

## Chapter 1

# *Identifying Poetic Features in Biblical Texts*

The underlying thesis of the current study is that the Pentateuchal Priestly source (P) intermixes lines that contain many and varied poetic features with verses that contain few or no poetic qualities. In order to pursue this theory, I begin with the most fundamental question: What are the characteristics or features that typify Biblical Hebrew poetry as opposed to prose? The answers proposed in this chapter will ultimately provide the mechanics necessary to identify poetic and prosaic material in the Priestly source.

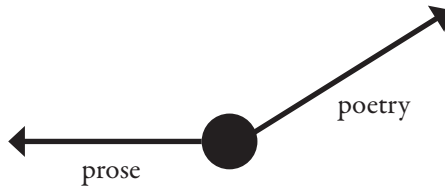
Scholars accept certain biblical books and verses as poetry, and past treatises have *defined biblical poetry* by observing the common denominators between these texts.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I review and critique the relevant literature in order to arrive at an understanding of the style, showing that *describing poetic features* is a more meaningful exercise than producing a definition of poetry. This chapter proposes that the verses most commentators accept as poetry share varying degrees of nine poetic features, which I group into three overarching categories:

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1. This consensus labels about one-third of the Bible as poetry, including the books of Psalms, Proverbs, Job (minus the narrative frame), Song of Songs, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, the majority of the Latter Prophets (excepting Jonah 1, 3–4), and a smattering of smaller poems interspersed in narrative. For a summary, see Adele Berlin, “Reading Biblical Poetry,” *JSB*, 2097, or J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 2, 230. JPS and NRSV indent cola they consider poetic, and their decisions are consistent with mainstream scholarship.

<p><i>Parallelism</i> (  )</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Literary Parallelism</b></li> <li>2. <b>Grammatical Parallelism</b></li> <li>3. <b>Lexical Parallelism</b></li> <li>4. <b>Phonological Parallelism</b></li> </ol> <p><i>Structure</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. <b>Chiasmus</b></li> <li>6. <b>Inclusio</b></li> <li>7. <b>Word Order (marked)</b></li> </ol> <p><i>Style</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. <b>Diction</b></li> <li>9. <b>Rhythm (pronounced)</b></li> </ol>
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Identifying these poetic elements in a text is the first step necessary to distinguish poetic and prosaic material. Differentiating between biblical poetry and prose is difficult, though, as no clear binary contrast exists between the two styles.<sup>2</sup> The ancients themselves provide little guidance, leaving no definitions or stylebooks. Moreover, no single definition of poetry can apply to the whole Bible and its many authors speaking different Hebrew dialects over many centuries. Poetry instead exists to a matter of degrees; individual verses and sections require separate examination and their own unique poetic description. By this method, all writing in the Bible falls at some point on a poetry-prose continuum. I propose the following diagram to explain the theory:



At some point, a biblical line has a sufficient constellation or cluster of poetic attributes for it to round the corner and acquire the label “poetry.” The stronger the poetic qualities, the higher the line falls on the poetry arm of the

<sup>2</sup> James L. Kugel best makes this observation in *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981). A full discussion of Kugel will follow.

diagram. The poetic evidence will be overwhelming for some verses but less convincing in others. In other cases, a piece of “accepted” poetry might reverse the trip around the corner and be called prose instead.<sup>3</sup>

For the purposes of this study, though, I will not speculate when and how a verse “rounds the corner” to be either poetry or prose; scholars will likely never agree on such a determination. As a result of describing poetic features as opposed to defining poetry, I instead propose a continuum concerning the presence or absence of poetic qualities in a text:



A passage with poetic qualities might still be “prose,” and vice versa.

Jonathan Z. Smith employs a similar method of study in an essay exploring early Judaism. He argues for the abandonment of monotheistic definitions of religion and suggests instead a model of polythetic taxonomies.<sup>4</sup> That is, Smith abandons “the quest for a single item of discrimination, the *sine qua non*, the—*that without which* a taxon would not be itself but some other.”<sup>5</sup> For example, circumcision cannot be the single item that defines early Judaism—nor prayer, belief in God, or study of Torah. In a polythetic mode of classification,

[A] class is defined as consisting of a set of properties, each individual member of the class to possess “a large (but unspecified) number” of these properties, with each property to be possessed by a “large number” of individuals of the class, but no single property to be possessed by every member of the class.<sup>6</sup>

I abandon a monotheistic definition of poetry and instead look for polythetic poetic features.

## TERMINOLOGY

No scholarly consensus exists regarding poetic nomenclature, causing a perplexing variety of terminology. I elect to use the simplest and most common terms that are still precise and accurate.<sup>7</sup> Amos 1:2 serves as an illustration:

3. The two verses of Psalm 117, for example, are less poetic than most other accepted poems.

4. Jonathan Z. Smith, “Fences and Neighbors: Some Contours of Early Judaism,” *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 1–18.

5. Smith, “Fences,” 2.

6. Smith, “Fences,” 4.

7. This includes avoiding common jargon such as hemistich, verset, stich, and strophe.

הַהָהָהּ מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁאַג וּמִירוּשָׁלַם יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ וְאֶבְלוּ נְאוֹת הָרָעִים וְיִבֶשׂ רֹאשׁ הַכַּרְמֶל

YHWH roars from Zion, and from Jerusalem sends his voice; and the shepherds' pastures shall dry, and the peaks of Carmel shall whither.

This is a biblical *verse*, a term that refers to Masoretic divisions and their medieval numeration. This particular verse contains two poetic *lines*, sub-parts with a complete and self-contained thought. Sometimes a poetic line corresponds to a Masoretic verse division; elsewhere, a single verse can contain multiple lines. The two lines in Amos 1:2 are:

1 הַהָהָהּ מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁאַג וּמִירוּשָׁלַם יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ  
2 וְאֶבְלוּ נְאוֹת הָרָעִים וְיִבֶשׂ רֹאשׁ הַכַּרְמֶל

1 YHWH roars from Zion, and from Jerusalem sends his voice;  
2 And the shepherds' pastures shall dry, and the peak of Carmel shall whither.

This study deals mainly with the individual poetic line, the level at which most parallelism and other poetic devices operate.<sup>8</sup> Lines contain sub-parts called *cola*. I format the text as follows to highlight visually a single line's two cola:

הַהָהָהּ מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁאַג  
וּמִירוּשָׁלַם יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ

YHWH roars from Zion,  
And from Jerusalem sends his voice.

The first colon in a pair is the A-colon, and the second colon is B. The line (A and B together) forms a *bicolon*.<sup>9</sup> A line with three cola is a *tricolon*:

8. The term "line" is unaffected by whether the words fall in a single horizontal row on a printed page. On modern typesetting and formatting of poetry, see Fokkelman, *Poetry*, 1–5.

9. Pausal forms and major disjunctive cantillation marks often assist in stanza and colon division (see E. J. Revell, "Pausal Forms and the Structure of Biblical Poetry," in *Poetry in the Hebrew Bible: Selected Studies from Vetus Testamentum*, ed. David E. Orton, Brill's Readers in Biblical Studies 6 [Leiden: Brill, 2000], 174 [= *VT* 31 (1981): 188]). Paul Sanders shows the merit of using pausal forms to divide poetic cola in "Pausal Forms and the Delimitation of Cola in Biblical Hebrew Poetry," in *Unit Delimitation in Biblical Hebrew and Northwest Semitic Literature*, ed. Marjo Korpel and Josef Oesch, *Pericope* 4 (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2003), 264–78; an earlier volume in this series establishes the merit of such critical study: *Delimitation Criticism: A New Tool in Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Marjo Korpel and Josef Oesch,

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם  
 And God created humanity in his image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Gen. 1:27

The cola are respectively A, B, and C:

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ A  
 בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ B  
 זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם C

- A And God created humanity in his image,  
 B In the image of God he created him;  
 C Male and female he created them.

Stephen A. Geller argues that readers should understand tricola as a series of “interlocking couplets,” meaning AB and BC.<sup>10</sup> James L. Kugel contends that tricola are “lopsided” bicola, meaning that B is significantly longer than A. This theory might apply to some lines, such as Ps. 128:5:

יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן A  
 וַיֵּרָא בְּטוֹב יְרוּשָׁלַם \ כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ B

- A May YHWH bless you from Zion,  
 B That you may see the prosperity of Jerusalem / all the days of your life.

“All the days of your life” could constitute a C-colon, but Kugel notes that internal rationale for a pause between the beginning of B and its end is lacking. He argues, “[T]he difference between binary and ternary lines is *not crucial*.”<sup>11</sup> While this may be true for Ps. 128:5, the separate and self-contained clauses in Gen. 1:27 above disprove the universality of his thesis.<sup>12</sup>

Pericope 1 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2000). The Masoretes’ documentation of pausal forms likely has an ancient pedigree but is not proof positive of poetic division.

10. Stephen A. Geller, *Parallelism in Early Biblical Poetry*, HSM 20 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1979), 14.

11. Kugel, *Idea*, 52 (emphasis original).

12. See the review of scholarship in Simon P. Stock, *The Form and Function of the Tricolon in the Psalms of Ascents: Introducing a New Paradigm for Hebrew Poetic Line-form* (Eugene:

To my mind, Geller’s understanding of AB and BC couplets is quite helpful; the nature of dynamic movement in a line of poetry is that a first colon finds fulfillment in the second colon while the second colon both draws from the previous colon and propels the meaning forward. In a supposed tricolon, in other words, the B-colon interacts with both A and C. I submit, however, contra Kugel, that the relationship between A and C also defines a tricolon. If the B-colon were removed in the two previous examples, the hypothetical poetic line would still be complete:

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ A  
זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם C

A And God created humanity in his image,  
C Male and female he created them.

יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן A  
כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ C

A May YHWH bless you from Zion,  
C All the days of your life.

I therefore still find the tricolon to be a real phenomenon and the separation between B and C to be of importance.

A line complete in itself is a *monocolon*, such as the last poetic line (bolded) in Jer. 14:9:

Why should you be like someone confused,	לָמָּה תִּהְיֶה כְּאִישׁ נִדְהָם
Like a warrior who cannot bring salvation?	כְּגִבּוֹר לֹא־יֹכֵל לְהוֹשִׁיעַ
But you are in our midst, O YHWH,	וְאַתָּה בְּקִרְבָּנוּ יְהוָה
We are called by your name.	וְשִׁמְךָ עָלֵינוּ נִקְרָא
<b>Do not abandon us.</b>	<b>אַל־תַּנְחֵנוּ</b>

Their isolation makes monocola difficult to identify, but Wilfred G. E. Watson provides three methods for discerning them: segmentation and elimination, where any single line left behind when other lines divide into bicola or

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Pickwick, 2012), esp. 1–21; he proposes the term “para-tricolon” to describe lines with three phrases each of two stresses, as opposed to “full tricola” (27).

tricola is a monocolon; position, noting that monocola often begin or end a poem; and recurrence.<sup>13</sup>

Content and markers generally determine a *stanza*, or a connected group of associated poetic lines.<sup>14</sup> No overarching rule assists in divisions based on content, as subjects differ between poems. Certain structural markers, such as a refrain or an introductory formula, appear infrequently but are usually reliable. In Amos 4, for example, the following refrain occurs five times after five descriptions of Godly punishments:<sup>15</sup>

“Yet you did not return to me.”  
—An utterance of YHWH

וְלֹא־שָׁבַתְּם עָדִי  
נְאֻם־יְהוָה

This recurrence signals five stanzas. Watson describes a stanza as a “miniature poem,” and like the larger poem, it has an opening, middle, and closing.<sup>16</sup>

Scholars such as Watson propose that the *strophe*—a single or group of mono-, bi- or tricola—is the sub-unit of a stanza. He often appears to use “stanza” and “strophe” interchangeably (most strophes are bicola).<sup>17</sup> “Line” as I have defined it is sufficient and arguably more precise, and I therefore abandon the term strophe.

More care is necessary when discussing *quatrains*. These are not simply two successive bicola, but rather they require a connection in terms of vocabulary and/or literary meaning between all four cola. Quatrains include parallelism and often occur with ABBA chiasmus:<sup>18</sup>

13. Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques*, JSOTS 26 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 169–170.

