

UNDERSTANDING THE USE OF *CHIASMUS* IN GENESIS 6:10-9:19

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ABSTRACT

This work presents a critical analysis of chiasmus found in Genesis 6:10-9:19. Though many have approached the text from different perspectives, few have recognized and appreciated the presence of chiasmus in the text. The purpose of this study was to explore the literary structure of the text under study and its significance in conveying the message of the flood narrative. The study employs the literary analysis method of biblical studies, which helped the researcher to examine the structure, symmetry, and patterns in the text, identifying parallel elements and examining the chiastic structure present. The findings of the study revealed the intricate chiastic pattern in the narrative, emphasising the central themes of obedience, faith, and divine judgment. The chiasmus serves as a literary device that emphasizes the importance of these themes and underscores the overarching message of God's covenant with humanity. By unravelling the chiastic structure of Genesis 6:10-9:19, this study provides valuable insights into the narrative complexity of the flood story and its enduring relevance for modern readers.

KEYWORDS: Noah, chiasmus, flood narrative, and X-point

INTRODUCTION

One of the most popular and controversial tales in the Bible is the one about Noah and the great flood mentioned in the book of Genesis. The narrative, with its themes of divine judgment, salvation, and the covenant between God and humanity, has, over the years, captivated people's imaginations. Moreover, the use of chiasmus in the text, especially in Genesis 6:10–9:19, is one feature of this tale that has intrigued many scholars (Woolley, 1956; Hasel, 1975; Sailhamer, 1992; Davidson, 2000; Park, 2000; Clark, 2009). Wenham (1979) observes that the genealogy of Noah found in Genesis 6:10-10:1 forms a chiasmus, with the covenant between God and Noah serving as its focal point. This chiasmus emphasizes the significance of the covenant as the central theme of the narrative, underscoring God's relationship with humanity and the promise of salvation. Sailhamer (1992) corroborates the above

views. According to him, Genesis 6:11-9:19 forms a chiasmus with the pivotal point being the covenant between God and Noah.

The word, chiasmus is derived from the Greek word, *chiazein*, meaning to mark with or in the shape of a cross. Chiasmus is a figure of speech in which the grammar of one phrase is inverted in the following phrase, such that two key concepts from the original phrase reappear in the second phrase in inverted order. It is a rhetorical device in which ideas are presented in a mirror-like fashion, with the crucial point being the most important. The purpose of Chiasmus is to concentrate attention on the main point of a text by placing it at the central turning point (Lambert-Sluder, 2017). Breck (1987) notes that this rhetorical device was a common feature in ancient Near Eastern literature and has been identified in various passages throughout the Hebrew Bible.

The purpose of this paper was to explore the presence of chiasmus in the Noah narrative and its implications for understanding the structure and message of the text. Through an analysis of the text, the paper reveals the significance of the chiasmus in Genesis 6:10-9:19 and explores how it shapes the interpretation of Noah's story. The study, therefore, tries to uncover the underlying message of the passage and gain insight into the broader themes, such as judgment, salvation, and covenant, that are central to the story. The paper critically examines the repetition and reversal of these themes within the chiasmus to provide valuable insights into the narrative complexity and its enduring relevance for modern readers.

The paper adopted the literary analysis method of biblical studies, focusing on the textual, structural, and thematic aspects of the text. The passage under study was thus broken into smaller units to identify symmetrical or mirror-like patterns and parallelisms. The study paid attention to the chiasmic structures (A-B-C-C'-B'-A', etc.), the keywords, themes, and narrative sequences. The presence of chiasmus in the flood narrative not only accentuates the central themes of the text; it also demonstrates the literary artistry and/or creativity and theological depth of Bible authors. By structuring the text in a chiasmic pattern, the author(s) and/or redactors of Genesis draw attention to key themes and motifs, inviting readers to reflect on the significance of the covenant, divine judgment, and salvation.

OVERVIEW OF GENESIS 6:10-9:19

Genesis 6:10-9:19 is a significant section of the Bible that details the story of Noah and the great deluge. This narrative is one of the most familiar and iconic stories in the Bible, and it holds deep theological and moral significance for believers. The story begins with God's decision to destroy the earth due to its

wickedness and corruption. Genesis 6:5-7 sets the stage for the unfolding of the events that lead to the Great Flood.

