Chapter 1

Identifying Poetic Features in Biblical Texts

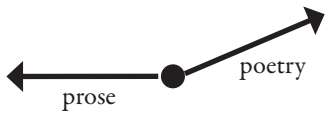
The underlying thesis of the current study is that the Pentateuchal Priestly source (P) intermixes lines that contain many and varied poetic features with verses that contain few or no poetic qualities. In order to pursue this theory, I begin with the most fundamental question: What are the characteristics 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.[1] 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:

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.

Parallelism (||)
1. Literary Parallelism
2. Grammatical Parallelism
3. Lexical Parallelism
4. Phonological Parallelism
Structure
5. Chiasmus
6. Inclusio
7. Word Order (marked)
Style
8. Diction
9. Rhythm (pronounced)

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.[2] 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

2. 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.[3]

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 monothetic definitions of religion and suggests instead a model of polythetic taxonomies.[4] 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."[5] 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.[6]

I abandon a monothetic 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.[7] 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. Ibid., 2.

6. Ibid., 4.

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

יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁאָג וּמִירוּשָׁלַם יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ וְאָבְלוּ נְאוֹת הָרֹעִים וְיָבֵשׁ רֹאשׁ הַכַּרְמֶל

YHWH roars from Zion, and from Jerusalem sends his voice; and the shepherds' pastures shall dry, and the peak 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*, subparts 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 יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁאָג וּמִירוּשָׁלַם יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ
2 וְאָבְלוּ נְאוֹת הָרֹעִים וְיָבֵשׁ 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.[8] Lines contain subparts called *cola*. I format the text as follows to highlight visually a single line's two cola:

יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁאָג
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*.[9] 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:

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

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.[10] 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:

A יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן
B וּרְאֵה בְּטוּב יְרוּשָׁלָם \ כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ

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*."[11] 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.[12]

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:

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

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

A יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן
C כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ

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 תִהְיֶה כְּאִישׁ נִדְהָם
Like a warrior who cannot bring salvation?	כְּגִבּוֹר לֹא־יוּכַל לְהוֹשִׁיעַ
But you are in our midst, O YHWH,	וְאַתָּה בְקִרְבֵּנוּ יְהוָה
We are called by your name.	וְשִׁמְךָ עָלֵינוּ נִקְרָא
Do not abandon us.	**אַל־תַּנִּחֵנוּ**

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

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.[13]

Content and markers generally determine a *stanza*, or a connected group of associated poetic lines.[14] 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:[15]

"Yet you did not return to me."	וְלֹא־שַׁבְתֶּם עָדַי
—An utterance of YHWH	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.[16]

Scholars such as Watson propose that the *strophe*—a single or group of mono-, bi- or tricola—is the subunit of a stanza. He often appears to use "stanza" and "strophe" interchangeably (most strophes are bicola).[17] "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:[18]

---

13. Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques*, JSOTS 26 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 169–70.

14. On determining stanzas, see ibid., 160–200. Most stanzas end with either an implied comma or period; when a sentence straddles two clauses, the result is called *enjambment* (ibid., 332–36). For alternative decisions regarding terminology, see the excellent survey in ibid., 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): 564–87.

15. See the section "Refrains" below.

16. Watson, *Classical*, 164–65.

17. Ibid., 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).

They have forsaken me, the fountain of	אֹתִי עָזְבוּ מְקוֹר **מַיִם** חַיִּים
living **waters**,	לַחְצֹב לָהֶם בֹּארוֹת
And hewn out cisterns for themselves;	בֹּארֹת נִשְׁבָּרִים
Cracked cisterns,	אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָכְלוּ **הַמָּיִם**
That cannot hold the **waters**.	Jer. 2:13b

The rare penta- and higher cola (Watson counts up to ten) occur in two classes: those with and without chiasmus.[19] 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.[20] 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.[21]

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).[22] 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*, 185–90.

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."[23] Lowth defines this *parallelismus membrorum* as appearing in three species.[24]

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

When Israel went out from Egypt,	בְּצֵאת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרָיִם
The house of Jacob from a strange people.[26]	בֵּית יַעֲקֹב מֵעַם לֹעֵז
	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.[27] In some cases, a line features verbatim (or almost so) synonymous parallelism:

רַבַּת צָרְרוּנִי מִנְּעוּרַי יֹאמַר־נָא יִשְׂרָאֵל
רַבַּת צָרְרוּנִי מִנְּעוּרָי גַּם לֹא־יָכְלוּ 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. 129:1aα-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."[28]

---

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 לֹעֵז. 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,	נֶאֱמָנִים פִּצְעֵי אוֹהֵב
And the kisses of an enemy are profuse.	וְנַעְתָּרוֹת נְשִׁיקוֹת שׂוֹנֵא
	Prov. 27:6

wounds ≠ kisses; friend ≠ enemy; faithful ≠ profuse[29]

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."[30] He assigns to this category all poetic lines that are neither synonymous nor antithetic but nonetheless related, such as:

YHWH's teaching is perfect,	תּוֹרַת יְהוָה תְּמִימָה
Restoring the soul.	מְשִׁיבַת נָפֶשׁ
	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.[31]

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.[32] However, Lowth proposes the first complete system to explain the phenomenon and is thus rightly the leader of the poetic revolution.[33] 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[34]—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."[35] 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.[36]

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

---

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. Rabbinic 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*, 306–7). 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 "omnisignificance," 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."[37] In Ps. 31:25,

Be strong and let your heart show strength,	חִזְקוּ וְיַאֲמֵץ לְבַבְכֶם
All who wait for YHWH.	כָּל־הַמְיַחֲלִים 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.[38] Following George B. Gray, Kugel labels synthetic parallelism a defective "catchall" category.[39]