14. On determining stanzas, see Watson, *Classical*, 160–200. Most stanzas end with either an implied comma or period; when a sentence straddles two clauses, the result is called *enjambment* (*Classical*, 332–36). For alternative decisions regarding terminology, see the excellent survey in Watson, *Classical*, 15–16; also see the description of “prosodic units” in John H. Hobbins, “Regularities in Ancient Hebrew Verse: A New Descriptive Model,” *ZAW* 119 (2007): 564–585.

15. See the section “Refrains” below.

16. Watson, *Classical*, 164–65.

17. Watson, *Classical*, 13–30.

18. On this structure, see Stanley Gevirtz, *Patterns in the Early Poetry of Israel*, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 32 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 43–44. John Jebb calls this ABBA formation “introverted parallelism” in *Sacred Literature* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1820), 53. Watson also recognizes ABCB quatrains (*Classical*, 185–85).

<p>They have forsaken me, the fountain of living <b>waters</b>,          And hewn out <u>cisterns</u> for themselves;          Cracked <u>cisterns</u>,          That cannot hold the <b>waters</b>.</p>	<p>אֶתִּי עָזְבוּ מְקוֹר מַיִם חַיִּים          לְהַצִּיב לָהֶם בְּאֵרוֹת          בְּאֵרֹת נִשְׁבְּרִים          אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִכְלוּ הַמַּיִם          Jer. 2:13b</p>
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The rare penta- and higher cola (Watson counts up to ten) occur in two classes: those with and without chiasmus.<sup>19</sup> At this point, however, Watson's strophes become unwieldy. Instead, clusters of multiple cola achieve a critical mass that should qualify them as stanzas.

### INTRODUCTION TO PARALLELISM

Modern study of biblical poetry began with Robert Lowth, born in Hampshire, England, in 1710. As a teenager, Lowth spent his primary education studying classical texts and writing poetry.<sup>20</sup> While contemporaries applauded and anthologized his English and Latin poems, Lowth left his indelible impression on scholarship through his skills as a grammarian and critic. Upon his graduation from Oxford, the university appointed Lowth Professor of Poetry in 1741. During his tenure, he read a series of lectures on Biblical Hebrew poetry to his students, anthologizing them in 1753. This volume, *Praelectiones de sacra poesi Hebraeorum*, began a scholarly revolution.<sup>21</sup>

In Lecture XIX, Lowth speculates that biblical poetry traces its root to religious services, specifically call-and-response chanting. He cites as an example when first Moses and the Israelite men and then Miriam and the women chant the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15).<sup>22</sup> He imagines half of a chorus reciting one colon, while the second half responds with a continuation of that line. Due to this original setting, poetry sports a peculiar characteristic that "consists chiefly in a certain equality, resemblance, or parallelism

19. Watson, *Classical*, 185–190.

20. See Robert Lowth, *Sermons, and Other Remains, of Robert Lowth, D.D., Some Time Lord Bishop of London*, ed. Peter Hall (London: Rivington, 1835).

21. Lowth published a second revised and expanded edition in 1763, which also incorporated notes by Professor John David Michaelis of Göttingen University. Lowth's theories are well known, yet they bear repeating to contextualize arguments made later in the chapter.

22. Modern critics attribute this particular example of repetition to different Pentateuchal sources; see William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, AB 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 476–83 and 573–75.



between the members of each period.”<sup>23</sup> Lowth defines this *parallelismus membrorum* as appearing in three species.<sup>24</sup>

In *synonymous* parallelism, the two parts of a line express the same sentiment in varied but equal terms.<sup>25</sup> For example:

When Israel went out from Egypt,	בְּצֵאת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם
The house of Jacob from a strange	בֵּית יַעֲקֹב מֵעַם לֵעֵז
people. <sup>26</sup>	Ps. 114:1

To put the verse in mathematical terms:

Israel = House of Jacob; Egypt = a strange people

The terms are equal, synonymous across the two cola.<sup>27</sup> In some cases, a line features verbatim (or almost so) synonymous parallelism:

רַבַּת צָרָרוּנִי מִנְעוּרַי יְאִמְרֵנָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 רַבַּת צָרָרוּנִי מִנְעוּרַי גַּם לֹא־יִכְלוּ לִי

“Many have attacked me since my youth,” let Israel now say;

“Many have attacked me since my youth,” but have never overcome me.

Ps. 129:1aa-2

Synonymous parallelism, then, describes a repetition of A’s meaning or wording in B.

In *antithetical* parallelism, B is contrary or opposed to A; “sentiments are opposed to sentiments, words to words, singulars to singulars, plurals to plurals, etc.”<sup>28</sup>

23. Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, 3rd ed., trans. G. George (London: Tegg, 1815), 205.

24. Watson correctly argues that parallelism also operates inside a single half-line (*internal* parallelism) and not only between two clauses in Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse*, JSOTS 170 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 104–92.

25. Lowth, *Lectures*, 205–10.

26. The translation is Lowth’s; modern scholars argue over the meaning of לֵעֵז. When reviewing past scholars’ work, I borrow their examples to showcase their points but use my own translations unless otherwise noted.

27. Israel and Jacob are the same character: his name changes in Gen. 32:29 (non-P) and 35:10 (P). Both “Israel” and “House of Jacob” refer collectively to all his descendants: the first unequivocal examples of each appear in Gen. 32:33 and Exod. 19:3, respectively.

28. Lowth, *Lectures*, 210–11.

The wounds of a friend are faithfully intended,  
 And the kisses of an enemy are profuse.

נְאֻמִּים פְּצָעֵי אֹהֶב  
 וְנִעְתָרוֹת נְשִׁיקוֹת שׁוֹנֵא  
 Prov. 27:6

wounds ≠ kisses; friend ≠ enemy; faithful ≠ profuse<sup>29</sup>

B can still be antithetical to A even if only some of A's elements are contrary and opposed in B.

Finally, Lowth identifies *synthetic* parallelism when two lines “answer each other,” sharing “a form of construction.”<sup>30</sup> He assigns to this category all poetic lines that are neither synthetic nor antithetic but nonetheless related, such as:

YHWH's teaching is perfect,  
 Restoring the soul.

תּוֹרַת יְהוָה תְּמִימָה  
 מְשִׁיבַת נַפְשׁ  
 Ps. 19:8a

The only notation that can represent these lines is one of consequential proof: the second colon shows *quod erat demonstrandum* that the first colon is correct.

According to Lowth, determining synthetically parallel lines requires “art and ability.” These lines are poetic because they simply *are poetic*. Context also helps, though the logic is circular: since the lines from the previous example appear in a poetic book, it reasons that they are poetry.

Lowth returned later in life to polish his ideas and produce a final definition of parallelism:

The correspondence of one verse, or line, with another, I call parallelism. When a proposition is delivered, and a second is subjoined to it, or drawn under it, equivalent, or contrasted with it, in sense; or similar to it in the form of grammatical construction; these I call parallel lines; and the words or phrases, answering one to another in corresponding lines, parallel terms.<sup>31</sup>

29. I use the ≠ sign to describe opposition of terms instead of its literal meaning of “not equal.”  
 30. Lowth, *Lectures*, 211–16.

31. Robert Lowth, *Isaiah: A New Translation*, 2 vols. (Glasgow: Longman, Hurst, 1882; 1st ed. 1778), 1:xv.

Lowth admits in his lectures that prior scholars had alluded to this parallel structure.<sup>32</sup> However, Lowth proposes the first complete system to explain the phenomenon and is thus rightly the leader of the poetic revolution.<sup>33</sup> Generations of scholars accepted his theories, which served as the backbone of centuries of research. Lowth's ideas of parallelism—expanded and refined by later scholars<sup>34</sup>—stood relatively unchallenged for over two hundred years.

### 1. *Literary Study*

James L. Kugel believes that Lowth's writings have had "a disastrous effect on subsequent criticism," proving tenacious despite "obvious flaws."<sup>35</sup> In *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History*, Kugel refutes Lowth's theory of parallelism by questioning how an ancient audience would have understood a parallel line.<sup>36</sup>

Kugel argues that the intensity of semantic parallelism varies greatly among parallel cola. In cola with "zero perceivable correspondence," the

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32. Lowth, *Lectures*, 204.

33. Ancient Jewish scholars simultaneously "forgot" and perpetuated parallelism, a paradox George B. Gray identifies in *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry: Considered with Special Reference to the Criticism and Interpretation of the Old Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915), 22–33. Rabbinical prayers and songs often exhibit synonymous or antithetical parallelism; for example, take the liturgical poem עלינו לשבח attributed to the third-century CE sage Rav: "This is our God, and there is no other / Indeed our king, and there is none but him" (see Kugel, *Idea*, 306–07). Yet rabbinic interpreters read parallelism in the Bible differently, thinking that the two parts of a parallel line refer to different events or thoughts. Kugel explains that this idea fits the worldview of biblical "omniscience," that the smallest details in biblical texts are of extreme importance; no words appear simply due to poetic license (104). Adele Berlin notes that in medieval and Renaissance times, Jews viewed poetry through the lens of their own contemporary Hebrew and Arabic verse, often torn between thoughts of biblical superiority and aesthetics that deemed biblical poetry lacking (*Biblical Poetry Through Medieval Jewish Eyes* [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991], 3–6).

34. Gray, for example, proposes dividing parallelism into two categories, recognizing that in some lines, B repeats part of A but also adds something fresh (*incomplete* parallelism), while every element in A is represented in B in other lines (*complete* parallelism); see *Forms*, 49–59.

35. Kugel, *Idea*, 15. I divide the evaluation of parallelism into two categories, literary and linguistic, following the observations of H. G. Widdowson in *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature* (London: Longman, 1975), 1.

36. *Idea* appeared towards the end of a spate of new work on parallelism, discussed below. I begin with Kugel's theories, however, because they have acquired the largest following. I observe now that few university professors would summarize Lowth without next turning to Kugel's objections.

pause acts as a “mere comma separating units of roughly equal length.”<sup>37</sup> In Ps. 31:25,

Be strong and let your heart show strength,  
All who wait for YHWH.

חֲזָקוּ וַיִּצְמַח לְבַבְכֶם  
כָּל־הַמַּיְתְּנִים לַיהוָה

the cola share neither synonyms nor antonyms. The parts of speech and verbal forms do not correspond. However, neither colon contains the complete thought in itself. The B-part defines A’s addressees, and A tells B’s subjects what actions God expects. Lowth would have defined these cola as synthetically parallel, yet Kugel is correct in pointing out that the parts lack parallel thoughts.<sup>38</sup> Following Gray, Kugel labels synthetic parallelism a defective “catchall” category.<sup>39</sup>

Kugel then turns his attention to “synonymous” parallelism, which he also considers a misnomer. Citing past arguments that synonymously parallel bicola “express [the author’s] thought twice in a different manner,” Kugel states instead that B continues A in the majority of cases; B “[goes beyond] A in force or specificity.” The ancient Hebrew listener would have heard and interpreted a parallel line as “A is so, and *what’s more*, B is so.”<sup>40</sup>

Kugel works with an example from Isa. 1:3a:

An ox knows its owner,  
And the donkey its masters’ trough.

יָדַע שׁוֹר קִנְיָהּ  
וְחִמּוֹר אֵבוֹס בְּעֵלָיו

A typical Lowthian evaluation of this line would create the formulas ox = donkey and owner = masters’ trough. Citing ritual texts that show the relative worth of the two animals, Kugel asserts instead that donkeys are inferior to oxen. The line, therefore, descends: an ox is *less unimportant* than a donkey (ox < donkey), and a food trough is *less recognizable* to an animal than is a human owner (owner < masters’ trough).<sup>41</sup> The Hebrew then implies, “An ox—a decent animal—knows its owner; what’s more, even a donkey—that

37. Kugel, *Idea*, 4–7.

38. While Lowth labeled this category “parallelism,” he only claimed the cola “answer each other” by their “form of construction” (*Lectures*, 211). Despite the name he gives it, then, Lowth would not disagree with Kugel’s observation.

39. Kugel, *Idea*, 2–12. See also Gray, *Forms*, 49–51.

40. Kugel, *Idea*, 8 (emphasis original).

41. The logic of this line is admittedly reversed: an ox is more significant an animal than a donkey (ox > donkey), but the progression is from good to bad, meaning that the “better” animal is “less bad” than the other. Kugel uses a double-sided arrow to create his equations (↔), since B both comes after and relates back to A (*Idea*, 8). Kugel often refers to the “after-

lowly creature!—knows where it gets its food.” This translation and analysis differs from one that considers the two cola simply synonymous, which might exaggeratedly read, “An ox knows its owner. That is to say, a donkey knows its masters’ trough.” The former translation expresses a single idea that builds on itself in B, while the synonymous translation implies two separate but identical ideas.<sup>42</sup> Lowth’s understanding says that B is almost meaningless, since it presents no new information after A. Kugel’s method argues that B is especially meaningful.