According to the story, Noah, a righteous man in the eyes of God, is chosen to build an ark and save himself, his family, and a remnant of animals from the impending destruction. In Genesis 6:9, the Bible mentions that Noah was righteous (Hebrew: *ṣaddīq*) and blameless (*tāmīm*) in his generation. He walked with God (Gen 6:9). The usage of the above Hebrew adjectives to qualify Noah shows how faithful and obedient he was to God, and that sets him apart from the rest of humanity. From verse 13ff, God instructs Noah to build an ark according to specific dimensions and to gather two of every kind of animal to bring into the ark. The floodwaters cover the earth for forty days and forty nights, destroying all living creatures except those on the ark. After the floodwaters recede, Noah and his family emerge from the ark, and he offers sacrifices to God in thanksgiving for their survival. God makes a covenant with him, promising never again to destroy the earth with a flood and establishing the rainbow as a sign of this covenant (cf. Gen 6:13-8:22).

The key themes in the narrative include human corruption, divine judgment, grace, salvation, and covenant. Despite the widespread corruption and sinfulness of humanity, God chooses to spare Noah and his family. This act of mercy and salvation demonstrates God's compassion and willingness to provide a way of escape for those who are faithful and obedient to him (6:8-9). The covenant God entered with Noah serves as a symbol of God's faithfulness and commitment to his creation, as well as a reminder of His enduring love and mercy (9:11-13).

OBSERVABLE CONTRADICTIONS IN GENESIS 6:10–9:19 BASED ON THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS

The Documentary Hypothesis (DH) posits that the Pentateuch is a compilation of four primary sources: J (Yahwist), E (Elohist), D (Deuteronomist), and P (Priestly). A critical reading of the text under study, suggests there are two interweaving authorial voices there: the J and P sources (Friemand, 2003; Carr, 2011). Below are the major contradictions found within this passage:

First, is the issue of the number of animals taken into the ark. According to the J-source, Noah was asked by the LORD to take seven (7) pairs of clean animals and one pair of unclean animals into the ark (cf. 7:2-3). However, in 6:19-20, which is believed to be from the P-source, he was asked to take one (1) pair of each kind. For Sarna (1989), this discrepancy in the number of animals implies that one source (J)

assumes knowledge of clean and unclean animals, while the other source (P) does not.

On the duration of the flood, again, there seem to be contradictions. According to the J-source, the flood lasted for forty days and forty nights (7:12). However, in 7:24, which is assumed to be from the P-source, the waters stayed for one hundred and fifty days. This significant difference in the duration of the flood for Carr (2011) suggests two different theological perspectives being harmonized in the final text, probably by editors.

Another seeming contradiction is found in Gen. 8:7, which says Noah sent out a raven, but is immediately followed by 8:8, which claims it was a dove. This incident, for me, is not an issue. Though the differences in how the raven and dove were sent suggest the blending of multiple sources (J and P-sources) as explained by the Documentary hypothesis, I think Noah might have sent out both birds at different times. In 8:7, he sends out a raven which “kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth,” of which the text does not indicate that it returned to the ark. Moreover, from the text, it is obvious that the dove was sent out about three times: the first time, the dove returned because it found no resting place (8:8-9). The second time, the dove returned with an olive leaf, which signalled that the waters had receded (8:10-11). And finally, the dove did not return, meaning the land was dry (8:12). Also, reading the flood narrative shows there are two different names used for God in the text: Yahweh, which is often connected to the J-source (cf. 7:1, 5; 8:20) and Elohim supposedly used by the P-authors here (6:9; 7:9; 8:1). The above facts of course, aligns with the hypothesis that different traditions were compiled and redacted (Friedman, 2003).

UNDERSTANDING *CHIASMUS*

Though the term “chiasmus” has already been explained, it is necessary to further elucidate its meaning. As already stated, chiasmus is a rhetorical device that involves the repetition of ideas or phrases in reverse order. This literary technique is often used to create a sense of balance and symmetry in writing, as well as to highlight contrasts or parallels between different concepts. The term, *chiazein*, begins with the Greek letter “chi” (X), which is shaped like an “X” thus representing the structure of this literary device. Chiasmus is a form of parallelism where the second half of a statement mirrors the first half, creating a symmetrical structure that highlights the central idea or theme of the passage (Alter, 1969; Fokkelman, 1987; Breck, 1987; Lambert-Sluder, 2017). It can be found in a wide range of texts, from ancient literature to modern speeches and advertisements.

