

From Adam to Moses

Cogitatio

There are three major points of intensification in Genesis 4-11. The first point is in Genesis 4 when Cain murders Abel. The author features the rapid pace at which sin corrupts the human race (6). The second instance is the story of Noah and the flood, wherein God's promise of a future offspring to crush the serpent's head is tested as God judges the world but saves Noah and his family (8-12). Finally, the last significant case of intensification is the tower of Babel. In the story, man rebels against God's blessing and command to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth; however, the rebellion is overturned when God gives them different languages and scatters them over the world (13).

In Abraham's story, God's choosing of Abraham and Isaac, and His promises to Abraham—as well as the functioning promise of an offspring from Genesis 3—form a core part of the intensification process (14, 17, 19, 21). In addition, Abraham's sins further intensify the action as they put God's faithfulness to the test (15, 18, 24). Lastly, the ultimate intensification in Abraham's story is when God commands Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, and Abraham obeys until the final moment (26-27).

There are four significant instances of intensifying action in the story of Moses. The ten plagues with which God strikes Egypt culminate in the first—here, the author demonstrates that God is at war with the false gods of Egypt, which peaks in the person of Pharaoh (78). The second is Israel's crossing of the Red Sea, wherein God's conflict against Pharaoh comes to a head and Pharaoh is defeated (93-94). After Pharaoh's defeat, the third occasion of intensifying action occurs when Israel commits idolatry in the wilderness (119-120). Israel's unfaithfulness to God brings to light a serious problem—will God remain faithful to the people of Israel in light of

their sin (121)? According to the fourth and last major intensification: yes. God reveals Himself to Moses as “a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...” (123).

Meditatio

The author begins Genesis 22 with God’s command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, which immediately intensifies the action by bringing God’s faithfulness into question. God made promises, and if He is truly faithful then He must keep those promises (4, 20, 25). God has essentially put everything on the table—His reputation, the redemption of the human race, and His covenant with Abraham. If Abraham defies God, or if Isaac is not rescued—whether from Abraham’s knife or by way of resurrection—then it’s possible that the whole story of the Bible will collapse because God promised Abraham that “through Isaac shall your offspring be named” (25).

In Exodus 12–14, God strikes down the firstborn of Egypt to prompt Pharaoh to throw out the Israelites as He promised (78, 90). The scene reveals more of who God is and propels the story forward by catalyzing God’s promise to bring the Israelites to the Promised Land. The action is exponentially intensified as Pharaoh’s eviction of the Israelites compels him to pursue them. Once more, God’s faithfulness and promises are at stake. If He abandons the Israelites here, God’s promises would fail, and the story could end because the promised offspring in Genesis 3 would never arrive. However, Pharaoh has made a fatal choice, which is demonstrated as Pharaoh and his army are destroyed in the Red Sea (92-94). Pharaoh’s death moves the

Israelites closer to the Promised Land and the story closer to the fulfillment of God's promises, while also bringing God His due glory (92-94).

In both of these instances—that is, Genesis 22 and Exodus 12-14—the author has in mind the themes of God's faithfulness and the unfolding of God's promises. For example, in both scenes God's faithfulness is tried and shown to be true—God rescues Isaac from Abraham's knife, and He rescues the Israelites from the Egyptians. Similarly, God's promises (to Adam and Eve, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses) unfold as God uses Abraham and his descendants to bring about the redemption of humanity.

Ruminatio

The author represents God as the one moving the story forward. Despite the challenge presented by His people's sin, God remains faithful and merciful, and He continues to act in ways that baffle the people He interacts with, as well as the audience. For instance, God chooses and uses Abraham and Moses—men who have both seriously failed—to bring about a nation through which God will redeem mankind and get glory for Himself (4). God's faithfulness and mercy, in addition to other vital attributes of His, is especially exemplified when God remains faithful to Israel despite their idolatry, and subsequently reveals Himself to Moses on the mountain as “a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (123).

As God works through Abraham and Moses, and the Bible's major points of intensification point to the promised offspring, the reader considers whether Abraham or Moses are the promised seed from Genesis 3. However, the author depicts Abraham as a flawed hero in need of God's faithfulness and rescue due to his cowardice and desire for expediency. The story

must continue onward since the promised offspring has not appeared. Moses is also depicted as a flawed hero due to his anger and doubt, and thus he cannot be the promised offspring either. So the story must continue to progress if God is to fulfill His promises. Moses' and Abraham's faults drive the biblical story forward as the author continues to implicitly pose the question: will God remain faithful to His promises despite the failings of His people?