Antithetical parallelism similarly contains no true antonyms, Kugel further argues. To return to an earlier example:

<p>The wounds of a friend are faithfully intended, And the kisses of an enemy are profuse.</p>	<p>נְאֻמִּים פְּצָעֵי אֹהֶב וְנִשְׁקוֹת נְשִׁיקוֹת שׂוֹנֵא Prov. 27:6</p>
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“Wound” is not a perfect antonym for “kiss.” Indeed, these words might not have any true antonyms in the lexica of either English or Hebrew. While “friends” and “enemies” are better antonyms, “faithfully intended” and “profuse” express different ideas. A truly antithetical line—or one at least close to it—could read,

<p>The (pain-causing) wounds of a friend are faithfully intended, And the (pleasure-causing) kisses of an enemy are <b>disloyally intended</b>.</p>	<p>נְאֻמִּים פְּצָעֵי אֹהֶב וְנִשְׁשָׁעוֹת נְשִׁיקוֹת שׂוֹנֵא</p>
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This, however, is not what the verse says. Such true antithesis is rare.

The Lowthian reader could incorrectly insert a “but” between these two original cola, indicating that the line contains two thoughts. Instead, Kugel argues that the line expresses only a single idea, which he translates as “You know how a friend’s reproaches ring true / [now] understand how an enemy’s praise should be taken for falsehood //.” A and B therefore agree with each other, producing no contrast and “nothing antithetical whatever.”<sup>43</sup>

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wardness” of B, yet this argument is that B goes beyond A; I therefore believe a less-than sign more accurately reflects the theory.

42. Kugel, *Idea*, 7–12.

43. Kugel, *Idea*, 14.

I assert that this line *does* indeed have antithetical qualities. True, the antonyms are not perfect. And yes, it only discusses one idea. However, the line expresses its singular conceit using two contrasting images that conjure opposite ideas. It seems to me argumentative or even deliberately obtuse to require Kugel's rigid definition of antithesis and ignore the contrasting topics of A and B. Their nature is still contradictory.<sup>44</sup>

As opposed to the simultaneity implied by synonymous and antithetical parallelism, Kugel's "A, and what's more, B" approach requires a feeling of completion, "afterwardness," sharpening, and heightening.<sup>45</sup> This approach allows varied translations of parallel lines beyond their literal meaning: "A, and what's more, B; not only A, but B; not A, not even B; not A, and certainly not B; just as A, so B; and so forth."<sup>46</sup>

Kugel's ideas are excellent and have rightly affected scholarly consensus. Following the latest generation of scholars, I recognize Kugel's achievements without accepting all of his assertions. He convincingly demonstrates that dozens of exemplars convey a sense of "afterwardness" in B. Yet the verse immediately following the ox || donkey line above raises problems with the thesis:

Ah, sinful nation,	הוי גוי הַטָּא
People heavy with iniquity!	עַם כְּבֵד עֹן
	Isa. 1:4aa

The words in the verse have a range of meaning, but no lexical evidence applicable to this context requires that B intensifies A.<sup>47</sup> The evidence does not

44. Kugel will repeat this pattern of denying the existence of a category that is difficult to define effectively when he discusses the nature of poetry versus prose (see the section "Prose versus Poetry" later in this chapter).

45. D. J. A. Clines makes the helpful observation that instead of B heightening A, the second half of a parallelistic couplet is generally more "precise or specific" than the first; see "The Parallelism of Greater Precision: Notes from Isaiah 40 for a Theory of Hebrew Poetry," in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, ed. Elaine R. Follis, JSOTS 40 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987), 77.

46. Kugel, *Idea*, 13.

47. In A, *הַטָּא* means "to miss a mark" morally, to do wrong, to sin. The *עֹן* in B is a misdeed, a sin. In both narrative (2 Sam. 24:10) and legal texts (Deut. 19:15), the terms appear synonymously. "Nation" (*גוי*) refers most often to non-Israelites, but many examples refer specifically to descendants of the Patriarchs and inhabitants of Israel/Judah (BDB, 1471). From context, the word here must refer to Judahites. "People" (*עַם*) implies an emphasis of kinship and religion (*HALOT*, 2:838). The word refers most often to the Israelite people specifically, but also to Egyptians (Gen. 41:40; Exod. 1:22), Moabites (*עַם-כְּמוֹשׁ*, Num. 21:29), and others. In summary, *הַטָּא* is synonymous with *עֹן* multiple times; *גוי* and *עַם* can have different meanings, but this does not appear to be the case in this verse.

support a Kugel-like *a fortiori* translation of “Ah, sinful nation; what is worse, people [said disparagingly] even heavy with iniquity!” Rather, the two verses simply seem synonymous.<sup>48</sup> True, Kugel says that only a “majority” of parallel lines follow his paradigm. I agree that this phenomenon is not present in every poetic line, and for every example he provides that fits, the critic can cite one that does not. Kugel’s theory, therefore, applies to many but not all parallel lines.

The terminological question arises whether “parallelism” is an accurate label. Indeed, Kugel prefers “seconding.” I will return to this point shortly, but for now, this question exposes another flaw in Kugel’s argument. Kugel speaks synchronically about parallelism, as if all ancient authors operated under the same system. However, biblical poetry spans a millennium, from Deborah’s song to Daniel’s apocalypses. Different legal authors used different styles in composing laws: talion, casuistic, apodictic, and aphoristic.<sup>49</sup> Discussing the “style of biblical law” is therefore impossible, as law has no unified style. There is similarly no single “style of biblical poetry.” Some authors might have written parallel lines, while others wrote seconding lines. The common element in all is that the line contains only one broad thought.

Poetic lines do not require their own separate categories of literary parallelism. The above examples do show, however, that some lines express generally synonymous ideas, others have a single thought heightened in B, and still more contain opposite notions between the cola. Yet the old labels of synonymous, antithetical, and especially synthetic are not accurate or particularly illuminating; at best, they should remain “ballpark approximations.” I do, however, retain the label “parallelism” due to its prevalence in most relevant literature. By this term, I do not imply a Euclidian mathematical equivalence, but rather a much freer relationship between the cola.

A tense scholarly faceoff occurred shortly after Kugel’s publication when Robert Alter, professor of Hebrew and literature at the University of California at Berkeley, published *The Art of Biblical Poetry* in 1985. The work is a follow-up to the scholar’s popular and award-winning *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, where he argues the merits of an approach that focuses on the literary conventions of biblical texts (narration, dialogue, repetition, diction, character) instead of their compositional history or dating.<sup>50</sup> Literary

48. The phrase  $\text{וְיָבִיטוּ בָּךְ}$  in B, using two words, has greater linguistic weight than the single word  $\text{וְיָבִיט}$  (see “Lexical Parallelism” below).

49. See Albrecht Alt’s 1934 essay “The Origins of Israelite Law,” in *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*, trans. R. A. Wilson (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), 101–71.

50. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, rev. and updated ed. (New York: Basic, 2011; 1st ed. 1981).

criticism leads Alter to conclude that two parallel cola are not merely synonymous, but rather that B heightens A.<sup>51</sup>

Alter uses unique vocabulary, such as “dynamic movement,” that captures the essence of the relationship between parallel cola. He also furthers Kugel by defining exact types of heightening: specification, focusing, concretization, dramatization; he argues that the difference between two parallel cola shows the literary art in their composition. Alter is less dogmatic, allowing that different poets used heightening to different degrees.<sup>52</sup> Alter’s observations thus sometimes depart from Kugel’s, but more often, they agree.<sup>53</sup> Alter’s terminology, which utilizes the best descriptive words of modern literary criticism, remains insightful and useful.

In conclusion, the essential element of parallelism is that the two cola express a single thought. As D. J. A. Clines well puts it, “The meaning of the couplet does not reside in A nor in B[, but rather] in the whole couplet of A and B . . .”<sup>54</sup> This observation expresses parallelism’s *sine qua non*.

### *Linguistic Parallelism*

The linguist Roman Jakobson begins an influential article on parallelism in Russian literature by noting the etymologies of *oratio prosa* (prose), meaning “speech turned straightforward,” and *versus* (verse), meaning “return.” He concludes, “We must consistently draw all inferences from the obvious fact that on every level of language the essence of poetic artifice consists in recurrent returns.”<sup>55</sup> All poetry asks the reader to consider whether a second line relates to its preceding line, and to what degree. Ancient Canaanites and Akkadians use parallel lines, Jakobson contends, but so do Chinese, Greek, Russian, and most other “folk” authors old and new. His point even applies

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51. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, rev. and updated ed. (New York: Basic, 2011; 1st ed. 1985), 22–23.

52. Alter, *Art of Biblical Poetry*, 22.

53. In a published review of Alter, Kugel describes his sense of “*déjà lu*,” remarking that the book has “little to add” and is “especially reminiscent” of Kugel’s own work (James L. Kugel, “A Feeling of *Déjà Lu*,” *Journal of Religion* 67 [1987]: 66–79). Alter even uses some of the same textual examples as Kugel—including Isaiah’s ox || donkey verse—without citation. Kugel gives the book a snarky moniker, *Kugel Slightly Altered*. Alter, for his part, claims that his ideas predate Kugel even if the publication of this book does not, and that the two scholars reached their conclusions independently but concurrently (Alter, *Art of Biblical Poetry*, xi). While Alter’s ideas do often second Kugel (how apt for a study of parallelism!), Kugel is understandably too harsh in rejecting the book in toto.

54. Clines, “Greater Precision,” 95.

55. Roman Jakobson, “Grammatical Parallelism and Its Russian Facet,” *Language* 42 (1966), 399.



strongly to modern English rhyming poetry, where A's rhyme is not fulfilled until B, and the satisfaction derived from the end of the line requires a mental or visual return to A.

B can relate (be parallel) to A with numerous “invariants and variables” that activate at all levels of language, including the phonological, phonemic, lexical, grammatical (morphological and syntactic), and semantic.<sup>56</sup> In the 1970s, Benjamin Hrushovski (later Harshav) actualized this theory in a study of parallelism that considered syntax, meaning, and stress all as important aspects.<sup>57</sup> Stephen A. Geller takes inspiration from Jakobson, isolating aspects of semantic and grammatical parallelism.<sup>58</sup> Adele Berlin later echoes this idea, further bringing it to the attention of broader biblical scholarship, defining *aspect* as “the area of linguistics activated” by the preceding linguistic categories.<sup>59</sup> I follow her example and divide the following linguistic study into three aspects: grammatical, lexical, and phonological. Klaus Seybold correctly argues that parallelism can exist at multiple textual levels:

*Parallelismus membrorum* heißt also im Blick auf die hebräische Dichtung bewusste Parallelstellung verschiedener Elemente eines Satzes oder eines Textstücks. Sie kann Strophen betreffen oder Verse, Versteile, Wörter, Silben oder auch Konsonanten und Vokale.<sup>60</sup>

The following linguistic phenomena, then, can each occur at different places in a poetic line.

## 2. Grammatical Study

Adele Berlin, whom I discuss first even though her work is later than Geller's, divides grammatical parallelism into two categories: morphology and

56. Jakobson, “Grammatical,” 423.

57. Benjamin Hrushovski (later Harshav), “Prosody, Hebrew,” *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), 13:1200–1203.

58. Geller, *Parallelism*, 1–4.

59. Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, rev. and exp. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008; 1st ed. 1985), 29.

60. Klaus Seybold, *Poetik der Psalmen*, Poetologische Studien zum Alten Testament I (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2003), 89. Although he uses Lowth's vocabulary of *parallelismus membrorum* liberally, Seybold later argues for restricting the term to versified (“versgebundene”) parallel structures (idem, “Anmerkungen zum *Parallelismus membrorum* in der hebräischen Poesie,” in *Parallelismus membrorum*, ed. Andreas Wagner, OBO 224 [Fribourg: Academic; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007], 108).

