection is clearly intended to be a separate unit.

At this point in the text, the exact dividing line is not clear. Should 6:18a, God saying he will set a covenant with Noah, be part of A<sub>1</sub> or B<sub>1</sub>? The full text is as follows:

**God Will Make Covenant (linear stanza)**

- a<sub>1</sub> 6:18a And I will set up
  - b<sub>1</sub> with (תָּס) covenant,
  - c<sub>1</sub> *with you* (תָּסָא)

**What to Bring in Ark (double chiastic stanza)**

- a<sub>1</sub> 6:18b–c And you will **bring** into the ark,
- b<sub>1</sub> *yourself* (תָּסָא)

c1 and sons-your

and wife-your

and wives

of sons-your

b2 **with you** (אִתְּךָ)

a2 6:19 And of every living thing, of all flesh,  
you shall **bring** two of every kind into the ark,

b3 to **keep them alive with you** (אִתְּךָ);

c2 they shall be **male and female**.

6:20 Of the birds according to their kinds,

and of the animals according to their kinds,

of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind,

**two of every kind** shall come in to you,

b4 to **keep them alive**.

a3 6:21 Also **take** with you every kind of food that is eaten and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them.”

#### Noah Obeyed (single linear line)

6:22 Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

Here, 6:18b–c and 6:19–22 are clearly connected: both concern instructions on who will enter the ark and instructions that both humans and animals are to enter in couples. The two stanzas also form a double chiasm based on what Noah is to bring with him on the ark (a-level), with himself (b-level), and a specific list of what to bring (c-level). The b-level transitions from you/yourself to “keeping alive”: yourself (b1), with you (b2), keep alive with you (b3), keep alive (b4).

Traditionally, 6:18a is seen as being the introduction to the instructions on what to take into the ark. In support of this, it does contain the keyword “with you” (אִתְּךָ) at its end; however, this “with you” more parallels the “with covenant” or “this, a covenant” (אֶת-בְּרִיתִי). Also, besides this word parallel, there is no structural relationship with the instructions on what to take into the ark. In fact, the statement looks back to the previous verse (17) where God says he will destroy all flesh: “For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die.” The covenant with Noah is thus in contrast to the lack of one with all flesh: God will destroy all flesh but will save Noah and those with him.



16:18a, the mention of the covenant with Noah, also creates the following structural linear pattern with the rest of A1:

- a1 God's decision to kill all flesh
  - b1 God will save Noah: instructions to make ark
- a2 God's decision to kill all flesh
  - b2 God will save Noah: *covenant made with Noah*

The reference to the covenant explains the instructions to build the ark: Noah is to build the ark because God is making a covenant with him.

Also, in regards to the overall structure, the reference to the covenant creates strong parallels with both the G<sub>1</sub> (God kills all flesh) and G<sub>2</sub> (God remembers his covenant with Noah and saves him) and A<sub>2</sub> (the rainbow covenant where God will never again destroy all flesh). In fact, A<sub>2</sub> begins with almost the exact words as 6:18a: "Behold, I will set up a covenant with you" (9:9). Thus, on several structural grounds, the mention of the covenant with Noah should be considered as part of A<sub>1</sub>.

As noted above, the rest of the compositional sections are clearly delineated, usually with a line mentioning the passage of time. The parallelism between chiasmic levels is also very clear and can be summarized as follows:

1. A<sub>1</sub> describes God deciding to destroy all flesh by flood, but makes a covenant with Noah, and A<sub>2</sub> describes God making a covenant with Noah never again to destroy all flesh by flood.
2. B<sub>1</sub> Noah is to collect food for all animals and thus nourish them, and in B<sub>2</sub> animals are to nourish humans. There is thus the logic that because humans saved all the animals and kept them alive, they can now eat them.
3. In C<sub>1</sub>, the second set of instructions on what to take, the LORD specifies that extra clean animals and birds are to be taken, and in C<sub>2</sub> these extra animals and birds are used for sacrifices to the LORD. Since sacrifices were seen as supplying food to the gods, the two scenes of animal collection are thus paralleled by two scenes where they become food.
4. D<sub>1</sub> describes the entry into the ark, which clearly parallels D<sub>2</sub> which describes the exit from the ark.
5. E<sub>1</sub>, a brief description of the coming of the flood, parallels the brief description of the flood abating in E<sub>2</sub>.