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."[40]

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

An ox knows its owner,	יָדַע שׁוֹר קֹנֵהוּ
And the donkey its masters' trough.	וַחֲמוֹר אֵבוּס בְּעָלָיו

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).[41] 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 (ibid.). 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.[42] 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:

The wounds of a friend are faithfully intended,	נֶאֱמָנִים פִּצְעֵי אוֹהֵב
And the kisses of an enemy are profuse.	וְנַעְתָּרוֹת נְשִׁיקוֹת שׂוֹנֵא
	Prov. 27:6

"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,

נֶאֱמָנִים פִּצְעֵי אוֹהֵב
וְנִפְשָׁעוֹת נְשִׁיקוֹת שׂוֹנֵא

The (pain-causing) wounds of a friend are faithfully intended,
And the (pleasure-causing) kisses of an enemy are **disloyally intended**.

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."[43]

---

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. Ibid., 7–12.

43. Ibid., 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.[44]

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.[45] 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."[46]

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,	הוֹי גּוֹי חֹטֵא
People heavy with iniquity!	עַם כֶּבֶד עָוֹן
	Isa. 1:4aα

The words in the verse have a range of meaning, but no lexical evidence applicable to this context requires that B intensifies A.[47] 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, חטא means "to miss a mark" morally, to do wrong, to sin. The עָוֹן 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" (גּוֹי) 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, חטא is synonymous with עָוֹן multiple times; גּוֹי 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.[48] 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.[49] 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 face-off 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.[50] Literary

48. The phrase כָּבֵד עָוֹן in B, using two words, has greater linguistic weight than the single word חֹטֵא (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.[51]

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.[52] Alter's observations thus sometimes depart from Kugel's, but more often, they agree.[53] 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."[54] 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."[55] 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

---

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

52. Ibid., 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.[56] 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.[57] Stephen A. Geller takes inspiration from Jakobson, isolating aspects of semantic and grammatical parallelism.[58] 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.[59] 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.[60]

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. Ibid.," 423.

57. Benjamin Hrushovski (later Harshav), "Prosody, Hebrew," in *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).

syntax.[61] 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.[62]

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.[63] Verbs also change *binyānîm* (conjugations) between lines, often between an active and a passive.[64] Other same-class substitutions include person, gender, and number for verbs; and gender,[65] number, definiteness, and case for nouns and adjectives.[66] Scott

---

61. Berlin, *Dynamics*, 31–63. For a thorough outline and definition of morphology in 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 (מִי שָׂם פֶּה לָאָדָם אוֹ מִי־יָשׂוּם אִלֵּם [Exod. 4:11aα] 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): 272–82; 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 chiastic. 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.[67]

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

וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַ͏ִם לְגַלִּים מְעוֹן תַּנִּים
וְאֶת־עָרֵי יְהוּדָה אֶתֵּן שְׁמָמָה מִבְּלִי 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.[68] 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);[69] 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.[70]

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.[71] Knowing the possible pitfalls, Geller presents the first methodological study of the semantic and grammatical structures of parallelism.[72]

---

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.

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 (ibid., 55).

70. Ibid., 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 a single statement.[73]

YHWH thundered from heaven,	יַרְעֵם מִן־שָׁמַיִם יְהוָה
ʿElyon (The Most High) sent forth his voice.	וְעֶלְיוֹן יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ
	2 Sam. 22:14

Geller reconstructs the sentence thus:

יַרְעֵם יְהוָה
מִן־שָׁמַיִם
יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ עֶלְיוֹן

producing four hypothetical reconstructed sentences:

יַרְעֵם מִן־שָׁמַיִם יְהוָה (YHWH thundered from heaven)
יַרְעֵם מִן־שָׁמַיִם עֶלְיוֹן (ʿElyon thundered from heaven)
יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ מִן־שָׁמַיִם יְהוָה (YHWH sent forth his voice from heaven)
יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ מִן־שָׁמַיִם עֶלְיוֹן (ʿElyon sent forth his voice from heaven)

A casual observer would understand the parallelism operating between YHWH and ʿElyon, both single-word epithets of the Israelite God. Geller also allows grammatical parallels between יַרְעֵם (thundered) and יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ (sent forth his voice), even though they differ in form, word count, and meaning.[74]

Geller analyzes parallel units in eleven steps, including determining grammatical and metrical units, sentence transformation, and reconstruction.[75]

---

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 anceps, 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.[76]

Encouraged by these psycholinguistic facts,[77] Greenstein argues that the term "parallelism" should only refer to *grammatical* parallelism, excluding all lines that do not have strict syntactic repetition.[78] He notes that grammatical and semantic parallelisms often appear together.[79] 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

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.[80] 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.[81] 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 ∅ predicators]).[82]

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.[83] 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).[84] O'Connor's translation of Ps. 106:35b-36a highlights the two constituents in each line and their syntactic matchings:

They-learned their-customs.	וַיִּלְמְדוּ מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם
They-worshiped their-idols.[85]	וַיַּעַבְדוּ אֶת־עֲצַבֵּיהֶם

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 (=11QPs[a])*, 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. Ibid., 67–87.

83. Ibid., 119.

84. Ibid., 149.

85. Ibid., 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 text itself now deserves consideration.[86] 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.[87] 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 **three** transgressions of Damascus,	עַל־**שְׁלֹשָׁה** פִּשְׁעֵי דַמֶּשֶׂק
And for **four** I will not reverse it.	וְעַל־**אַרְבָּעָה** לֹא אֲשִׁיבֶנּוּ
	Amos 1:3

Cardinal numbers do not generally have synonyms, so the poet heightens the number in B using the formula X || X + 1.[88] 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

---

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, Universita 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.