

## ASPECTS OF POETIC TEXT ANALYSIS, with special reference to biblical poetry<sup>1</sup>

In the first half of this study, I summarize some of the important characteristics of biblical poetry—stylistic features that need to be taken into consideration during any form-functional text analysis. Occasional questions are introduced to encourage readers to engage in the analysis of exemplifying passages. In the second section, I overview several principles that pertain to the discourse analysis of poetic texts, that is, how to demarcate the larger units of structural organization in order to get a better grasp of the compositional whole and its parts. In short, much more than *inclusio* is involved.

Poetry characteristically emphasizes the *oral-aural* sound qualities of a text, especially rhythmic speech that is structured according to some recursive pattern of formal and/or thematic organization. In addition, the sight of one's "inner sight" is often stimulated, that is, the *visual* dimension, through figurative, evocative, and imaginative devices.

In Biblical Hebrew (and in many other literatures), poetic discourse manifests many of the following features:

- **parallelism** (i.e., short, balanced A and B lines forming a sequence of parallel pairs)
- **condensation** (e.g., ellipsis of elements in the B parallel line or omission of conjunctions)
- **rhythmic cadence** of word accents and/or syllable counts (a kind of meter)
- **concentrations of figures of speech** (especially simile and metaphor)
- **word order variations** (e.g., divergence from prosaic V-S-O, more chiasmic constructions)
- **word plays** (puns) and **sound plays** (alliteration, assonance)
- **lexical repetition** (both exact and synonymous, random and structured)
- **intensified language**, occasionally exclamatory
- **rhetorical questions** and **deliberative questions**
- **specialized vocabulary** including technical liturgical or archaic words and poetic word pairs
- **direct speech** as the preferred mode of text presentation
- **allusion** and **symbolism** (especially characteristic of religious discourse)

Another general point to note is that the poetry of Scripture is almost always represented in the form of *direct speech*. It is either God, the biblical author, or some narrative character such as Jacob, Moses, or David who speaks the poetic text in question. Alternatively, the passage has been composed to be uttered aloud (recited, chanted, perhaps even sung), as is the case for the Psalms. When translating such passages, then, they must always be tested as they are being *spoken aloud* in the TL – for naturalness, effectiveness, and phonic appeal.

The following is a more detailed exposition and exemplification of the major stylistic qualities of biblical poetry:

### A. Parallel phrasing

Parallelism is probably the most prominent and important characteristic of Hebrew poetry. Fortunately, it is a feature that can often be reproduced, with similar poetic effect to a large extent, when translating into another language. This technique involves composing a text in the form of paired, comparatively short, rhythmic lines called cola. (The plural form is *cola*, the singular is *colon*, the two together are referred to as a *bicolon*.) These lines, here designated as A or B (plus C or D in the case of a less common third or fourth line), are closely related to each other semantically, and often with regard to certain formal aspects as well (e.g., similar length, vocabulary, sounds, word forms or word order, and grammatical constructions). At times, especially in the Psalms, two common religious or poetic terms are put together – one in the A line, the other in the B line – to

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<sup>1</sup> This text is a compilation of excerpts from my published studies on the subject.

form a *word pair*, for example, “heavens” and “earth” in Psalm 96:11, “sun” and “moon” in Psalm 121:6, “Zion” and “Jerusalem” in Amos 1:2, “Judah” and “Israel” in Psalm 76:1.

The main hermeneutical implication of such parallel phrasing is that the pair of lines must always be interpreted together as a single unit of meaning within the text, not as isolated segments. Most obvious are the coupled poetic lines that occur adjacent to each other, one after the other – A + B. However, other sets of corresponding lines may be separated from one another, normally serving to mark discourse boundaries in lyric texts as in Psalm 8:1 and 8, and 98:4a and 6b.

In addition to having formal linguistic parallels, the poetic lines of a bicolon are usually related to each other in one of four main ways: That is, line B functions to complement line A by means of a relationship of (1) similarity, (2) contrast, (3) cause-effect, or (4) addition. Examples of each of these types are given below (using, except where noted, the NIV, which is a relatively literal version). Another feature to watch out for in these parallel lines is *heightening*, in which the B line is often found to be more specific, intensive, graphic, rhetorically marked, or semantically significant than A.