6. In F1 there is another description of the entry into the ark and the ark being sealed, which is paralleled in F2 with the opening of the ark and a partial exit with the sending out of the birds.
7. G1 contains a second description of the flood coming and G2 the first description of the flood abating.

The above analysis shows the highly structured nature of the final flood story. There are 14 scenes or main compositional units in total besides the introduction and conclusion which, considering its relation to the number 7, is unlikely a coincidence. Seven is the number associated with the order of creation in the Ancient Near East, and, in the flood story, we have ordered destruction and re-creation. Such precise parallelism and structural balance do not occur by chance and indicate the chiastic structures were the compositional intent of the final redactor.

### Separating the J and P Material: The Entries into the Ark

Wenham argues that the compositional wholeness of the flood story, due to the overarching chiastic structure, points to one author, and goes on to say, “The documentary hypothesis may yet be defended, if one is prepared to posit a most ingenious and thorough redactor who blended J and P into a most marvelous and coherent unity.”<sup>8</sup> This supposed monumental task is, perhaps, not as difficult as Wenham proposes. While the above analysis does indicate ingenious artistry on the part of the redactor, the simplest means of creating a chiasm with two stories with similar scenes would be to double up on the scenes—which does not require a huge amount of ingenuity. The redactor does, however, do an excellent job using this technique.

The relative simplicity becomes apparent when one lays out the scenes of J and P in order. The following outline uses the standard division of the text into J and P:

| Scene        | Division of Text  | J or P |
|--------------|---|--------|
| Introduction | LORD decides to blot out humans, animals, and birds                   | J      |
| Scene 1      | God decides to end all flesh  | P      |
| Scene 1      | God instructs building of the ark                                     | P      |
| Scene 1      | J text not present—likely completely subsumed into P                  | J      |
| Scene 2      | God commands to take animals—male and female                          | P      |
| Scene 3      | LORD commands to take 7 clean animals, 2 unclean animals, and 7 birds | J      |

|          |   |                  |
|----------|---|------------------|
| Scene 4  | Entry into ark I  | J (mostly)       |
| Scene 5  | Flood description I                                     | J (mostly)       |
| Scene 6  | Entry into ark II                                       | P (mostly)       |
| Scene 7  | Flood description II                                    | P (mostly)       |
| Scene 7  | Animal destruction                                      | P and J combined |
| Scene 8  | Flood abatement I                                       | P                |
| Scene 9  | Exit from ark I with mention of flood abatement I       | J                |
| Scene 10 | Flood abatement II                                      | P                |
| Scene 11 | Exit from ark II  | P                |
| Scene 12 | LORD promises not to destroy humans, animals, and birds | J                |
| Scene 13 | No action parallel: God allows the eating of animals    | P                |
| Scene 14 | God promises not to destroy all flesh                   | P                |

Generally, the division is clear due to the use of either Yahweh or Elohim when referencing God. When laid out in the above manner, the combining of the two stories in a chiasitic structure does not seem overly complicated. For the most part, J and P scenes are alternated.

The major change seems to be the elimination of the J account of the building of the ark, which was likely merged with the P account in scene 1.<sup>9</sup> If the two accounts differed and were thus contradictory, the redactor would have to pick one as his description.

The main editorial work seems to have been in the entry into the ark and flood description scenes. However, due to the specific types of language used by J and P, the unraveling of the strands is not difficult. Careful analysis reveals not only the editorial work, but the likely structures of the original J and P texts. The following shows the likely J, P, and R (redactor) elements of this section with reason for assignment in parentheses:

| Verse              | Division of Text  | Author (reason) |
|--------------------|---|-----------------|
| <b>Ark entry I</b> |   |                 |
| 7:6                | Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came on the earth | P (Use of date) |

|        |   |  |
|--------|---|--|
| 7:7    | And Noah with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood.    | P (Same as wording for covenant with Noah in 6:18 and use of "flood" instead of "rain")  |
| 7:8    | Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, | J (Matches descriptions of animals found in the J announcement of destruction [6:7] and J instructions to collect animals [7:2]) |
| 7:9a-b | two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah,  | J but possibly P (Both J and P animal descriptions use "male and female," but only P used "two and two," 6:19-20)                |
| 7.9c   | as God had commanded Noah.  | P (Use of name Elohim [God])   |

