

Literary Breakdown of the Flood in Genesis 6 – 9

The story of Noah and the Flood incorporates a common literary mechanism in ancient Hebrew, the *palistrophe*. This method of arrangement highlights the major plot points of the story, focuses the reader on the central point of the story (at the center of the chiasm), and creates a mirror-image structure between the first and second half of the story. Just as we know to expect 3 plot twists in movie scripts, ancient Hebrew readers understood this literary format as a way to express meaning.

Transitional Introduction (6:9 – 10)

Violence in creation (6:11 – 12)

First divine speech: resolve to destroy (6:13 – 22)

Second divine speech: “enter ark” (7:1 – 10)

Beginning of the flood (7:11 – 16)

The rising flood (7:17 – 24)

God remembers Noah (8:1)

The receding flood (8:1 – 5)

Drying of the earth (8:6 – 14)

Third divine speech: “leave ark” (8:15 – 19)

God’s resolve to preserve order (8:20 – 22)

Fourth divine speech: covenant (9:1 – 17)

Transitional conclusion (9:18 – 19)