### 1. Similarity

An example of *similarity* is in Psalm 61:1 (NIV; compare the GNT rendering):

A: Hear O-God my-cry; [3 words in Hebrew]  
B: heed my-prayer! [2 words]

The 3 + 2 word (accentual) pattern that we see here is the *second* most common kind of pairing found in the Psalms; it is often associated with laments. A balanced 3 + 3 bicolon is the most common, but there are many variations within a range of from one (long) to six words. (Hebrew word counts and syntactic word orders may be roughly discerned by consulting an interlinear Bible based on the Masoretic text.) In Psalm 61:1, syntactic parallelism accompanies and reinforces the semantic similarity: Line A is composed of Verb + Vocative + Object, and line B of Verb + Object (with the Vocative left implicit). Such synonymous parallelism often manifests a certain heightening of meaning in the B line; in Psalm 61:1, we note that line B is somewhat more specific in its appeal than A (“cry” => “prayer”).

### 2. Contrast

A clear example of *contrast* is in Psalm 145:20 (NIV; compare the GNT rendering):

A: The LORD watches over all who love him,  
B: But all the wicked he will destroy.

A paired contrast is sometimes arranged in the form of a chiasmus, as here, perhaps as a way of emphasizing the opposing (antithetical) elements. Line A of Psalm 145:20 is composed of Verb + Subject + Object, and line B of Object + Subject-Verb:

A: Watching Yahweh DO-all-those-loving-him [3 words; DO = direct object marker]  
B: and-DO all-the-wicked-ones he-will-destroy [3 words]

### 3. Cause-effect

Examples of *cause-effect* are seen in Psalm 116:2 and 119:11. Several different types of cause-effect relations can link a line A and line B, but two common types are illustrated by these verses:

Because he turned his ear to me,  
I will call on him as long as I live. (Ps. 116:2)

I have hidden your word in my heart  
that I might not sin against you. (Ps. 119:11)

Try to specify the logical connection between the two lines after comparing the NIV rendering with the original Hebrew.

Which bicolon do you think is means-purpose and which reason-result? Perhaps, based on the Hebrew text, you wish to propose a different relationship between the A and B lines. If so, explain your interpretation.

At times, distinct causal relationships occur *within* a poetic line because two or more verb (predicative) ideas are involved, as is the case in the B line below:

For the sake of your name, O LORD,  
forgive my iniquity,  
though it is great. (Ps. 25:11; i.e., *reason* + *appeal* + *concession*)

Furthermore, two (or more) complete bicola may be closely connected with each other, for example:

Test me, O LORD, and try me,  
examine my heart and my mind; (Ps. 26:2, *similarity*)  
for your love is ever before me,  
and I walk continually in your truth. (Ps. 26:3, *addition*)

Here verse 3 (as a whole) is linked to verse 2 by the relationship of *appeal* + *reason*, which is a very common pairing in the Psalter. The sequence of such bicola forms a hierarchy of interdependent semantic relationships throughout a given psalm (see Wendland 2002:98–107). A careful analysis of the relationships that link bicola enables the reader/analyst/translator to more fully explore the Psalter's depths of meaning, including not only its referential content but also the connotations of personal attitudes, emotions, and motivations.

Examine the colon connections of Psalm 139:23–24. What similarities and differences do you find?

Find another pairing of cause-effect lines in the Psalms, but one with a linkage that differs from the types illustrated above.

#### 4. Addition

An example of *addition*, the fourth type of relationship that can join a line B (the complement) to a line A (the base), is in Psalm 14:1a:

The fool says in his heart,  
"There is no God."

There are several different types of paired addition relations.

How does Psalm 1:1 (below) differ from Psalm 14:1a in the way its complementing line B relates to line A? Which bicolon is base-alternative and which is base-content?

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked  
or stand in the way of sinners  
or sit in the seat of mockers. (Ps. 1:1)

Observe that Psalm 1:1 is an instance of three lines in parallel, a *tricolon* (A + B + C). When such a combination appears – or, alternatively, just a single unpaired line (a *monocolon*) – it may serve as a point of emphasis within the psalm.

What might be the reason for the tricolon in this case?

Do you notice any special heightening in the C line, that is, in comparison with lines A and B? (You may need to consult a commentary or the UBS Handbook on Psalms.)

Find another good example of additive parallelism in the Psalms and explain how the poetic lines are cumulatively related to each other – that is, how line B (+/- C) complements A to make the sum of overall significance (A + B) greater than the meanings of the individual lines.

## B. Sound effects

Poetry is composed with the intention that it be recited aloud and usually in public. Therefore it features various sound techniques in order to enhance the oral-aural articulation of the text in the ears of its audience and thereby also increase its memorability. Qvale (2003:173) describes the poetic construction process and its product as follows:

[E]ach individual line has its rhythmic character, and...this is not only determined by the metrical pattern, but also by phonetic nuances, by [aural] associations and alliterations, by the length of words and rhythmic quality, by logical and emotive emphasis, by intonation, dramatic tempo, metrical and syntactic pauses, by repetition, parallels or contrasts in relation to the surrounding lines – by all this all at the same time.