**Flood description I**

|       |  |   |
|-------|--|---|
| 7:10a | And after seven days   | J (Schema of 7 days)  |
| 7:10b | the waters of the flood came on the earth.   | P (Use of "waters of flood" instead of "rain")                                    |
| 7:11  | In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. | P (Use of date and use of flood caused by waters below and above instead of rain) |
| 7:12  | The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.  | J (Schema of 40 days and use of "rain")   |

**Ark entry II**

|          |  |   |
|----------|--|---|
| 7:13     | On the very same day Noah with his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons entered the ark,  | J (P does not name the sons elsewhere in the flood story)   |
| 7:14-16b | they and every wild animal of every kind, and all domestic animals of every kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every bird of every kind—every bird, every winged creature. They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; | P (Matches description of animals in the P animal collection, 6:19-20)  |
| 7:16c    | and Yahweh shut him in   | J (Use of name of Yahweh. This was moved by R and likely came after the entry into the ark but before the coming of rain) |

**Flood description II**

|         |   |  |
|---------|---|--|
| 7:17    | The flood continued forty days on the earth   | R (Addition using P and J wording to replace description of fountains and windows opening, 7:11) |
| 7:18–20 | The waters swelled and increased greatly on the earth; and the ark floated on the face of the waters. The waters swelled so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered; the waters swelled above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep. | P (Use of waters swelling due to fountains opened and use of the number 15)                      |

The redactor thus seems to have thoroughly mixed the material to create two entries into the ark and two descriptions of the coming of the flood/rains. This was likely done to preserve both traditions. If each was kept in the original form, it would be clear that there were two separate entries made and not one. The redactor combined the two entries into the same event described twice.

We shall begin by looking at the J and P material separately, beginning with the J material. The redactor, by combining the J and P materials, seems to have caused two sets of elements to be reversed, because he has the P people entry into the ark followed by the J animal entry, and then the J people entry into the ark followed by the P animal entry. Consequently, the original J animal entry likely came after the J people entry, and likewise for the P material. Second, this in turn would mean the J description of the rain starting after seven days (7:10a) and falling for forty days (7:12) should logically come after the LORD had shut Noah in (17:16c) and not before.

“Correcting” these reversals produces the following chiasm:

- a1 For in *seven days* I will send *rain* on the *earth* for *forty days and forty nights* (7:4)
- b1 And Noah did all that the LORD commanded him (7:5)
  - c1 On the very same day **these entered**
    - d1 Noah
      - e1 and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah,
      - d2 and the wife of Noah
      - e2 and the three wives of his sons

- c2 with them **into the ark** (7:13)
- d3 From the animals clean,
- e3 and from the animals that are not clean,
- d4 and of birds,
- e4 and of everything that creeps on the ground,
- c3 two and two, **went with** Noah into the ark, male and female, (7:8–9b)
- b2 [P: as had commanded him God (7:9c/7:16b)] and shut the LORD him inside. (7:16c)
- a2 And after *seven days* (7:10a) the *rain* fell on the *earth forty days and forty nights* (7:12)

This chiasm is bound by an inclusio of the mention of the rain coming after seven days and falling for forty days and forty nights. It is interesting that the P phrase “male and female as had God commanded” (7:9c) is found at the end of the J account of the animals entering the ark (7:8–9b) and at the end of the P account of the animals entering (7:16a–b). There may thus have been an original “LORD” commanding in the J original, which has been changed to “God” by the redactor in his combining of the J and P material.

As with the J material, the P description of the animals entering the ark likely came after that of Noah entering, and the P description of the flood starting likely came after Noah and the animals had entered the ark. This produces the following P description:

- a1 Noah was **six hundred years** old (7:6a)
- b1 when the *flood of waters came on the earth*. (7:6b)
- c1 And Noah with his sons and his wife and the wives of his sons went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood (7:7), as God had commanded Noah. (7:9c)
- d They and every wild animal of every kind,  
and all domestic animals of every kind,  
and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth,  
and every bird of every kind—every bird, every winged creature.
- c2 They went with Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; (7:14–16)
- b2 the *waters of the flood came on the earth*. (7:10b)
- a2 In the **six hundredth** year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. (7:11)

Again, a chiastic structure is formed by this simple exchange of material. In addition, by placing the bursting forth of the fountains and opening of the windows after the entry into the ark, the following pattern occurs with the P descriptions of the coming and abating of the flood:

- a1 Fountains and windows are opened (linear stanza): instead of the single J line
  - b1 Ark lifted up (chiastic stanza)
    - c1 Mountains covered (chiastic stanza)
- a1 Fountains and windows closed (chiastic stanza)
  - b1 Ark comes to rest (linear stanza)
    - c1 Mountains uncovered (linear stanza)