61. Berlin, *Dynamics*, 31–63. For a thorough outline and definition of morphology in

syntax.<sup>61</sup> In morphological parallelism, B substitutes one element in A with a grammatically equivalent or contrastive counterpart. Examples of substitutions between different word classes include noun to pronoun, noun/pronoun to relative clause, prepositional phrase to adverb, and substantive to verb.<sup>62</sup>

For substitutions between words in the same class, Berlin first notes that variations include aspect/tense, such as from a perfect verb to a *wāw*-consecutive. Scholars have widely observed the pattern *qtl* || *yqtl* and *yqtl* || *qtl* in biblical and especially Ugaritic poetry, occurring regardless of whether the verbs share the same root.<sup>63</sup> Verbs also change *binyānîm* (conjugations) between lines, often between an active and a passive.<sup>64</sup> Other same-class substitutions include person, gender, and number for verbs; and gender,<sup>65</sup> number, definiteness, and case for nouns and adjectives.<sup>66</sup> Scott

biblical Hebrew and general linguistics, see W. Randall Garr, "The Linguistic Study of Morphology," in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Walter R. Bodine (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 49–64. The foundational work on biblical Hebrew syntax is Friedrich Eduard König, *Historisch-kritisches Lehrgebäude der hebräischen Sprache*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897). In my study, I unify morphology and syntax under grammatical parallelism, recognizing that changing a single morpheme usually affects changes in a sentence's syntax; the eminent structural linguist Ferdinand de Saussure calls the division between the two "illusory" in *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye with Albert Reidlinger, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 135. See also Walter R. Bodine, "How Linguists Study Syntax," in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Walter R. Bodine (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992) 89–108.

62. Berlin, *Dynamics*, 33–34.

63. See the recent study by Silviu Tatu, *The qatal//yiqtol (yiqtol//qatal) Verbal Sequence in Semitic Couplets: A Case Study in Systemic Functional Grammar with Applications on the Hebrew Psalter and Ugaritic Poetry*, Gorgias Ugaritic Studies 3 (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2008), which furthers the work of Moshe Held, "The YQTL-QTL (QTL-YQTL) Sequence of Identical Verbs in Biblical Hebrew and in Ugaritic," in *Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman*, ed. Meir Ben-Horin et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 281–90. Berlin cites Gen. 1:5 and Exod. 4:11 (among others) to note that the phenomenon appears in prose, but I label both these verses poetry based on their poetic features (אֵלֶם אוּ מִי־שׁוֹם אֶלֶם) [Exod. 4:11aa] contains lexical and phonological parallelisms).

64. Umberto (Moshe David) Cassuto discusses this active–passive pattern in *The Goddess Anath: Canaanite Epics of the Patriarchal Age*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1971), 47–48; see also Moshe Held, "The Action-Result (Factitive-Passive) Sequence of Identical Verbs in Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic," *JBL* 84 (1965): 272–282; and Terry L. Fenton, "Command and Fulfillment in Ugaritic—'TQTL:YQTL' and 'QTL:QTL,'" *JSS* 14 (1969): 34–38.

65. Watson uses "gender-matched parallelism" to describe when the gender of nouns switches between cola. This can occur in a straightforward masc. + masc. || fem. + fem. pattern, the genders can invert, or the arrangement can be chastic. This technique mainly expresses merismus or heightens antithesis (Watson, *Classical*, 123–27).

66. Some of these variations are necessary for lexical reasons and do not necessarily contribute to the poetic nature of a line (Berlin, *Dynamics*, 44).

Noegel has argued recently that biblical poets will often cluster geminate verbs in parallel cola.<sup>67</sup>

Berlin cites Jer. 9:10, where every parallel word exhibits morphological parallelism:

וְנַתַּתִּי אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַם לְגִלְיִים מְעוֹן תַּנִּים  
וְאֶת־עָרֵי יְהוּדָה אֶתֶן שְׁמָמָה מִבְּלֵי יוֹשֵׁב

I will make Jerusalem into rubble, a jackals' den,  
And the cities of Judah I will make desolation, without an  
inhabitant.

The verbs are *qtl* || *yqtl*; *Jerusalem* || *cities of Judah* vary in number; *rubble* is masc. pl., while *desolation* is fem. sing.; *jackals* and *an inhabitant*, though not strictly parallel, vary in number.<sup>68</sup> Berlin's observations are accurate and thorough, and her categories describe the bulk of grammatical parallelism.

In syntactic parallelism, the whole colon B transforms the syntax of A. Berlin identifies four types of transformation: nominal-verbal, where A contains no finite verb but B does (or vice-versa);<sup>69</sup> positive-negative, not to be confused with Lowth's antithetical parallelism; subject-object, where a term in A serves a different syntactic function in B; and contrast in grammatical mood, such as between indicative, interrogative, jussive, and imperative.<sup>70</sup>

In a revision of his 1979 Harvard dissertation, Geller argues that Jakobson's theories are correct but difficult to realize in the study of biblical poetry given our incomplete modern understanding of the lexicon, grammar, and pronunciation of Biblical Hebrew.<sup>71</sup> Knowing the possible pitfalls, Geller presents the first methodological study of the semantic and grammatical structures of parallelism.<sup>72</sup>

67. Scott Noegel, "Geminate Ballast and Clustering: An Unrecognized Literary Feature in Ancient Semitic Poetry," *JHS* 5 (2005), [http://www.jhsonline.org/Articles/article\\_38.pdf](http://www.jhsonline.org/Articles/article_38.pdf).

68. Berlin, *Dynamics*, 52.

69. Berlin notes further that this transformation can also occur with the verb "to be," even though it has no participial form (*Dynamics*, 55).

70. Berlin, *Dynamics*, 53–63.

71. Geller, *Parallelism*, 1–4.

72. As with Kugel and Alter, linguistic study of parallelism and poetry exploded in the 1970s and '80s when several authors separately considered similar subjects (see especially Collins, Greenstein, Berlin, and O'Connor). Writing independently from but concurrently with Geller, Terence Collins published his dissertation also focusing on grammar and syntax in poetry from the prophetic corpus (*Line-Forms in Hebrew Poetry: A Grammatical Approach to the Stylistic Study of the Hebrew Prophets*, Studia Pohl: Series Maior 7 [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1978]). He argues for a separation of lines into four basic sentence types based on their grammatical structure (involving the sentences' constituents: subject, object, verb, and

In all cases of strict parallelism (involving semantically parallel words), Geller argues that the critic can reconstruct the binary parts into in a single statement.<sup>73</sup>

YHWH thundered from heaven, ‘Elyon (The Most High) sent forth his voice.	יָרַעַם מִן־שָׁמַיִם יְהוָה וַעֲלִיּוֹן יָתַן קוֹלוֹ 2 Samuel 22:14
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Geller reconstructs the sentence thus:

יְהוָה	יָרַעַם
עֲלִיּוֹן	מִן־שָׁמַיִם
יָתַן קוֹלוֹ	יְהוָה

producing four hypothetical reconstructed sentences:

יְהוָה	יָרַעַם מִן־שָׁמַיִם	(YHWH thundered from heaven)
עֲלִיּוֹן	יָרַעַם מִן־שָׁמַיִם	(‘Elyon thundered from heaven)
יְהוָה	יָתַן קוֹלוֹ מִן־שָׁמַיִם	(YHWH sent forth his voice from heaven)
עֲלִיּוֹן	יָתַן קוֹלוֹ מִן־שָׁמַיִם	(‘Elyon sent forth his voice from heaven)

A casual observer would understand the parallelism operating between YHWH and ‘Elyon, both single-word epithets of the Israelite God. Geller also allows grammatical parallels between יָרַעַם (thundered) and יָתַן קוֹלוֹ (sent forth his voice), even though they differ in form, word-count, and meaning.<sup>74</sup>

Geller analyzes parallel units in eleven steps, including determining grammatical and metrical units, sentence transformation, and reconstruction.<sup>75</sup>

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modifier of the verb); four General Line-Types depending on whether the line has one or two Basic Sentences and how they relate; and Line-Forms based on the order of the constituents.

73. Geller, *Parallelism*, 16–17; see also Raphael Sappan, *The Typical Features of the Syntax of Biblical Poetry in the Classical Period*, Hebrew with English summary (Jerusalem: Kiryat-Sefer, 1981), 70–71.

74. Geller allows “transformation” and grammatical adjustments in his reconstructions when the syntactic nature of a line does not allow for a logical single-sentence reconstruction (due to a negative, for example, or to number or gender differences); see *Parallelism*, 21–22.

75. Scholars generally accept that monosyllabic particles and prepositions are proclitics that form units with the following word. Geller therefore proposes speaking of “grammatical units” as opposed to “grammatical elements.” Multisyllabic particles are anacpeps, whose weight depends on the individual examples. Multisyllabic words that contain only one grammatical unit might contain multiple “metrical” units, depending on individual circumstances. With humility, Geller notes that uncertainty pervades all these conclusions (*Parallelism*, 6–9).

He then applies his technique to a small corpus of seventeen “early” poems. Ultimately, Geller concludes that relatively few parallel patterns are active in his selected corpus, “formulae” that vary commonly in terms of meter, grammar, and semantics.

Edward L. Greenstein argues that the popularity of grammatical (or syntactic) parallelism in literature is the result of a psychological effect, namely that humans naturally understand the correlation between sentences such as “The lazy student failed the exam” and “The smart girl passed the test.” When we hear the first sentence, we prefer and expect to have it followed with a sentence like the second. Similarly, first sentences influence how audiences interpret following sentences. If a person hears the ambiguous sentence “They are visiting sailors,” he or she is unsure how to interpret it. If contrasting sentences such as either “They are performing monkeys” or “They are bombarding cities” precede the ambiguous sentence, the listener will interpret the “sailors” comment differently.<sup>76</sup>

Encouraged by these psycholinguistic facts,<sup>77</sup> Greenstein argues that the term “parallelism” should only refer to *grammatical* parallelism, excluding all lines that do not have strict syntactic repetition.<sup>78</sup> He notes that grammatical and semantic parallelisms often appear together.<sup>79</sup> Here, he carries his argument to an unnecessary extreme. While Greenstein’s theories are helpful (see “staircase parallelism” below), a narrow definition that gives not only priority but absolute authority to grammar over semantics or any other manner of correspondence does not recognize the richness and varieties of biblical poetics. It limits the extent of poetry. To restate my prior objections to Kugel: different poets over time have distinct priorities, diverse training, and work

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76. Edward L. Greenstein, “Two Variations of Grammatical Parallelism in Canaanite Poetry and Their Psycholinguistic Background,” *JANES* 6 (1974): 87–105. I point out that a contemporary author becomes effective and great by manipulating these psycholinguistic expectations.

77. Greenstein’s cited studies are significant, but I submit that obvious differences in circumstance make assuming a window into the ancient mind based on surveys of twentieth-century American schoolchildren problematic. Granted, Greenstein claims these psychological effects are common across different cultures worldwide (“Variations,” 88). Nevertheless, this research best demonstrates contemporary views, even if those views are common.

78. Edward L. Greenstein, “How Does Parallelism Mean,” in *A Sense of Text: The Art of Language in the Study of Biblical Literature* (Philadelphia: Dropsie College, 1982), 41–70. The thought-provoking title refers to the perceived fact that linguistic textual analysis allows insight into the humans who produced the text and how they used language; see also idem, “An Introduction to a Generative Phonology of Biblical Hebrew,” in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Walter R. Bodine (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 29–40.

79. Greenstein, “How Does,” 64.

in disparate genres.<sup>80</sup> Some of the psalmists that Greenstein cites write only grammatically parallel lines. However, other techniques are also poetic.

Instead of focusing only on the relationship between cola of biblical poetry, Michael O'Connor strives first to define the nature of a "line" (colon according to my terminology) in grammatical terms.<sup>81</sup> A line contains combinations of units, constituents, and clauses: 2–5 units (individual verbs and nouns, with their dependent particles), 1–4 constituents (each verb and nominal phrase, along with dependent particles), and 0–3 clauses (either verbal or verbless [called  $\emptyset$  predicators]).<sup>82</sup>

By emphasizing an individual colon, O'Connor discusses poetry in general more than parallelism specifically. He does see syntactic *matching*, "the phenomenon most widely referred to as parallelism," in lines with identical syntactic (constituent) structures.<sup>83</sup> This force operates at different *tropes*, including the word level (repetition, constructs), line level (parallelism, *gapping* [an element in one line is missing in its match]), and supra-linear level (for example, quotations).<sup>84</sup> O'Connor's translation of Psalm 106:35b-36a highlights the two constituents in each line and their syntactic matchings:

They-learned their-customs.