In the context of the Hebrew Bible, chiasmus is used to draw attention to important concepts, themes, or ideas. The structure of chiasmus can be seen in various forms throughout the Bible, from individual verses to entire chapters. Scholars have noted the prevalence of chiasmus in the Hebrew Bible and have analysed its significance in interpreting the text (Bernhard, 1978; Wenham, 1978; Blenkinsopp, 1992; Welch, 1998; Fokkelman, 2004).

One scholar who has written extensively on the topic of chiasmus in the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) is Hayes (2007). He discusses the use of chiasmus in the Hebrew Scriptures and its implications for understanding the biblical text. He argues that chiasmus serves as a literary device that helps to organize and emphasize key themes in the Hebrew Bible. Another scholar who has contributed to the study of chiasmus in the Hebrew Bible is Fishbane (1985). He explores the use of chiasmus in the Hebrew Scriptures and its role in shaping the meaning of the text. He acknowledges that chiasmus serves as a tool for emphasizing important ideas and creating a sense of symmetry in the biblical narrative. Clines (1997) and Assis (2002) also discuss the use of chiasmus in the Old Testament and its impact on the interpretation of the biblical text. They argue that chiasmus serves as a structural device that helps to organize and convey meaning in the Hebrew Bible. Some have pointed out that biblical authors used chiasmus to cohere, unify, and confine the boundaries of a literary unit (Parunak, 1981). Dahood (1976) acknowledges that “Biblical writers used chiasmus extensively to lend variety and charm” (p. 145).

EXAMPLES OF CHIASMUS IN OTHER OLD TESTAMENT TEXTS

Certainly, the Hebrew Bible is full of chiasmus on the level of a verse, paragraph, chapter, book, etc. Some of the most well-known examples of chiasmus in the Hebrew Bible can be found in the Pentateuch and Poetic Books. For example, in Genesis, the following examples will suffice: Genesis 9:6- “Whoever shed man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed...” (NKJV). This verse follows a chiastic structure, with the first half of the clause mirroring the second half in reverse order.

- A. Whoever shed
- B. blood
- C. of man (humans)
- C’. by man
- B’. his blood
- A’. shall be shed

The above chiasmus serves to emphasize the principle of retributive justice, stressing the consequences of committing murder. There are numerous chiasmi in most of the

narratives in the Pentateuch that cannot be discussed here. Assis (2002) and many others have explored this area.

Another example of chiasmus in the Hebrew Bible can be found in the Poetic Book, Psalms. Psalm 30:5 remarks, “For his anger is but for a moment, his favour is for life; Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning” (NKJV).

A. For His anger is but for a moment,

B. His favour is for life.

X: Weeping may endure for a night,

B’. But joy comes with the morning.

A’. His grace surpasses His anger.

From the above chiastic elements, it is obvious that A, which talks of God’s anger enduring for a moment, contrasts with A’, which mentions the overarching grace and favour of God. This, therefore, highlights the fleeting nature of divine judgment versus the enduring nature of love. B (His favour is for life) parallels B’ (joy comes in the morning), thus focusing on the permanence and renewal that accompany God’s blessing. The X-point (Weeping may endure for a night) serves as the pivotal moment and symbolizes the temporary nature of suffering before the breakthrough of joy.

In Psalm 103:11-12, the psalmist remarks, “For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us” (NKJV). This passage thus demonstrates a chiastic structure, with the phrases “as high as the heavens are above the earth” and “so great is his steadfast love” mirroring each other, as do the phrases “as far as the east is from the west” and “so far does he remove our transgressions from us”. This chiasmus serves to accentuate the boundless nature of God’s love and forgiveness.

PSALMS 8:1-9

A. God’s excellent name and majesty (v.1a)

B. God’s rule (vv.1-3)

C. Humanity’s littleness (v.4)

X. Crowning of Humans with glory (v.5b)

C’. Humanity’s greatness (v.5)

B’. Humanity’s rule (vv.6-8)

A’. God’s excellent name and majesty (v.9)

The above Psalm expresses a paradox: while humanity is small in comparison to the vastness of creation, God has crowned him with glory and entrusted him with great

responsibility over all other creation. Moreover, this also aligns with God's victory over enemies, both cosmic (enemies, foes, and avengers) and earthly (humanity's role over creation). The chiasmus intensifies the impact of the author's message by weaving the idea of divine majesty and human responsibility into a mirrored pattern. The essence of the literary structure is to ensure that the reader experiences the thoughtful mystery of human existence about God's greatness and/or mightiness; thus, leaving the reader with a deep sense of awe at God's creation and human place within it.