This is a more balanced structure than the one created by the redactor and discussed above, because the singular J line is replaced by a full stanza, like the rest of the units.<sup>10</sup>

This reversal between stanzas being linear and chiastic also continues with the exit from the ark, which has a linear structure, and the entry, which, as noted above, has a parallel structure. The P exit is as follows:

- a1 God tells Noah and family to leave ark (8:15–16)
  - b1 and then to take animals out of ark (8:17a)
    - c1 This is so they can be fruitful and multiply (8:17b)
- a2 Noah and family leave ark (8:18)
  - b2 and then animals leave ark (8:19)

As the preceding analysis indicates, both the J and P accounts seem to have been arranged chiastically. This in turn would make the redactor's work easier.

## The J Chiasm

The J material produces the following chiastic structure:

### **Introduction: On the children of the sons of God (6:1–4)**

- a1 Sons of God take wives
  - b1 LORD limits human life
- a2 Children born to the sons of God
- A1 LORD decides to destroy all humans and animals (6:5–10)**
  - a1 LORD sees wickedness of humans
    - b1 LORD sorry he made humans
    - b2 LORD decides to blot out humans and animals

a2 Noah righteous in LORD's sight and three sons are listed

**B1 Noah is told to enter ark and take clean animals (7:1-3)**

a1 LORD tells Noah to build ark (eliminated or merged with P)

b1 LORD tells Noah to go into ark because he, alone of his generation, is righteous

c1 LORD tells Noah to take 7 pairs of clean animals and 1 pair of unclean animals into ark

**C1 Noah enters ark, rains come, LORD shuts Noah in ark, rains continue (7:4-5, 7-8, 10, 12, 16b, [17], 22-23)**

a1 Rain will come in 7 days and it will rain 40 days and blot out life (7:4)

b1 Noah obeys the LORD (7:5)

c1 Noah's family enters ark (7:13)

c2 Animals enter ark (7:8-9b)

b2 LORD shuts Noah in the ark (7:16b)

a2 In 7 days waters come (7:10) and rains fall for 40 days (7:12) and blots out life (7:23a-c)

**C2 Rains stop, Noah opens window and flood abates (8:6-12, 13b)**

a2 Rains from heaven stop (8:2b) after 40 days

b3 Noah opens window of the ark (8:6)

c3 Raven sent out and does not return (8:7)

d1 Dove sent out and returns (8:8-9)

d2 After seven days, dove sent out and returns (8:10-11)

c4 After seven days, dove sent out and does not return (8:12)

b4 Noah removes cover from ark (8:13b)

a4 Noah sees earth is drying (8:13c)

Missing: description of Noah leaving ark

**B2 Clean animals sacrificed (8:20)**

a1 Noah builds altar

b1 he takes from clean animals and birds

a2 he offers them as burnt offering on the altar

**A2 LORD promises never again to destroy all humans and animals (8:21-22)**

The sacrifice pleases the LORD, he will not curse humans again because they are by nature wicked



**Conclusion: On the children of Noah (9:18–27)**

Sons of Noah leave ark; they are named; these three will people the whole earth

a1 Noah plants a vineyard and falls asleep naked

b1 Ham sees nakedness

c1 Shem and Japheth cover nakedness

a1 Noah knows what is done

b1 Ham is cursed

c1 Shem and Japheth blessed

It is not immediately clear whether the introduction and conclusion are actually part of the structure or whether they are separate units, because they are only indirectly linked to the story. One argument in favor of including them as part of the chiasmic structure is the fact that both concern the generations immediately before and after the flood. The mingling of the sons of God with humankind causes the LORD to limit human life in the introduction, and their children seem to be the cause or part of the wickedness the LORD sees in humans in A1. Things are clearly not as they should be.

After the flood, sin quickly recurs in the story of Ham seeing his father's nakedness, which, as noted above, is a sexual sin, and thus makes a parallel with the sexual sin of intercourse between sons of God and humans. The return to the state of sin confirms the LORD's observation made in A2 that the human heart is, by nature, wicked. Thus, despite the flood, the world still contains human wickedness. There are thus clear thematic links between the introduction and A1 and between A2 and the conclusion. There is also a minor structural link: A1 ends by naming Noah's sons, and the conclusion begins by naming Noah's son, and thus comes at the end of A2.