They-worshipped their-idols.<sup>85</sup>

וַיִּלְמְדוּ מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם

וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ אֶת-עֲצָבֵיהֶם

Most matching line-groups are independent clauses, and word order often varies. Further, matching line-groups most often appear in sets of two, usually with no more than two or three constituents. Yet not all parallel lines are matching lines. While Greenstein would discount lines that lack this syntactic correspondence, O'Connor makes no such claim and instead gives scholars one specific tool to sharpen the understanding of poetry.

The approach of defining and independently analyzing as a line what my study defines as a colon has major drawbacks: O'Connor loses both the

80. On the long evolution of Hebrew poetry, see Eric D. Reymond, *Innovations in Hebrew Poetry: Parallelism and the Poems of Sirach*, SBL Studies in Biblical Literature 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2004); and idem, *New Idioms within Old: Poetry and Parallelism in the Non-Masoretic Poems of 11Q5 (=11QP<sup>a</sup>)*, SBL Early Judaism and Its Literature 31 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011).

81. Michael O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980; reprinted with Afterword, 1997).

82. O'Connor, *Hebrew*, 67–87.

83. O'Connor, *Hebrew*, 119.

84. O'Connor, *Hebrew*, 149.

85. O'Connor, *Hebrew*, 120.

importance of B's completion of A and the poetic satisfaction the reader experiences in closing a thought.

### 3. *Lexical Study*

After looking at the grammatical structure of the words in a sentence, the words themselves now deserve consideration.<sup>86</sup> This analysis can have two parts: the words themselves (lexical aspect) and what they mean (semantic aspect). Appropriately, Berlin calls this category the Lexical-Semantic aspect, where lexical parallelism occurs at the word level and semantic at the line level.<sup>87</sup> While I recognize the difference between the two, I include both under the heading of "lexical" because (1) vocabulary cannot easily be separated from meaning, and (2) individual words necessarily affect the meaning of an entire line.

Number sequences clearly show lexical parallelism:

For the <b>three</b> transgressions of Damascus,	עַל-שְׁלֹשָׁה פְּשָׁעַי דָּמָשֶׁק
And for <b>four</b> I will not reverse it.	וְעַל-אַרְבָּעָה לֹא אֶשְׁיבָנּוּ
	Amos 1:3

Cardinal numbers do not generally have synonyms, so the poet heightens the number in B using the formula  $X || X + 1$ .<sup>88</sup> Like the other categories of word-pairs discussed in this section, this phenomenon is common to Hebrew, Ugaritic, and Akkadian poetry.

Study of lexical parallelism ignited with the discovery of Ugaritic texts in the 1920s. By the 1930s, Harold L. Ginsberg discovered that Ugaritic and

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86. Lexical study of Biblical Hebrew entered its modern phase when James Barr argued for the importance of a strong consideration of semantics in *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961); he removes theology from semantics and dismisses the common fallacy that the Bible's language gives insight into the thoughts and values of ancient Israelites. For further background, see the foundational collection of essays *Studies on Semitic Lexicography*, ed. Pelio Fronzaroli, *Quaderni di Semitistica* 2 (Florence: Istituto di Linguistica e di Lingue Orientali, Università di Firenze, 1973).

87. Berlin, *Dynamics*, 64–102.

88. See Wolfgang M. W. Roth, "The Numerical Sequence  $x/x+1$  in the OT," *VT* 12 (1962): 301–11; also Menachem Haran, "The Graded Numerical Sequence and the Phenomenon of 'Automatism' in Biblical Poetry," in *Congress Volume, Uppsala, 1971*, ed. G. W. Anderson et al., *VTSup* 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1972): 238–67. Concerning this verse, see Meir Weiss, "The Pattern of Numerical Sequence in Amos 1–2: A Re-Examination," *JBL* 86 (1967): 416–23; and idem, "On Three . . . and on Four" (Hebrew), in *Scriptures in Their Own Light: Collected Essays* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1987), 13–26.

Hebrew poetry share fixed expressions that he called “standing pairs.”<sup>89</sup> For example, he cites the pairing of gold || silver:

The wings of a dove are covered in **silver**,  
Its pinions with fine **gold**.

כַּנְפֵי יוֹנָה נִחְפָּה בַּכֶּסֶף  
וְאַבְרוּתֶיהָ בְּיָרְקֶרֶק חָרוֹץ  
Ps. 68:14

Ginsberg concluded, “Certain fixed pairs of synonyms that recur repeatedly, as a rule in the same order . . . belonged to the regular stock-in-trade of the Canaanite poets.”<sup>90</sup> Umberto (Moshe David) Cassuto refined the theory, proposing that a “fixed bond” had formed between certain synonyms, where the presence of one in the first colon inevitably leads to the presence in the second colon of its pair.<sup>91</sup> He later published a list of about forty “correlated synonyms.”<sup>92</sup> Mitchell Dahood continued this research in his Anchor Bible commentaries on the Psalms.<sup>93</sup>

Perry B. Yoder argues that word-pairs occur whenever two words of the same grammatical class appear more than once in two parallel cola, noting that recurrence rather than semantics determines pairs.<sup>94</sup> Following this logic, however, perhaps the word-pairs that have survived in the extant corpus of ancient Near Eastern texts are a matter of happenstance. I submit that a word-pair might exist in Gen. 9:13:

אֶת־קִשְׁתִּי נֹתַתִּי בְעָנָן  
וְהָיְתָה לְאוֹת בְּרִית בֵּינִי וּבֵין הָאָרֶץ

I am setting my bow in a **cloud**,  
And it will be a covenantal sign between me and the **earth**.

עָנָן and אָרֶץ do not elsewhere in the Bible appear as a word-pair. However, the modern reader who considers the words’ meaning and relationship might identify them as such. I call these *conjectural* word-pairs, admitting that

89. Harold L. Ginsberg and Benjamin Maisler, “Semitized Hurrians in Syria and Palestine,” *JPOS* 14 (1934): 243–67; and Ginsberg, “The Victory of the Land-God over the Sea God,” *JPOS* 15 (1935): 327–33.

90. Harold L. Ginsberg, “The Rebellion and Death of Ba’lu,” *Orientalia* 5 (1936): 172.

91. Umberto (Moshe David) Cassuto, “Biblical Literature and Ugaritic Literature” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 14 (1943): 1.

92. Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath*, 28–29.

93. Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III: 101–150*, AB 17A (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970).

94. Perry B. Yoder, “A-B Pairs and Oral Composition in Hebrew Poetry,” *VT* 21 (1971): 472–73.



evidence suggests but does not require such a label. Indeed, each word-pair could fit on a continuum:



Following Yoder's criterion, a word-pair is "established" if it appears more than once in parallel cola.<sup>95</sup> Pairs with many attestations are simply "more established" than pairs with few attestations.

Milman Parry, based on his study of Homer, proposes that fixed units in a poem betray the oral nature of a poem's composition. He hypothesized that a stock word-pair library aided oral poets required to compose rapidly.<sup>96</sup> Yoder similarly concludes, "Those poems which indicate a high reliance by the poet on A-B pairs were orally composed. Those poems which show little reliance on these oral compositional units were composed in writing."<sup>97</sup> This research resulted in the consensus that Hebrew poets (and their Ugaritic counterparts) had at their disposal a written or oral poetic dictionary<sup>98</sup> of approximately one thousand stock word-pairs.<sup>99</sup> Poets of successive generations composed this compendium.

Recent scholars have challenged this theory of orality, noting that word-pairs appear in both prose and poetry that is unlikely to have an oral origin, such as acrostics.<sup>100</sup> Berlin follows but surpasses others in suggesting that word-pairs originate in word association operating on the psycholinguistic level.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, O'Connor states, "The psychotherapeutic exercise of free

95. Ideally, an "established" word-pair would appear dozens of times in texts of different genres and from different periods. However, the biblical corpus is limited and does not often allow such a plethora of attestations. Two examples will have to suffice to demonstrate to the modern reader that a word-pair is established, given that Biblical Hebrew is a linguistic fragment with a relatively small extant lexicon.

96. Milman Parry, *L'Épithète Traditionnelle dans Homère: Essai sur un problème de style homérique* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1928), 5–10.

97. Yoder, "A-B Pairs," 489.

98. First coined by Moshe Held, "More Parallel Word Pairs in the Bible and in the Ugaritic Documents" (Hebrew with English summary), *Lesbonenu* 18–19 (1952–1954): 144–60.

99. See collected word-pairs in Loren R. Fisher and Stan Rummel, eds., *Ras Shamra Parallels: The Texts from Ugarit and the Hebrew Bible*, 3 vols., AnOr 49–51 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1972–81).

100. Kugel, *Idea*, 30; Berlin, *Dynamics*, 66.

101. See also William R. Watters, who attributes word-pairs to "borrowing, coincidence, or idiom" in *Formula Criticism and the Poetry of the Old Testament*, BZAW 138 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976), 73. Berlin cites as inspiration Herbert H. Clarke, "Word Association and Linguistic Theory," in *New Horizons in Linguistics*, ed. John Lyons (Baltimore: Penguin,

association reveals, if it is not obvious, that any single word in a language can be paired with any other” by a competent speaker.<sup>102</sup>

Geller searches for common denominators, or “rhetorical relationships” producing literary effects, between paradigms of words. For example, יַיִן (wine) and דֶּם-עֵנָבִים (blood of grapes) refer to the same substance and are a semantic word-pair. Other words such as חֵלֶב (milk) and מַיִם (water) may join their alcoholic counterparts in belonging to the greater paradigm of potables. מַיִם could belong in a category with יָם (sea), and יַיִן and יָם could be elements in a paradigm of liquids. However, “wine” and “sea” are not together in the paradigm of potables. Most words are constituents of multiple paradigms. Geller sees word-pairs as enumerative and expressing merism, among other purposes.<sup>103</sup>

Watson fits word-pairs into categories such as synonymous (sea || river), antonymic (right || left), correlative (blind || lame), augmented (the desert || the holy desert), epithetic (David || the Son of Jesse), figurative (oil || honey), identical/repetitive (to contend || to contend), numerical (three || four), and so on.<sup>104</sup> Watson’s categories are thorough and productive, and I use them as the basic method for describing word-pairs.

Beyond the paradigmatic or paraphrastic class, Berlin also observes syntagmatic word-pairs, where her Idiom Completion Rule predicts that the first half of a compound-word idiom in A will elicit a connected thought in B. Sometimes the connection is obvious, such as with a conjunctive *wāw* or the preposition וְ, while elsewhere the reader must puzzle out the connection.<sup>105</sup> In paradigmatic pairs, by contrast, a word with an obvious “opposite” (good || bad) will appear alongside that antonym a majority of the time (her Minimal Contrast Rule).<sup>106</sup> Berlin continues that semantic parallelism disambiguates or adds ambiguity, meaning that B can either resolve uncertainty in A or add to it. This phenomenon also allows for metaphor because the reader expects similarity and strives to understand how A and B relate.<sup>107</sup>

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1970), 271–86; and James Deese, *The Structure and Association of Language and Thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1965).

102. O’Connor, *Hebrew*, 96.

103. Geller, *Parallelism*, 33–35.

104. Watson, *Classical*, 128–42.

105. Berlin, *Dynamics*, 92–93.

106. Berlin, *Dynamics*, 75–79.

107. Berlin, *Dynamics*, 99–101; see the section “Rhetorical Devices: Metaphor and Simile” below. I consider this semantic study more properly part of literary parallelism. Berlin does indeed say, “What I have called disambiguation is [a] kind of clarification, redefinition, unfolding of development. I think this is what Kugel often means by his ‘A, what’s more, B’” (Berlin, *Dynamics*, 98).