In Proverbs, chiasmus is used in many places to convey wisdom and moral teachings. Proverbs 11:24 says: "There is one who scatters, yet increases more; And there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty" (NKJV).

- A. One person gives freely,
- B. Yet gains even more;
- B'. Another withholds unduly,
- A'. But comes to poverty.

This verse follows a chiastic structure, with the actions of giving and withholding being contrasted for emphasis. The chiasmus in this verse serves to underscore the principle of generosity and its rewards. Here, the first and last elements, **A and A'** (giving freely vs. coming to poverty), create a mirror image, thus emphasizing the consequences of generosity and stinginess. Moreover, the middle elements, B and B' (gaining more vs. withholding unduly), show the direct connection between actions and their consequences. This is done to reinforce the idea that generosity leads to abundance, while stinginess (withholding) leads to loss.

One more example of chiasmus in the Hebrew Bible can be found in the prophetic book of Isaiah. In Isaiah 40:31, the prophet writes, "but those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (NKJV). Again, this passage exhibits a chiastic structure, with the phrases "wait for the Lord" and "renew their strength" mirroring each other, as do the phrases "mount up with wings like eagles" and "run and not be weary". This chiasmus emphasizes the idea of trusting in God and receiving strength and endurance as a result.

The above few examples, among many others, show that chiasmus is a powerful literary device that is frequently used in Old Testament texts to convey important themes and ideas. By these and other examples, one can see how this rhetorical technique enhances the meaning and impact of the text.

CHIASMUS IN THE FLOOD NARRATIVE (GENESIS 6:10-9:19)

The chiasmus structure in Genesis 6:10-9:19 is a fascinating literary device that adds depth and complexity to the narrative. As earlier mentioned, chiasmus is a rhetorical device in which the structure of a sentence or passage is inverted or mirrored. Hence, in this particular section of Genesis, the chiasmus structure is used to highlight key themes and motifs, as well as to emphasize the central message of the passage.

In Genesis 6:10-9:19, the chiasmus structure can be seen in the following pattern:

- A.** Introduction of Noah and his family (6:10)
- B.** Description of the corruption and violence in the world (6:11-12)
- C.** God's decision to destroy the earth with a flood (6:13-17)
- D.** God's covenant with Noah (6:18-22)
- E.** God instructs Noah to enter the ark with all animals (7:1-5)
- F.** God shuts Noah and the family inside the ark (7:6-24)
- G.** Flood waters cover the earth (7:11-24)
- X.** God remembers Noah (8:1-2)
- G'.** The flood waters recede (8:1-5)
- F'.** Noah opens the window of the ark (8:6-12)
- E'.** God commands Noah to leave the ark (8:13-19)
- D'.** God's covenant with Noah (9:1-7)
- C'.** God promises to never again destroy the earth with a flood (9:8-17)
- B'.** Description of Noah's drunkenness and the curse on Canaan (9:18-27)
- A'.** Conclusion of the story of Noah and his family (9:28-29) (cf. Scott, 2020, p. 35; Fokkelman, 1987; Hunter, 2022).

The chiasmus in the flood narrative includes 6 pairs of parallels but utilizes three different types. The first identified form is repetition, which occurs when a

word or phrase is repeated in both parallels. Repetition, as Fokkelman remarks, “is used at every level of the hierarchy which the text constitutes, from sounds, words, and clauses to stories and groups of stories. It is rarely applied mechanically or inartistically, and usually, it features ingenious variations” (46). For instance, A + A’ and B + B’ are examples of repetitional parallels.

In Genesis 6:10, the narrator or redactor introduces Noah’s family and mentions the names of the children: Shem, Ham, and Japhet, and skipping to the end of the narrative, 9:28-29, the names are repeated. Also, in B (6:11-12), the narrator describes the corruption and violence in the world, and coming to 9:18-27, which is B’, the narrator describes Noah’s drunkenness and the curse on Canaan. This is significant: Noah is subtly indicted of depravity.

Another instance of repetitional parallels in the first main flood chiasmus is C and C’. In C (6:13-17), God decides to destroy the earth with a flood, and in C’ (9:8-17), he promises never again to destroy the earth with a flood. This type of chiastic connection is perhaps the simplest to recognize, as two nexuses are connected through exact or almost exact mirroring of words or phrases.