The parallels between the units of the flood story proper are very clear. This is especially true for the beginning, middle, and end where there are repeated word and phrase parallels.

**A1: Punishment announced**

a1 6:5 The **LORD** saw that

b1 the wickedness of *humankind* was great in the *earth*,

c1 and that every inclination of the thoughts of **their hearts** was only evil continually.

a1 6:6 And the **LORD** was sorry that

b1 he had *made humankind* on the *earth*,

c12 and it grieved him to **his heart**.

- a1 6:7 So the **LORD** said, “I will **blot out**
  - b1 *human beings* I have *created* from the *ground*,
    - d1 people
    - d2 together with animals and creeping things
    - d3 and birds of the air;

**C1: Punishment fulfilled**

- a1 7:23 **He blotted out** every living thing
  - b1 that was on the face of the *ground*,
    - d1 human beings
    - d2 and animals and creeping things
    - d3 and birds of the air;
- a2 they were **blotted out**
  - b2 from the *earth*.

**A2: Punishment will not occur again**

- a1 The **LORD** said in **his heart**,
  - b1 “I will never again curse the *ground* because of *humankind*,
    - c1 for the inclination of the human **heart** is evil from youth;
      - d1 nor will I ever again **destroy** every living creature as I have done.”

Here the parallels are both word and structural and thus extremely clear. The first part of A1 parallels A2, and the last part of A1 parallels C1.

Analysis of the B-level (the collecting and sacrificing of clean animals) shows a likelihood that B1 also contained instructions for building the ark. The building of the ark is a necessary plot item that is currently missing from the J account. It may have been merged with the P account and rendered indistinguishable by the redactor, or it may have simply been completely contradictory in its design to the P description and, consequently, omitted. The building of the ark was likely in B1, since this would create a parallel with the building of the altar in B2.

The entry into the ark and the coming of the rains in the C-level has already been discussed in detail. C2 picks up the themes of C1: we are told the rain stops after 40 days, Noah opens a window and later removes the cover (in contrast to the LORD shutting Noah in), and there are intervals of seven days. Missing is a description of the full exit from the ark, which was likely omitted by the redactor in order to keep structural balance in his new chiastic arrangement.

There is, thus, ample evidence that the original J version was also arranged in a chiasmic manner. However, due to the rearrangement of the J material by the final redactor, the exact contours of J cannot be determined with precision.

### The P Chiasm

The P material also produces a tight chiasmic design.

#### **A1: God decides to kill all flesh by a flood, but makes covenant with Noah (6:11–17)**

- a1 God sees corruption and violence and decides to destroy all flesh
  - b1 Noah to build ark
- a2 God will bring flood to end all flesh
  - b2 God will make covenant with Noah and family

#### **B1: Noah to collect animals and food for them (6:18–22)**

Noah, family, and two of all land creatures will be saved and Noah to provide food

#### **C1: Waters begin and Noah and animals enter ark (7:6–7; 7:14–16b)**

##### ***Noah is 600 years old (7:6a)***

- a1 The flood waters begin (7:6b)
  - b1 Noah and family enter ark (7:7) as God commanded (7:9c)
    - c1 Animals enter ark (7:14)
  - b2 Two by two animals with Noah enter ark as God commanded (7:15–16b)
- a1 On day waters began (7:10b)

#### **D1: Waters rise over earth (7:11; 7:17b–20)**

***In Noah's 600th year, 2nd month, and 17th days*** (7:11a. This is 77 days [2 times 30 plus 17] after waters began to rise)

- a1 The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven open (7:11b)
  - b1 Ark raised up over earth (7:17b–18)
    - c1 Mountains covered with water 15 cubits (7:19–20)

#### **E: All flesh dies from flood and God remembers (7:21–22; 7:24–8:1)**

- a1 All flesh with breath of life dies, except for those in the ark (7:21–22, 23)
  - b1 ***The waters cover the earth for 150 days (7:24)***
- a2 God remembers Noah and animals (8:1a)

**D2: Waters abate from the earth (8:1–5)**

- a1 Fountains and windows closed (8:1b–3a)
  - b1 *Waters abate for 150 days,*  
*In the 7th month and 17th day* (which is exactly 150 days after fountains opened and raised ark, 7:11),  
 The ark rests on Ararat (8:3b–4)
  - b2 *In 10th month and 1st day* (73 days later plus 77 days of waters gradually rising equals 150 days)  
 Mountain tops appear (8:5)
    - c1 *In Noah's 601st year, 1st month, 1st day* (This is exactly one year after waters started covering the earth)  
 The waters are dried up from the earth (8:13a)
    - c2 *In Noah's 601st year, 2nd month, 27th day* (This is one year and ten days since fountains of heaven opened)  
 Earth is dry (8:14)