While Kugel would see intensification between the words ( $A < B$ ), Geller says the words are often simply synonymous. Each theory is correct depending on the verse under consideration. One rule, though, is generally true: the first element in a word-pair is usually shorter and lexically more common than its counterpart.<sup>108</sup>

### Special Types of Lexical Parallelism

Some lexically parallel lines with exact word repetition are examples of *staircase parallelism*, which exists in bicola but more commonly in tricola.<sup>109</sup> In such lines, a proper noun or a vocative interrupts a sentence that starts in A, leading to the sentence restarting in B. In tricola, C is usually syntactically parallel to B:<sup>110</sup>

**Surely your enemies, O YHWH,**  
**Surely your enemies** perish;  
 All evildoers shall scatter.

כִּי הִנֵּה אֵיבֶיךָ יְהוָה  
 כִּי־הִנֵּה אֵיבֶיךָ יֹאבְדוּ  
 יתְפָרְדוּ כָּל־פְּעֻלֵי אֲוֹן  
 Ps. 92:10

This formation produces a climax, or it either opens or closes a speech or section.<sup>111</sup>

Cyrus Gordon coined *Janus parallelism* (or “polysemous parallelism”) to refer to instances where the meaning of a line “hinges on the use of a single word with two entirely different meanings: one meaning paralleling what precedes, and the other meaning what follows.”<sup>112</sup>

הַנְּצַנִּים נִרְאוּ בְּאֶרֶץ  
 עֵת הַזְּמִיר הִגִּיעַ  
 וְקוֹל הַתּוֹר נִשְׁמַע בְּאֶרְצֵנוּ

The flowers have appeared on the land,  
 The time of the *zāmîr* has arrived,  
 And the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.

Song 2:12

108. See Robert G. Boling, who argues that B-words often vary against consistent A-words: “Synonymous’ Parallelism in the Psalms,” *JSS* 5 (1960): 221–25.

109. See Greenstein, “Two Variations,” 96–105; also Chaim Cohen, “Studies in Ancient Israelite Poetry I: An Unrecognized Case of Three-Line Staircase Parallelism in the Song of the Sea,” *JANES* 7 (1975): 13–17.

110. Greenstein, “Two Variations,” 97.

111. Greenstein, “Two Variations,” 97; Watson, *Classical*, 152.

*Zāmîr* means both “pruning” and “song,” giving this verse a double entendre depending on whether a reader looks at it together with A or C.

A word or phrase that appears both at A’s end and B’s beginning is a *pivot*.<sup>113</sup> The phenomenon exists in two categories. First, a word can be written twice:

He gave their land **as a heritage**,  
**As a heritage** to his people Israel.

וַנִּתֵּן אֶרְצָם נַחֲלָה  
 נַחֲלָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַמּוֹ  
 Ps. 135:12

Or, a word or phrase might appear only once at the end of A but still govern the beginning of B:

I will praise you among the people, **my**  
**Lord**,  
 I will sing praises to you among the  
 nations.

אֲדַבֵּר בְּעַמִּים אֲדַבֵּר  
 114 בְּלִי אֲמִים  
 Ps. 57:10

B implies the vocative as well, so אֲדַבֵּר “pivots” to serve both cola.

112. Cyrus Gordon, “New Directions,” *BASP* 15 (1978): 59–66; see further Watson, *Classical*, 159. See more examples by his student Gary Rendsburg in “Janus Parallelism in Gen. 49:26,” *JBL* 99 (1980): 291–92; and idem, “Notes on Genesis XV,” *VT* 42 (1992): 266–72. For a thorough study of the phenomenon, including a history of scholarship and lists of applicable verses, see Scott B. Noegel, *Janus Parallelism in the Book of Job*, JSOTS 223 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996). The example of Song 2:12 is Gordon’s, with further study on that particular verse done by Bertil Albrektson, “Singing or Pruning?” *Bible Translator* 47 (1996): 109–114. Shalom M. Paul calls the phenomenon “polysensuous polyvalency,” where a word “refers to one thing while alluding to yet another within the same single context” (“Polysensuous Polyvalency in Poetic Parallelism,” in *Sha’arei Talmon: Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon*, ed. Michael Fishbane, Emanuel Tov, and Weston W. Fields [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992], 147).

113. Håkan Möler first describes the phenomenon in “Strophenbau der Psalmen,” *ZAW* 50 (1932): 240–56. Mitchell Dahood named the phenomenon “double-duty modifier” in “A New Metrical Pattern in Biblical Poetry,” *CBQ* 29 (1967): 574–79. He lists examples in *Psalms III*, 439–44. Watson coined *pivot pattern*: “Verse Pattern in Ugaritic, Akkadian and Hebrew Poetry,” *UF* 7 (1975): 489. See also Daniel Sivan and Shamir Yona, “Pivot Words or Expressions in Biblical Hebrew and in Ugaritic Poetry,” *VT* 48 (1998): 399–407; and Nathan Klaus, *Pivot Patterns in the Former Prophets*, JSOTS 247 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999).

114. Read instead as בְּלִי אֲמִים.

4. *Phonological Study*

*Assonance* and *alliteration* are common poetic phenomena. Berlin studies “sound pairs,” which she defines as “the repetition in parallel words or lines of the same or similar consonants in any order within close proximity.”<sup>115</sup> She excludes vocalic sound pairs for two reasons: scholars remain unsure about exact ancient pronunciation, and Hebrew is often considered a “consonantal language” because the consonantal roots carry the words’ meaning.<sup>116</sup> She notes that a subsection of word-pairs is also phonologically parallel, for example: נִבְקְעוּ || נִפְתְּחוּ = *nibqe‘û* || *neptāhû* = “they burst apart” || “they broke open” in Gen. 7:11b. Sound pairs also occur outside of word-pairs:

<p><i>yāšîhû bî yōšēbē šā‘ar</i> <i>ûnēgînôt šôtē šekār</i></p>	<p>יִשְׁחֹוּ בִי יְשֵׁבֵי שָׂעַר וְנִגְיִנוֹת שׁוֹתֵי שֶׁקֶר</p> <p>Ps. 69:13</p>
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Two sound pairs often appear together in the forms *aabb*, *abab*, and *abba*.<sup>117</sup> Alliteration also expands to letters of the same class, such as the sibilants *s*, *z*, and *š*.<sup>118</sup>

The Masoretic vowel system preserves the pronunciation of Hebrew as the Masoretes heard and received it, but the language and especially its vowels had changed between the biblical and Masoretic periods.<sup>119</sup> However, the Masoretes were studied linguists, both preservers and creators.<sup>120</sup> In an examination of Masoretic vocalizations, James Barr states, “The Massoretes began with a text lacking vowel points and proceeded to point it and accent it; but this does not mean that they invented the vocalization. What they invented was a series of increasingly subtle systems for the marking of the vocalization which was already in use.”<sup>121</sup> Citing evidence from Yemenite Jewry and

115. Berlin, *Dynamics*, 104.

116. See similarly William L. Holladay, “Form and Word-Play in David’s Lament over Saul and Jonathan,” *VT* 20 (1970): 153–89.

117. Berlin, *Dynamics*, 112–21.

118. I use this term with the understanding that alliterative letters do not only appear at a word’s beginning.

119. On the history of the Tiberian vocalization system, see Geoffrey Kahn, *A Short Introduction to the Tiberian Masoretic Bible and its Reading Tradition*, Gorgias Handbooks 25 (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2012), 51–70; also Joshua Blau, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 2nd amended ed., PLO 12 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993), 30–37.

120. See John C. L. Gibson, “The Massoretes as Linguists,” in *Language and Meaning: Studies in Hebrew Language and Biblical Exegesis*, ed. James Barr, *OtSt* 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 165–79.

121. James Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament*, reprint with additions and corrections (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 196.

Babylonian pointing systems, Barr argues in favor of the Masoretes preserving genuine ancient traditions.<sup>122</sup> I submit that while the Masoretic vowels are no guarantee of original pronunciation, they can still be useful in studying how the texts might have sounded to their original audiences.<sup>123</sup> Similarly, we can assume that two *Qal* participles with strong roots would have likely sounded similar to each other. We may not know the exact quality of a vowel, but if we know its morphological form, we can often have a good idea about the “relative vocalization” of similar words.<sup>124</sup>

Assonance refers to a series of like vowel sounds, usually dominant or accented, such as /a/ in this example:<sup>125</sup>

<p><i>maddûa</i> ‘<i>yāraš malkām</i> ‘<i>et-gad</i>  <i>wě</i> ‘<i>ammô bê</i> ‘<i>ārāyw yāšāb</i></p>	<p>מדוע יִרַשׁ מַלְכָּם אֶת־גַּד  וְעַמּוֹ בְּעָרְיוֹ יֵשֵׁב  Jer. 49:1b</p>
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Assonance is also present when different vowels of the same *a*-, *i*-, or *u*-class recur in a line, or when two cola contain the same sequence of vowels.

Such sound pairs may also include *end-rhymes*, where the last syllables of words are similar or identical inside of or across multiple cola.<sup>126</sup> Saadia Gaon, a tenth-century CE rabbi, proposes the following example of rhyme:<sup>127</sup>

<p><i>lō</i> ‘<i>tēsullé bēketem</i> ‘<i>ôpîr</i>  <i>běšōham yāqār wēsappîr</i></p>	<p>לֹא־תִסְלֶה בְּכֶתֶם אוֹפִיר  בְּשֹׁהֶם יִקָּר וְסַפִּיר  Job 28:16</p>
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Kugel warns biblical readers,

If, then, one wishes to discourse on “Rhyme in the Bible,” it will be important first and foremost to recognize the problem of convention built into the subject—starting with the conventionality both

122. Barr, *Comparative*, 217–22.

123. See J. J. Glück, “Assonance in Ancient Hebrew Poetry: Sound Patterns as a Literary Device,” in *De Fructu Oris Sui (Essays in Honour of Adrianus van Selms)*, ed. I. H. Eybers et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 69–84.

124. Thanks to Bronson Brown-deVost at Brandeis University for reminding me of this point.

125. The example is from Watson, *Classical*, 223.

126. See James L. Kugel, “On the Bible and Literary Criticism,” *Prooftexts* 1 (1981), 219–22.

127. Saadia Gaon also cites Job 21:4 and Isa. 49:1; see Kugel, *Prooftexts*, 222.

of our own rules of rhyme, and of the significance we attach to rhymes in our tradition. One would then want to search the Bible to see if there is anything at all analogous, and if so, how the conventions agree and how they differ. This is obviously a difficult and a tentative affair—but I daresay nothing less than this will do. For if we just say “*That* rhyme is obvious!” or “Anyone can see that!” we risk being hopelessly off the mark.<sup>128</sup>

This caution is appropriate, but I submit that Kugel overstates his case; the scholars I reference in this section do not simply say that a rhyme is obvious and leave the matter at that.

Berlin responded to Kugel’s arguments (which she calls “disturbing”), saying, “Modern biblical scholarship, while not an exact science, is based on the principles of induction and deduction.”<sup>129</sup> For the purposes of this study, I employ what I believe is a reasonable definition of end-rhyme that will describe concluding words or phrases that end with the same consonant-vowel-consonant or vowel-consonant sequence.

These examples show phonological similarities across multiple cola, but poets also employ such techniques of *sound play* between words inside a single colon. In the famous example תָּהוּ וָבְהוּ *tōhû wābōhû* (“formless and void”) in Gen. 1:2,<sup>130</sup> perhaps “chaos shmaos” captures the Hebrew’s meaning even better.<sup>131</sup> Or, consider תַּאֲנִיָּה וְאֲנִיָּה *ta’āniyyā wa’āniyyā* (Lam. 2:5), which Berlin translates as “mourning and moaning.”<sup>132</sup> In one final example of intracolonic sound play with alliteration, the sound /š/ dominates:

*šûr haššûrîm ’āšer lišlômô*

 שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לְשִׁלְמוֹהַ  
 Song 1:1

128. Kugel, *Prooftexts*, 222 (emphasis original).

129. Adele Berlin, “On the Bible as Literature,” *Prooftexts 2* (1982): 223–27.

130. This is not parallelism, but I mention it here as it relates to phonological study. On this example, see Luis Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, Subsidia Biblica 11 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1988), 21.

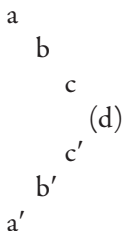
131. Though I first heard this translation from Melvin Jules Bukiet in 2005, I can trace it in print back to the late Yochanan Muffs of the Jewish Theological Seminary; see Neil Gillman, *Doing Jewish Theology: God, Torah & Israel in Modern Judaism* (Woodstock: Jewish Lights, 2008), 57.