The second type of parallel is conceptual parallels, where the phrasing is not mirrored exactly, but the concepts in the mirrored sections are uniform. One example of conceptual parallelism in the Noah chiasmus is D (6:18-22) and D’ (9:1-7). In D God commands Noah to take unto him all food that is eaten into the ark, including animals. When D is paralleled in 9:1-7, God is again talking about food, but in a different context. He says to Noah in verse 3, “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs”. In this sense, the notion of eating and physical fulfilment remains the same, but the words and phrases used in the comparisons alter.

Finally, many of the paralleled sections utilize oppositions, where there may be some similarities in words or phrasing, but the concepts between the parallels are opposites. F and F’ exhibit oppositional parallelism; in F (7:6-24) God instructs Noah to enter the ark, and in 7:16, he shuts him, his family, and all the animals up inside the ark. In F’ (8:6-12), “Noah opened the window...” Though F and F’ are different and share no repeated words or phrases, it is the polar opposition that connects them. In F, something is shut, and in F’, something is opened.

Apart from the above examples, there are other chiasmus structures in the flood narrative. For example, in C and C’ in C (6:13-17), God decides and vows to destroy the earth with a flood. It is in verse 14 that the “ark” is first mentioned in the narrative. In C’ (9:8-17), God decides and vows never to destroy the earth again with a flood. According to Hunter (2022), the similarities between the two parallels are inherent, with both sections mentioning a flood of waters and the phrase “destroy all

flesh,” though the context of the phrase is important. God tells Noah he will destroy all flesh, then promises to him that he will never again send a flood to destroy all flesh (12).

SIGNIFICANCE OF HEBREW REPETITION IN THE FLOOD NARRATIVE

In Genesis 6:10-9:19 chiasmus, the Hebrew words used to describe Noah, and the flood convey important themes and messages. One of the key Hebrew words used in this passage is *ṣaddîq* which means “righteous”, and the word *tāmîm*, meaning “blameless”. Noah is described as a *ṣaddîq* in Genesis 6:9, setting him apart from the wickedness of the world around him. This word emphasizes Noah’s moral character and his obedience to God, emphasizing his role as a righteous man chosen to survive the flood. Of course, *tāmîm* conveys a sense of completeness or integrity, particularly in relation to moral or spiritual matters. Noah is thus described as *tāmîm* in his generation, suggesting that his integrity was not only personal but stood out in contrast to the corruption of his contemporaries.

Furthermore, the Hebrew words *mayyim*, meaning “waters,” and *mabbûl*, meaning “flood,” are significant in the passage. They are utilized to make connections in the chiasmic structure. In G and G’, these Hebrew words are used to represent the flooding of waters. According to Hunter (2022), *mayyim* is used as a looser translation of water, while *mabbûl* specifically references the flood. Both words are repeated in each parallel. The unmodified words *לְשַׁחַת*/*lešahat*, meaning “to destroy” and *כָּל בָּשָׂר*/*kōl bāšār*, “all flesh” (humans), are also strung together in both parallels, meaning “to destroy (erase) all flesh” (p. 14).

The word *mabbûl*, which is used to describe the catastrophic event that destroyed all life on earth, stresses the magnitude and devastation of the flood. By using this specific Hebrew word, the redactor(s) convey(s) to the reader the overwhelming power and destructive force of the flood, and the need for Noah to build an ark to survive. The Hebrew language also serves to underline the oppositional parallels. For example, in E (7:1-5), God commands Noah to “enter” (Heb. *bô’*) the ark with all animals. In the inverse, in E’, *yāšā’* appears, which means to “come out” or “go out.” Circumstantially, *bô’* and *yāšā’* are opposites, as come and go are opposites in English.

Also, the Hebrew word *tēbāt*, meaning “ark” or “vessel”, is used to describe the large boat that Noah built to save himself, his family, and the animals from the flood. This word is used in the Hebrew Bible on two occasions: once in Noah’s flood narrative as a noun for the ark, and again when describing the vessel Moses is placed into as a baby. In 6:14-16, the word *tēbāt* is used four times; then it is repeated in the

parallel, 9:18, which is the last time it is used in the flood narrative. The choice of this word is significant because it conveys the idea of safety and protection, giving the reader the impression that the ark was a refuge from the destruction outside. The word *têbāt* also carries symbolic meaning, representing salvation and deliverance from the wrath of God (Hunter, 2022, p. 14).