These sound effects are created as part of the esthetic dimension of the text, but the skilled poet also uses them to highlight certain aspects of meaning within a given poem. Often this is done by means of some prominent phonological similarity or contrast between the A and B lines of a bicolon. These too are concrete instances of parallelism, even though they involve phonic form rather than content.

Three kinds of special audio effects are illustrated below (with reference to the Hebrew text, for which a literal rendering is provided):

1. rhythm
2. assonance/alliteration
3. puns

## 1. Rhythm

*Rhythm* is manifested by the regular recurrence of some perceptible, often predictable pattern of sound, though the pattern may be modified at any time to create some added impact. This can be a rather complicated subject in scholarly discussions, but here we will consider only the very basic technique of counting the major Hebrew words within the poetic line.

The rhythm of Hebrew poetry follows a system of free (i.e., roughly regular, but not fixed or predictable) *meter* composed of variable word-accent (word-stress) patterns. These patterns tend to be fairly uniform within a given poem so that any variations from the norm tend to be significant. Each *poetic word*, which may be extended by a Hebrew hyphen (*maqeph*, represented by the [=] sign), is considered to have one major beat (accent). The most common poetic line, as mentioned before, has three such accents. Four-beat or two-beat lines also occur relatively frequently, but other types do not, so when they appear within a poem they may serve to emphasize the text at that point.

The following is a sequential listing of the line-accents in Psalm 1:

[v. 1] 2+5+4+4, [v. 2] 4+4, [v. 3] 5+4+3+3, [v. 4] 2+2+2, [v. 5] 4+3, [v. 6] 4+3.

What is the average line length for the psalm as a whole?

Where does an obvious shift in the prevailing rhythm occur?

Can you see any significance for this – in other words, do the shorter (two beat) lines in verse 4 appear to serve as some sort of a marker? If so, what is it?

In the following literal rendition of Psalm 1:4, the short lines may represent a vocal reflection of the wind that suddenly and completely blows the wicked away:

not=so the-wicked,  
for rather=like-the-chaff,  
which=it-blows-away wind

In Judges 16:23, we observe a syllabic rhythm that slightly increases in length for climactic effect. This is coupled with an internal rhyming pattern that highlights the key terms (set in bold):

[He]-delivered **our-God** ['elohêynu] (2 words, 5 syllables)  
into-**our-hand** [beyadênu] D.O.=**our-enemy** ['oyebênu], (2 words, 6 syllables)  
and-D.O.=the-one-ravaging **our-land** ['artsênu], (2 words, 6 syllables)  
and-who [he]-multiplied D.O.=**our-slain-ones** [chalalêynu]! (3 words, 7 syllables)

What is poetry doing in a narrative book of the Bible like Judges?

Note that GNT uses the verb “sang” to introduce the direct quotation here: “They sang, ‘Our god has given us victory over our enemy Samson!’ ” Is “sang” (for the Hebrew “saying”) appropriate as a translation here? Explain.

Check the context and explain why this passage is poetic in the original. Moffat translates the verse in this way:

Our God has now put  
the foe into our hands,  
who wasted our lands  
and slew us in bands!

What do you think of this poetic rendition? Does it convey the same connotation, impact, and appeal for you as the original?

## 2. Assonance and alliteration

*Assonance* is the close reiteration of vowel sounds, *alliteration* the reiteration of consonants. These devices are quite common in Hebrew poetry. They may be used either separately or together to mark certain key lines within a book, poem, or section.

Which of these devices occurs in the two lines below? Underline the repeated sounds.

Look these passages up and suggest what these “sound effects” may be intended to distinguish, highlight, or emotively color in each case.

shiyṛ hashiyriym ‘asher lishlômôh • (Song. 1:1)

qâdôsh, qâdôsh, qâdôsh, yâhwêh tsebâ’ôth melô kol hâ-ârets kebôdô (Isa. 6:3)

rediy uwshebiy ‘al-‘aphâr betulat bat-bâbel (Isa. 47:1a)

When assonance and alliteration are combined within a verse or section (as in the preceding verse from Isaiah), they may function to focus upon certain concepts, actions, or characters that are being depicted. We hear this, for example, in Psalm 137:3, in the song (shir) that is used to insult “us” (–u– sound, with reference to the people of Israel in Babylon). Also observe the minor climax that occurs at this point in Psalm 137 to conclude the first strophe:

kiy sham she’êlunuw shôbêynu  
dibrêy–shiyṛ wetôlâlêynu simchâh  
shiyruw lanuw mishiyṛ tsiyyôn.