**C2: Earth dries and Noah and animals leave ark (8:13–19, 9:1)**

- a1 God tells Noah and family to leave ark
  - b1 And then to take animals out of ark (8:15–17a)
    - c1 This is so they can be fruitful and multiply (8:17b)
- a2 Noah and family leave ark (8:18)
  - b2 and then animals leave ark (8:19)
    - c2 Humans to be fruitful (9:1)

**B2: Humans can now eat animals (9:1–7)**

- a1 Humans to be fruitful (9:1)
  - b1 Creatures will fear humans (9:2)
    - c1 Creatures are food for humans (9:3)
    - c2 Humans cannot eat animal blood (9:4)
  - b2 All flesh will be punished for shedding human blood (9:5–6)
- a2 Humans to be fruitful (9:7)

**A2: God makes covenant with Noah, promises never to destroy all flesh with a flood, rainbow as sign to remember (9:8–17)**

- a1 God makes covenant with Noah
  - b1 And with all creatures
    - c1 God will never destroy all flesh by flood, the sign of the covenant is the rainbow, and it will help God remember
    - b2 Rainbow will make God remember covenant with all flesh
- a2 Rainbow is sign of covenant

As already noted in discussing the redactor's chiasm, the parallelism between the chiastic units is very strong.<sup>11</sup> In both A1 and A2, God makes a covenant with Noah concerning the destruction of all land life by flood. What was said in A1 becomes true in E, and God remembers Noah. Then in A2, God sets up a rainbow in order to remember the new covenant. In B1, Noah is told to collect the animals and provide them food, and in B2 animals are allowed to be food for humans. Then in C1, there is a doubled description of Noah entering the ark, which parallels the doubled mention of them leaving the ark in C2. D1 describes the coming of the water, and D2 its abatement. E describes the destruction of the animals, which was declared in A1, and is promised never to happen again in A2. E also fulfils the covenant made with Noah.

The removal of the J material adds two extra parallel stanzas to the description of the abatement of the flood:

And it was in the first and six-hundredth year  
 On the first of the first month  
 The waters were dried-up from the earth

And in the month the second  
 In the seventh and twentieth day of the month  
 Was made dry the earth

This provides four stanzas describing the actual abatement, perhaps to indicate the totality of the abatement. Four, in the ancient world, was a number of completeness (expressed, for example, in the concept of the world having four directions and four winds).

The dates also provide another level of parallelism between the sections:

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Beginning of C1:            | Noah is 600 as flood first begins                                |
| Beginning of D1:            | In 600th year, 17th day of 2nd month, fountains and windows open |
| Middle of E1:               | 150 days flood endures   |
| Beginning of 2nd D2 stanza: | 150 days flood abates  |
| Beginning of 2nd D2 stanza: | 17th day of 7th month: ark rests on Ararat                       |
| Beginning of 3rd D2 stanza: | 1st day of 10th month: mountains appear                          |
| Beginning of 4th D2 stanza: | 601st year, 1st day of 1st month: flood waters gone              |
| Beginning of 5th D2 stanza: | 27th day of 2nd month: earth dried                               |

The flood first begins when Noah turns 600. However, the fountains of the deep and windows of heaven are not opened until 77 days later (2 months of 30 days plus 17 days). The time it takes Noah to enter the ark (C<sub>1</sub>) is thus 77 days. The action of D<sub>1</sub> all seems to take place on the same day: the fountains and windows opening causes the ark to rise up and the mountains to be covered. The actual flood begins at this point—the point when the earth is completely covered with water. We are told in E that this lasts 150 days, which in turn is also the timespan of unit E. Then at the beginning of D<sub>2</sub>, we are told the fountains and windows are shut off, and the ark seems to rest on Ararat on the same day. It rests on Ararat exactly five months after the fountains and windows were opened, which is 150 days (five 30-day months).

The next two dates in D<sub>2</sub> provide further numerical order: the mountains appear 73 days later, which is 300 days after the flood first began (the 10th month of Noah's 600th year), and the flood waters are completely gone a year after the flood began (Noah's 601st birthday).