Finally, the Hebrew word *berît*, meaning “covenant”, is used in Genesis 6:18 to describe the promise that God makes with Noah to never again destroy the Earth with a flood. This covenant serves as a symbol of God’s mercy and faithfulness, in a way, demonstrating his commitment to humanity despite their sinful nature. The word *berît* also underscores the importance of God’s relationship with Noah and his descendants, establishing a lasting bond between God and humanity.

THE CHIASTIC POINT X

Critically examining the entire chiasmic structure of the flood narrative, one discovers that one specific moment or point (called the X point) is the most important in the whole narrative. The X-moment of the flood narrative is in Genesis 8:1-2: “Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided. The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were also stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained” (NKJV). Commenting on this verse, Hunter (2022) remarks:

The reason the author wants to highlight these verses specifically is because they characterize God and highlight his intervention in Noah’s life. In these two verses, God remembers not only Noah, but his family and all the animals that were on the ark with him. This emphasizes and isolates a moment that shows God’s mercy and compassion shown toward Noah, and further characterizes Him as a limitless, all-powerful God (p. 16).

The X-point text above focuses on God’s remembrance (*zakar*) of Noah and the animals in the ark. According to Turner (2017), this Hebrew word, *zakar*, “is frequently used to signify not only the mental process that recalls previous knowledge but also a positive faithful act on behalf of someone (p. 2; cf. Clines, 2009, p. 100). Whenever this word is used in connection with God, it means God intervening in human affairs because of his covenant relationship and mercies. Hence, God remembering (*zakar*) Noah and the animals in the ark connotes his mercy and compassion towards his creation, not that he forgot them. Because of his love and mercy, God does not forget about his creation even amid a great catastrophe. The second part of the text describes how God sent a wind to recede the

waters and closed the floodgates of the heavens, indicating the end of the flood and the beginning of a new era for Noah and his family.

This X-moment is the climax of the story because as Hunter (2022) notes, “it is a moment of divine intervention and acts as a transition point in Noah’s life”. The essence of this point is for the reader to take note of God’s acts and works in a specific setting. Hence, this structure is designed to make sure that God’s actions are taken with special consideration (p. 16). The narrator and/or editor of the story is thus emphasizing the central theme of God’s faithfulness and providence.

Despite the destruction and chaos of the flood, God remained faithful to his promises and ensured the survival of Noah and his family. This points out the importance of trust and obedience in God’s plan, as Noah’s faithfulness in building the ark and following God’s instructions leads to his salvation. God is the subject and main character in this X-point: he is the one performing the actions, though, in v. 2, the sentences are written passively; however, it is God who remembers Noah and causes a wind to sweep the waters away. The X moment serves not just as the story’s climax, but also as a transition point. It represents the transition from unrighteousness to purity: Noah enters the ark because of the earth’s wickedness and emerges into a new, pure world, physically and symbolically cleansed of its sinfulness. The X-moment also indicates a transition from judgment to deliverance; God judges the world as evil and Noah as virtuous, and then, following the transitional X, delivers Noah into the new world and saves him from the floods (Hunter, 2022).

As to the reasons why the author(s) and/or redactor(s) of the text embedded Noah’s drunkenness in the chiastic pattern raises some questions and/or concerns. There are many scholarly views for embedding the episode of Noah’s drunkenness within the chiastic structure of the Flood narrative. Below are a few scholarly perspectives:

First, some scholars such as Turner (2017) think that this account was added to the chiastic arrangement to highlight the persistence of sin after the flood. According to them, the chiastic arrangement with Noah’s drunkenness paralleling the pre-flood transgressions points to the fact that sin remained even after the flood. Hence, the flood did not solve the problem of sin as human propensity for wrongdoing persists despite divine intervention. Furthermore, Turner also posits that Noah’s lapse within the chiasm illustrates the limitations of punitive measures. Though God used the flood to punish humanity for moral sins and wickedness, Noah’s subsequent misconduct indicates that such punitive punishment alone cannot eradicate sin. Hence, there is a need to look for solutions beyond retribution.