132. Adele Berlin, *Lamentations*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 3.

## STRUCTURAL DEVICES

5. *Chiasmus*

Reverend John Jebb pioneered the study of biblical chiasmus.<sup>133</sup> Named for the Greek letter *chi* (X), chiasmus is a series that expresses itself once and then again in reverse order, sometimes with an unrepeat middle element:



Like word-pairs, chiasmus is common in both Akkadian and Ugaritic, as well as in Greek and Latin classics—even in the Book of Mormon.<sup>134</sup>

Suggestions for the purpose of chiasmus range from the mnemonic to the stylistic, or perhaps to “relieve the monotony of persistent parallelism.”<sup>135</sup> It might have drawn special attention to the middle elements of the text, requiring careful authorial or editorial planning. Newer studies see it as a rhetorical device that calls attention not to the middle member but to the fact that the text as a whole is well constructed.<sup>136</sup>

Chiasmus operates at two levels: first in poetry at the line level, contributing to parallelism:

A **He who spills** the blood of **man**,

B **By man** his blood **will be spilt**.

שִׁפְךָ דָּם הָאָדָם A  
 בְּאָדָם דָּמוֹ יִשְׁפָּךְ B  
 Gen. 9:6a

133. John Jebb, *Sacred Literature, Comprising a Review of the Principles of Composition Laid Down by the Late Robert Lowth* (London: Cadell & Davies, 1820), 53–74.

134. In *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*, ed. John W. Welch (Hildesheim: Gersenberg, 1981), see Robert F. Smith, “Chiasm in Sumero-Akkadian,” 17–35; and John W. Welch, “Chiasmus in Ugaritic,” 36–49. On general Hebrew chiasmus, see Frances I. Andersen, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), 119–40. On Joseph Smith’s chiasmus, see James W. Welch, “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 10 (1969): 69–84.

135. Charles H. Talbert, “Artistry and Theology: An Analysis of the Architecture of John 1:19–5:47,” *CBQ* 32 (1970): 341–66; quoted from Watson, *Classical*, 205.

136. Elie Assis, “Chiasmus in Biblical Narrative: Rhetoric of Characterization,” *Prooftexts* 22 (2002): 286–92.



Each word in colon A appears in reverse order in colon B (mirror chiasmus):

שִׁפְךָ  
 םָ  
 הָאָדָם  
 בָּאָדָם  
 דָּמוֹ  
 יִשְׁפֹךְ

The forms are different: the verbs form the pattern *Qal* (active) participle || *Nip'al* (passive) *yqtl*, םָ appears with a suffix in B, and B adds a preposition to םָ. Chiasmus does not require the words to be identical; rather, it thrives on variation. The device here cannot safely separate from the line's parallelism, and chiasmus thus serves as further evidence of a line's poetic nature.<sup>137</sup>

Entire lines can reverse within a stanza with an idea, theme, or word as the common denominator:

They have forsaken me, the fountain of living <b>waters,</b> And hewn out <u>cisterns</u> for themselves; Cracked <u>cisterns</u> , That cannot hold the <b>waters</b> .	אֲתִי עָזְבוּ מְקוֹר מַיִם חַיִּים לְהַצִּיב לָהֶם בְּאֵרוֹת בְּאֵרֹת נִשְׁבְּרִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִכְלוּ הַמַּיִם Jer. 2:13b
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I label these phenomena *proximate chiasmus*, referring to occurrences of chiasmus at the line (monocolon, bicolon, tricolon, and so on) or stanza level.<sup>138</sup>

In proximate chiasmus, the chiastic elements may be semantically related (that is, in content) and/or grammatically related (parts of speech). Watson defines several forms of such chiasmus: In *mirror chiasmus*, B perfectly repeats A's lexicon in reverse (see Gen. 9:6a above). In *complete chiasmus*, all A elements reverse in B, though the vocabulary may differ:

<b>Return will</b> his mischief <u>on his head</u> , <u>And on his skull</u> his violence <b>will</b> <b>descend</b> . <sup>139</sup>	יָשׁוּב עֲמְלוֹ בְּרֹאשׁוֹ וְעַל קַדְקֵדּוֹ תִּמְסוּ יָרֵד Ps. 7:17
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137. So Kugel, *Idea*, 20; see also J. P. Fokkerman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis*, SSN 17 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975), 35.

138. Watson speaks about the difference between the types of chiasmus, calling this form “internal chiasm” (Watson, *Techniques*, 104); see also idem, “Chiastic Patterns in Biblical Hebrew Poetry,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*, ed. John W. Welch (Hildesheim: Gersenberg, 1981), 126–35.

139. The clunky translations highlight the chiasmus at the expense of English grammar.

*Split-member* refers to instances where the order of only one element is reversed, while other elements retain their original order:

**The kindnesses** of YHWH have not ceased,      חֲסֵדֵי יְהוָה כִּי לֹא־תִמְנוּ  
Have not ended **the mercies** [that are] his.      כִּי לֹא־כָלוּ רַחֲמָיו  
Lam. 3:22

The c/c' elements are chiasmic, but a/a' and b/b' appear in the same order; the line is thus abc || c'a'b'. Finally, *partial chiasmus* occurs when A elements are excluded from the chiasmus in B:

**Will find** your hand all your enemies,      תִּמְצָא יָדְךָ לְכָל־אֹיְבֶיךָ  
Your right hand **will find** your haters.      יְמִינְךָ תִּמְצָא שׂוֹנְאֶיךָ  
Psalm 21:9

The c/c' elements sit outside the chiasmus (abc || b'a'c'), as a/a' and b/b' skip over c/c'.<sup>140</sup>

Yehuda T. Radday writes that many prose biblical narratives also contain chiasmic arrangements, indicating that ancient writers considered the style “*de rigueur*.”<sup>141</sup> I reproduce his chiasmic arrangement of Jonah 1 to illustrate his point:<sup>142</sup>

- A Narrative; the sailors' fright (1:4-5)
- B The sailors' prayer to their gods (1:5)
- C Narrative (1:5-6)
- D The captain's speech (1:6)
- E The sailors' speech (1:7)
- F Narrative (1:7-8)
- G Jonah's confession (1:9)
- F' Narrative; the sailors' great fright (1:10)
- E' The sailors' speech (1:10-11)
- D' Jonah's speech (1:12)
- C' Narrative (1:13)
- B' The sailors' prayer to the Lord (1:14)
- A' Narrative; the sailors' great fright of the Lord (1:15-16)

140. Watson cites these three examples in his explanations (Watson, *Classical*, 203–04).

141. Yehuda T. Radday, “Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*, ed. John W. Welch (Hildesheim: Gersenberg, 1981), 51.

142. Radday, “Chiasmus,” 60 (formatting original).

I call this *general chiasmus*, which occurs across sections, chapters, or even whole books.

Long texts muddle the study of chiasmus. Kugel comments that efforts to bring out chiastic structures “always end in diagrams of striking symmetry,” but that they impart information only about the ingenuity of the critic and not the original author.<sup>143</sup> When such observers see chiasmus across whole chapters or books, David P. Wright argues the structures are “artifacts of modern analysis, not the product of an ancient authorial or editorial intent.” He claims that modern scholars are guilty of various chiastic crimes, such as inconsistency of criteria (A and A' are structurally chiastic, but B and B' are thematically so), imbalance (supposing A and A' are each twenty verses long, while B is three and B' is only one), and harmonization that ignores non-chiastic features.<sup>144</sup> Marc Zvi Brettler points out that past scholars have ignored chiastic interference, where one of the chiastic elements of A and A' also appear in B or C. Brettler uses the term “chiasmaniacs” to describe individuals who, in his opinion, too freely label a text chiastic.<sup>145</sup>

Kugel cautions that studying the Bible “as literature” often means imposing Greco-Roman and modern literary attributes *onto* the text, believing that “one can learn about the Bible’s structure and meaning by comparing it to other human texts and acts.”<sup>146</sup> While textual comparison is a valid and important tool of the historical critic, such an imposition of modern (or non-ancient Near Eastern) standards is especially easy when scholars hunt for chiasmus. I therefore use caution in labeling chiasmus, recognizing that the structure may be as much the imaginative invention of the modern reader as a device of the ancient writer.

General chiasmus also occurs in poetry, such as the partial chiasmus in Isa. 1:21-26:

21 אֵיכָה הִיָּתָה לְזוֹנָה קְרִיָּה נְאֻמָּנָה מְלֹאֲתֵי מִשְׁפָּט צָדֵק יִלְוֶינָה בָּהּ וְעֵתָהּ  
מְרַצְחִים 22 כִּסְפָּה הִיָּה לְסִיגִים סְבֻאָה מֵהוּל בְּמִים 23 שְׂרִיָּה סוֹרְרִים וְחֻבְרֵי

143. Kugel, *Prooftexts*, 224–25.

144. David P. Wright, “The Fallacies of Chiasmus: A Critique of Structures Proposed for the Covenant Collection (Exodus 20:23—23:19),” *ZABR* 10 (2004), 143–45; he responds to scholars who argue that the Covenant Collection is chiastic. Wright has since tempered his stance against seeing chiasmus as a real biblical phenomenon; see “Chiasmus in the Covenant Code Reconsidered: The Final Apodictic Laws,” in *“Gerechtigkeit und Recht zu üben” (Gen 18, 19): Studien zur altorientalischen und biblischen Rechtsgeschichte, zur Religionsgeschichte Israels und zur Religionssoziologie—Festschrift für Eckart Otto zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Reinhard Achenbach and Martin Arneht, *BZAR* 13 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 171–81.

145. Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Book of Judges*, Old Testament Readings (New York: Routledge, 2002), 11–12.

146. Kugel, *Prooftexts*, 218.

גַּנְבִים כָּלוּ אֶהָב שָׁחַד וְרֹדֵף שְׁלֹמֹנִים יְתוֹם לֹא יִשְׁפֹטוּ וְרֵיב אֶלְמָנָה לֹא־יִבּוֹא  
 אֶלֶיהֶם 24 לֵכֵן נָאִם הָאֱדוֹן יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת אֲבִיר יִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא אֲנַחֵם מִצָּרֵי  
 וְאֲנַקְמָה מֵאוֹיְבָי 25 וְאֲשִׁיבָה יָדַי עֲלֵיךָ וְאֶצְרֹף כֶּבֶד סִינְיִךָ וְאֶסִּירָה כָּל־בְּדִילֶיךָ  
 26 וְאֲשִׁיבָה שְׁפֹטֶיךָ כְּבִרְאשֹׁנָה וְיַעֲצִיךָ כְּבִתְחִלָּה אַחֲרֵי־כֵן יִקְרָא לְךָ עִיר  
 הַצְּדִק קִרְיַת הַנְּאֻמָּה

21 Alas, she has become a harlot, that faithful city; full of justice, righteousness dwelled within her—but now, murderers! 22 Your silver has turned to dross, your wine is cut with water. 23 Your princes are rebels, friends of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and pursues rewards. They do not judge (for) the orphan; the widow’s case does not come before them. 24 Therefore says the sovereign, YHWH of hosts, the mighty one of Israel, “Ah, I will become satisfied on my adversaries and be avenged on my enemies! 25 I will turn my hand against you, and smelt away your dross as with lye; I will remove all of your alloy. 26 I will restore your judges as in the beginning, and your counselors as from the first. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.”

The chiasitic structure is thus:

- A City of faith and righteousness goes astray (1:21)
- B Precious items turn to dross (1:22)
- C The rulers are corrupt (1:23)
- D God will avenge himself (1:24)
- B' Dross is removed from precious items (1:25)
- A' City of faith and righteousness is restored (1:26).

I confidently label this example chiasitic because the reused vocabulary and the specificity of the chiasitic elements outweigh Kugel’s advised caution. In other words, the criterion of precious items becoming and losing dross is so narrow (as opposed to “narrative” in Jonah 1:5-6 and 13 [C and C'] in Radday’s example) that the chiasmus is strong and not likely accidental.

To summarize, with examples both in Jonah 1 (prose) and Isaiah 1 (poetry) among many others, general chiasmus cannot serve as a feature that distinguishes poetic from prosaic texts.<sup>147</sup> Instead, only proximate chiasmus is indicative of style. Watson’s four categories of line-level chiasmus are

147. Not all scholars agree that Jonah is prose. For example, Duane L. Christensen argues, “Jonah belongs to the category of poetry as this term is normally used in the field of literature” (“Narrative Poetics and the Interpretation of the Book of Jonah,” in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, ed. Elaine R. Follis, JSOTS 40 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987], 29).

excellent and all-encompassing, and I therefore accept them.<sup>148</sup> The modern scholar must guard against overly broad connections, though, always cautious against imposing imagined structures onto texts.