The dates as a whole indicate the full control of God and that everything is done in an orderly manner. The symbolic numbers 7 and 10 predominate (77, 7 and 10th [17th] day twice, 10th month, 73 days, 27th day) as they do in the priestly creation account.

To this list of significant numbers, we can add the number 150, whose significance is unknown. The same is also true for the last date given—that for the earth being completely dry. We are told this date is the 27th day of the 2nd month, that is, it is 87 days (two 30-day months plus 27 days) after the waters were gone (the 1st day of the 1st month of the 601st year). It is also 427 days since the flood first began, 1 year and ten days since the fountains and windows opened (or 12 30-day months plus 10 days, or 370 days), and 220 days since the fountains were shut off. None of these numbers appears to have any significance, though the numbers 7 and 10 do recur.

All of the numbers of the dates likely have some precise religiously symbolic significance, most of which are lost to us. What these precise numbers do, though, is indicate the orderly control of God in his bringing and removing the flood. This order is paralleled fittingly by the orderly construction of the story. Thus, though the story of the flood is one of chaos inundating the world, it is an orderly account, and the chaos is presented as being firmly under the control of God.

## Conclusion

The above analysis provides strong evidence that chiastic structuring was used over several centuries—no matter which dating scheme one uses for J, P, and R. J is usually dated to the monarchy, P to the Exilic Period, and R in the Persian Period. There is a high likelihood that R was fully aware of the chiastic structuring of both J and P, because of the meticulous inter-splicing of the two chiasms. The redactor was careful to preserve both accounts: both versions were likely well established and cherished within various sections of the Jewish community.

Also, contrary to Wenham's thesis, because both J and P were arranged in chiastic structures, it would not have been overly difficult for the redactor to splice the two stories together into one story. The two-source theory remains the best explanation for the doubling of events and also the two different language styles found in the text as we have it.

This paper has also shown the usefulness of paying attention to lower/micro-level structures when analyzing the text. A mid-level analysis may not be adequate for determining structural units of a text nor for determining the source material used by the redactor. Such structural analysis is, thus, a useful tool for both source and redaction criticism.

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## Notes

1. Gordon J. Wenham, "The Coherence of the Flood Narrative," *VT* no. 28 (1978): 336–48, repr. in *"I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood": Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11* (ed. Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994): 436–47; Yehuda T. Radday, "Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structure, Analysis, Exegesis* (ed. John W. Welch; Provo, UT: Research Press, 1981): 99–100.

2. It is widely accepted that the Torah is the combination of several sources, a J source (this author refers to God Yahweh, which is Jahweh in German), an E source (this author refers to God as Elohim), a P source (this author has priestly concerns), and a D source (this author has the same style as the author of Deuteronomy). The flood story is widely accepted as being a combination of J and P and is often used as the prime example to demonstrate the source theory, because of the ease of separation of the sources according to style, which produces two almost complete versions of the story.

3. This vagueness has led some scholars to suggest that Canaan did more than simply look. However, there is no real evidence of this, besides the extremity of the curse which seems disproportionate to the sin. That being said, the laws on sexual relationships in Lev 18 and 20 speak of “uncovering the nakedness” when referring to sex, and furthermore connect these illicit sexual practices with the Canaanites. However, in the Noah story, Ham did not uncover his father’s nakedness, but Noah, due to his drunkenness, left his nakedness uncovered.

4. My own translation which follows the word order of the Hebrew (Leningrad Codex).

5. The criteria for deciding which lines belong to J and which to P is discussed below. The use of the number 40 is seen as being of the J source.

6. Radday, “Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative,” 99.

7. In the priestly creation account (Gen 1–2:4), creation is done in 7 days with 10 commands by God.

8. Wenham, “Coherence of the Flood Narrative,” 347–48.

9. Note that there are seemingly two beginnings for the description for building the ark: “Make yourself an ark of cypress . . .” (6:14); “This is how you are to make it . . .” (6:15). The second has very precise numerical measurements, which likely indicate the P source, because P seems to have a love of numbers.

10. See p. 38 above, “Redactor’s Chiasm,” and the chart providing reasons for the division of the text: 7:12: “Use of the name of Yahweh. This was moved by R and likely came after the entry into the ark but before the coming of the rain”.

11. See pp. 55–56 above, and the discussion of the redactor’s chiasm beginning p. 38 with the summary of the parallelism on p. 50.