Second, some scholars argue that the chiastic structure results from merging two distinct sources, each having its chiastic design. Hence, it reflects source integration (J-chiasm and P-chiasm). Moreover, the editor's integration of Noah's moral lapse (drunkenness) into this framework highlights the sophisticated editorial technique employed to harmonize these two sources into a cohesive narrative (Wenham, 1978; Radday, 1981; Scott, 2020).

Lastly, Frankel (2021) proposes that the redactor(s) of the Flood narrative reworked existing traditions to address textual anomalies and/or inconsistencies. Therefore, by embedding Noah's drunkenness within the chiasm, the editor transformed earlier accounts or myths such as those concerning Ham and Canaan to align with the broader theological themes of Genesis. Though all the above hypotheses are plausible, they are not without challenges.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study provides valuable theological, literary, and interpretive insights into the structure and message of the text, Genesis 6:10-9:19. First, the chiasmus in the text is a powerful literary device that enhances the depth and complexity of the biblical narrative of the great deluge. One of the key implications of Noah's chiasmus is the emphasis on the importance of obedience and faithfulness to God. Noah is portrayed as a righteous man who follows God's commands without question, and as a result, he and his family are saved from destruction. This incident serves as a powerful example of the rewards of obedience and trust in God's promises.

Second, the symmetry of the chiasmus structure emphasizes God's control over the entire narrative, from the decision to send the flood to the reestablishment of order afterward. God is the one who commands the flood, remembers Noah, and sets the bow in the sky as a sign of His promise. Thus, Sailhamer (1990) suggests that the narrative's structure reinforces God's overarching plan and purpose in human history.

Third, the chiastic pattern draws attention to parallels between the flood narrative and the creation account in Genesis 1-2. The flood serves as a form of "de-creation" as the world is returned to a watery chaos, followed by a "re-creation" when Noah and his family repopulate the earth. Walton (2001) argues that this reflects God's sovereignty in bringing order out of chaos both in creation and in the flood. Turner (2017) has done an excellent job of comparing the Creation account and the Flood narrative. According to him, both narratives employ the same

vocabulary. Thus, the use of common vocabulary in both accounts invites us to read the Flood narrative in light of the Creation narrative (p. 4).

Another implication of the chiasmus is the idea of renewal and restoration. The story of the flood is not just about destruction, but also about the opportunity for a new beginning. According to Wenham (1978) and Westermann (1984), the covenant that God makes with Noah symbolizes a fresh start for humanity, a chance to rebuild and renew the earth in a way that is pleasing to God. Finally, the chiasmus structure of the narrative serves to underscore the interconnectedness of the various elements of the story. The parallelism between the sections reinforces the idea that all aspects of the narrative are interconnected and serve to convey a unified message about God's judgment, salvation, and covenant with humanity. The chiastic structure serves as a literary device that unifies the narrative, creating a cohesive and ordered storyline. As already noted, it emphasizes key theological motifs- judgment, covenant, and salvation- while also providing a clear progression from chaos to order (Woolley, 1956; Wenham, 1978; Welch, 1998; Hunter, 2022). According to Sarna (1989), this structural pattern ensures that the narrative communicates its themes with clarity and purpose.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to discover and critically analyse the chiastic structures of the flood narrative. The study discovered that the chiasmus of Noah and the flood narrative uses three distinct types of parallels to make chiastic connections: repetition, conceptual, and oppositional parallels. These parallels serve to highlight the X-moment of the chiasmus, which brings to the forefront important knowledge of God's remembrance and His Divine Intervention. The above chiasmus structure serves to emphasize the central message of the passage, which is the faithfulness and obedience of Noah in the face of God's judgment. The repetition and mirroring of themes and events in the passage create a sense of symmetry and balance, underlining the importance of these key elements in the narrative. Furthermore, the chiasmus structure in Genesis 6:10-9:19 serves to underscore the overarching themes of judgment, redemption, and covenant in the passage.

The destruction of the Earth by the flood is a clear act of judgment by God, but it is also a means of redemption for Noah and his family, who are spared from the destruction because of their faithfulness and obedience. The covenant that God makes with Noah after the flood is a promise of redemption and protection, a symbol of God's faithfulness and mercy. Based on the findings of this study, it is obvious that the chiasmus found in the flood narrative in Genesis stands as a powerful

example of the beauty and complexity of biblical storytelling, and redaction/editorial sophistication and expertise in ancient Israel. This, in turn, demonstrates the enduring relevance of these ancient texts in shaping our understanding of faith, morality, and the human experience.

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