### 6. *Inclusio Structure*

*Inclusio structure* describes when the same or similar word or words both begin and end a section of text.<sup>149</sup> It occurs in both poetry and prose and is therefore only a productive poetic feature in short, non-dialogic lines or stanzas. The correspondences can be in either form or meaning. As such, *inclusios*, also called inclusion or envelope, often help determine textual boundaries. The device may appear chiasmic, as if a stanza begins with A and ends with A'; it can also resemble a refrain. Yet *inclusio*, *chiasmus*, and refrains are three separate phenomena, with an important distinction being that *inclusio* only occurs once in a stanza or poem.<sup>150</sup>

Like *chiasmus*, *inclusios* can be either general or proximate. When *inclusio* structures begin and end large passages, I again call this *general inclusio* structure. Psalm 118, for example, begins and concludes with *הודו ליהוה כי טוב \ פי לעולם תסדו* "Give praise to YHWH, for he is good; / His love is eternal."<sup>151</sup>

In general *inclusio* structures, the repeated element can be as long as a sentence or as short as a word. Psalm 1, itself a short composition, demonstrates single-word general *inclusio*:

אֲשֶׁר־יִהְיֶה אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִלֵּךְ בְּעֵצַת רְשָׁעִים  
 . . .  
 וְדַרְךְ רְשָׁעִים תֵּאבֵד

Happy is the man who does not follow the advice of the **wicked**.

...

And the way of the **wicked** will perish.

Ps. 1:1a, 6b

148. As shown with Isa. 1:21-26, Watson's categories can also describe general *chiasmus*. However, *chiasmic* structures in texts longer than one stanza are less formally structured and more open to creative modern readings. Therefore, they do not always lend themselves to simple categories, and enumerating classifications is not particularly helpful.

149. See Martin Kessler, "Inclusio in the Hebrew Bible," *Semitics* 6 (1978): 44-49.

150. Watson, *Classical*, 283.

151. Psalms 106, 107, and 136 begin with this stock expression (see also Ezra 3:11, 1 Chron. 16:34, and 2 Chron. 7:3).

In Psalm 1, the words duplicate verbatim. However, general inclusio also applies when only the root repeats:

בְּיְהוָה חִסִּיתִי אֶל־אֲבוֹשָׁה לְעוֹלָם

כִּי־בָשׁוּ כִי־חָפְרוּ מִבְּקָשִׁי רָעָתִי

In you, YHWH, I take refuge; let me never **be shamed**.

...

For **shamed** and disgraced are those who sought my harm.

Ps. 71:1, 24b

These cola repeat  $\sqrt{\text{בוש}}$ , but the second replaces the cohortative in the first with a 3rd com. pl. perfect verb. In other words, the repetitions need not be exact.

Inclusio also operates at the colon-, line-, or stanza-level; I call this *proximate inclusio* structure. Dahood cites an excellent example:<sup>152</sup>

**Good** you have done for your servant,

O YHWH, according to your word,

**goodness.**

טוֹב עָשִׂיתָ עִם־עַבְדְּךָ

יְהוָה כְּדְבָרְךָ טוֹב

Ps. 119:65-66a

Similar words begin and end this line, and the principle applies also to words of the same root. Word-pairs also create inclusio:<sup>153</sup>

**O God**, do not be silent,

Do not be still and do not be quiet,

**O deity.**

אֱלֹהִים אֶל־דְּמִי־לֶךְ

אֶל־תַּחֲרֹשׁ וְאֶל־תִּשְׁקֹט אֱל

Ps. 83:2

General inclusio structure also occurs in prose, for example at the beginning and end of the tribal territorial assignments in Joshua:<sup>154</sup>

152. Dahood, *Psalms III*, 181; he reads the bicolon against the cantillation and MT verse division. Watson calls this subtype “strophic inclusio” (Watson, *Classical*, 285).

153. Dahood, *Psalms III*, 273; Watson also cites this example (*Classical*, 285).

154. Most recently, see the discussion in Elie Assis, “How Long Are You Slack to Go to Possess the Land?” (Jos. XVIII 3): Ideal and Reality in the Distribution Descriptions in Joshua XIII-XIX,” *VT* 53 (2003), 12–13.

14:1 וְאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר־נָחֲלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר נָחֲלוּ אוֹתָם אֶלְעָזָר  
הַכֹּהֵן וַיהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נּוּן וְרָאשֵׁי אָבוֹת הַמִּטּוֹת לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

19:51 אֵלֶּה הַנְּחִלֹת אֲשֶׁר נָחֲלוּ אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן וַיהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נּוּן וְרָאשֵׁי הָאָבוֹת  
לְמִטּוֹת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגֹרֶל בְּשִׁלֹה לְפָנַי יְהוָה פָּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיְכַלּוּ  
מִחֶלֶק אֶת־הָאָרֶץ

14:1 These are what the Israelites inherited in the land of Canaan, that which Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the patriarchs of the tribes distributed to the Israelites.

...

19:51 These are the inheritances that Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the patriarchs of the tribes of the Israelites distributed by lot in Shiloh before YHWH, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. So they finished dividing the land.

Some words and roots appear verbatim in each example, though the concluding verse adds additional details. These texts demonstrate how inclusio delineates the limits of a distinct section of text.

Proximate inclusio also appears in prose, almost always in dialogue.<sup>155</sup> In the story of David and Bathsheba, for example, David's army commander Joab imagines how David might react to news of an Israelite rout. Joab supposes David might say, "Why did you approach the city" (מָדוּעַ נִגַּשְׁתֶּם אֶל־הָעִיר) to wage war? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? Who killed Abimelech son of Jerubbesheth? Was it not a woman who dropped an upper millstone on him from the wall at Thebez, and he died? Why did you approach the wall (2) (לָמָּה נִגַּשְׁתֶּם אֶל־הַחוֹמָה)? (Sam. 11:20-21). The vocabulary differs between the opening and closing questions, but they form an inclusio around the quotation.

Since general inclusio occurs commonly in both poetry and prose, it does not greatly assist in dividing between poetic and prosaic texts. Dialogic proximate inclusio is also not exclusively a poetic element. However, non-dialogic proximate inclusio is a productive poetic feature and can buttress arguments concerning a text's style.

155. See first George W. Savran, *Telling and Retelling: Quotation in Biblical Narrative*, Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature 18 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 29–36. On inclusio in dialogue persuading the listener of something, see E. J. Revell, "The Repetition of Introductions to Speech as a Feature of Biblical Hebrew," *VT* 47 (1997): 93–94.

7. *Word Order*

Word order in both poetry and prose is still imperfectly understood,<sup>156</sup> but marked word order is significantly more common in poetry than in prose.<sup>157</sup> E. Kautzsch's *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, based on the work of C. Albrecht, concludes that nominal clauses usually contain the word order S(subject)-P(predicate).<sup>158</sup> When not, the reversal "must be used when special emphasis is laid on the predicate."<sup>159</sup> Francis I. Anderson and Takamitsu Muraoka show that approximately one-third of nominal clauses are P-S, and that the semantics of a sentence contribute to its word order.<sup>160</sup> In verbal sentences with a stated subject, the dominant word order is V(erb)-S(ubject)-O(bject); when the subject is not explicit, the order is V-O.<sup>161</sup> This verb is usually a *wāw*-consecutive, indicating narrative sequence.

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156. Alviero Niccacci argues that word orders in poetry and prose are different matters to study separately: "Analyzing Biblical Hebrew Poetry," *JOT* 74 (1997): 77–93. I intend to show that scholarship has not yet perfectly differentiated between poetry and prose; prejudging a text's genre is therefore inadvisable.

157. Robert D. Holmstedt appraises the study of word order and gives an ominous warning: "[T]he standard VS analysis of Hebrew has not been empirically supported using any modern linguistic framework; rather, it has been and continues to be assumed, and even when the question is raised, . . . it is done perfunctorily, in the manner of 'we take this truth, that Biblical Hebrew has VS basic word order, to be self-evident and so it hardly needs mentioning'" ("The Typological Classification of the Hebrew of Genesis: Subject-Verb or Verb-Subject?" *JHS* 11 [2011], 5–6, [http://www.jhsonline.org/Articles/article\\_161.pdf](http://www.jhsonline.org/Articles/article_161.pdf)). I believe that the studies cited in this section make a more convincing case than Holmstedt allows.

158. GKC § 141i; C. Albrecht, "Die Wortstellung im hebräischen Nominalsatze," *ZAW* 7 (1887): 218–24; 8 (1888): 249–63. See also *GAG* 3:70–89; and Waltke & O'Connor § 8.4. On Hebrew as a *regens-rectus* language, see O'Connor, *HVS*, 115–18.

159. GKC § 141i, emphasis original. For a recent defense of this theory, see Randall Buth, "Word Order in the Verbless Clause: A Generative-Functional Approach," in *The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew: Linguistic Approaches*, ed. Cynthia L. Miller, Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 1 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 79–108.

160. T. Muraoka proposes that the predicate describes the subject in all P-S sentences; see *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1985), 14. Andersen studies word order through the *tagmeme*, "the basic unit of grammatical description," in *The Hebrew Verbless Clauses in the Pentateuch*, *JBL* Monograph Series 14 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 26. Definite predicates generally appear S-P, he argues, and indefinite predicates P-S. For a spirited argument against many of Andersen's points, see J. Hofstijzer, "The Nominal Clause Reconsidered," *VT* 23 (1973): 446–510. See also a later critique of both Andersen and Hofstijzer in Janet W. Dyk and Eep Talstra, "Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Features in Identifying Subject and Predicate in Nominal Clauses," in *The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew: Linguistic Approaches*, ed. Cynthia L. Miller, Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 1 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 133–86.

161. For various deviations from this dominant word order, see Barry L. Bandstra, "Word Order and Emphasis in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: Syntactic Observations on Genesis 22



Many biblical sentences are exceptional, but Barry L. Bandstra summarizes the situation well: “When something other than a [*wāw*-consecutive verb] is found in the first position [in a sentence], something significant has taken place.” He notes that word order creates less “emphasis” and instead affects “topicalization,” where “a writer brings into prominence new information and places it into the given information slot or the topic position.”<sup>162</sup> However, volitional forms and certain grammatical constructions, such as interrogatives, conjunctions, and negatives, necessitate a non-standard word order. Context dictates whether such usages are absolutely necessary or intentional variations. In my view, the abundant use of the *wāw*-consecutive in biblical narrative may have unduly affected the perception of standard word order, equating consecutive verbs and not simply V-S-O with unmarked word order. Indeed, a vocal minority of scholars have argued that outside of sentences with the *wāw*-consecutive, the standard word order is S-V.<sup>163</sup>

In sum, though, the consensus holds that biblical Hebrew contains two *unmarked*—that is, general and majority—word orders: S-P for nominal clauses and V-(S)-O for verbal clauses. *Marked*—unusual, minority, “remarkable”—forms also abound, often emphasizing particular information. Two verses about Noah and his antediluvian generation exemplify the phenomenon:

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from a Discourse Perspective,” in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Walter R. Bodine (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 109–23. For corroboration, see also JM § 155*k* and Waltke & O’Connor § 8.3.

162. Bandstra, “Word Order,” 120–22. Michael Rosenbaum discusses how Deutero-Isaiah deviates from V-S-O for pragmatic and defamiliarizing reasons in *Word-Order Variation in Isaiah 40–55: A Functional Perspective*, SSN 35 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1997). Adina Moshavi’s recent study on “preposing” word order in finite nonsubordinate clauses, where the subject, object, or adverb precedes the verb, concludes that most examples of marked order classify as one of two “syntactic-pragmatic constructions”: topicalization and focusing. Her study, however, restricts itself to prose: *Word Order in the Biblical Hebrew Finite Clause: A Syntactic and Pragmatic Analysis of Preposing*, Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 4 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 1–4.

163. Moshe Greenberg, *Introduction to Hebrew* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 129–30; Walter Groß, “Is There Really a Compound Nominal Clause in Biblical Hebrew?” in *The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew: Linguistic Approaches*, ed. Cynthia L. Miller, Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 1 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 30–31 n. 46; Vincent DeCaen, “A Unified Analysis of Verbal and Verbless Clauses within Government-Binding Theory,” in *The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew: Linguistic Approaches*, ed. Cynthia L. Miller, Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 1 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 117–18 n. 22; and Robert D. Holmstedt, “The Relative Clause in Biblical Hebrew: A Linguistic Analysis” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2002), 132–59.