Notice, too, how the chiasmic arrangement of key vowels and consonants in the following line of Ecclesiastes 2:25 serves to heighten the rhetorical question and the internal disjunctive notion that it embodies. What can be done in YL to duplicate this poetic effect?

kiy miy yôkal<sup>2</sup>  
uwmiy yâchuwsh chuwts mimmeniy.

## 3. Puns

Puns (a form of word play) involves two words with similar sounds but different meanings. The words are played off each other for mutual reinforcement, or for contrastive effect (perhaps with a connotative touch of irony, criticism, or even humor). Listen, for example, to the word of judgement upon the apostates in Israel in Amos 5:5c: hagilgâl gâlôh yigleh “[the]-Gilgal going-into-exile he-will-go-into-exile.”

In Isaiah 5:7 there is a highly dramatic double word play:

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<sup>2</sup> The appearance of a word that does not fit the iterative sound pattern of this verse, yôkal ‘the eater’, may be explained as a repetition that ties this verse to the preceding one, v. 24.

And he looked for justice [mishpât], but he saw bloodshed [mispâh];  
for righteousness [tsedâqâh], but heard cries of distress [tse'âqâh].

Look up the context of Isaiah 5:7b. What does this special sound correspondence achieve?

Who is doing the looking in this case, whom is he looking at, and why?

Notice where in the poem this pun occurs – what is the significance of this textual location?

Now consider Esau's pathetic complaint in Genesis 27:36, when he discovers his brother's deception:

"Is his name not rightly called Jacob [ya'aqôb]?  
For he has deceived me [wayya'qêbeniy] these two times!  
My birthright [bekôrâtiy] he took [lâqach],  
and look now he has taken [lâqach] my blessing [birkâtiy]!"

What effect does the chiasmic arrangement of key words achieve in these last two lines?

Most versions indicate that this passage is pure prose, but if it is, it certainly incorporates a number of poetic effects as a way of indicating the relative importance of these words within the dialogue as a whole. This is typical of biblical poetry – not simply “art for art’s sake,” but “art that plays a part,” that is, in highlighting, memorializing, or intensifying the intended meaning of the discourse.

Try to find another good example of such purposeful sound effects in the Psalter.

Read and discuss the following observation (from Scorgie, Strauss, and Voth 2003:203) about some well-known Bible translators of the past who gave serious attention to the sound structure of the text. Does this apply to the translation that you are preparing? If not, why not?

An interesting and important detail about Luther's translation is that he wanted his Bible to be in *spoken* rather than in *bookish* or *written* German. Before any word or phrase could be put on paper, it had to pass the test of Luther's ear. It had to sound right. It is not surprising, as we will see, that the translators of the KJV had the same concern.

## C. Figurative language

Skilled poets like to use vivid imagery and colorful language, especially when they are describing certain new or noteworthy objects, events, and personages in their poems. Figures of speech enable them to appeal to the imagination for a specific communicative purpose. Often figures and idioms are repeated or combined in the same passage of Scripture, or in adjacent passages, in order to heighten the descriptive outcome, usually with particular reference to some crucial theological or ethical subject. Any such figure adds another cognitive frame of reference (mental space) to interact conceptually with that of the religious topic being talked about.

Three common pairs of figures in Hebrew poetry are presented below (paired because of the similarity between them).

### 1. Metaphor and simile

Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;  
though they are red like crimson, they shall be like wool. (Isa. 1:18b–c)

See how the faithful city has become a harlot!...  
Your silver has become dross, your choice wine is diluted with water! (Isa. 1:21a, 22)

### 2. Metonym and synecdoche

Your incense is detestable to me! (Isa. 1:13b)

Your hands are full of blood! (Isa. 1:15d)

### 3. Personification and anthropomorphism

They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them! (Isa. 1:14b–c)

The Daughter of Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard. (Isa. 1:8a)

These are figures that should already be familiar to you.

Explain how each is different from the other member of the pair, giving a brief definition of each figure. (To refresh your memory, see Zogbo and Wendland 2000:41–46).

Explain what each figure contributes to the poetic passage in each example in terms of its content, impact, feeling, and esthetic appeal.

Suggest how such vivid imagery might be effectively reproduced in YL.

All of the preceding examples come from the opening chapter of Isaiah. Most of them are exclamatory utterances. Note who is speaking: Yahweh is not pleased with his people, and his poetic language clearly and dramatically reveals his strong feelings throughout this oracle. God is a powerful, effective preacher as well as a poet, and his words ought to sound that way in translation. As Ryken (2002:247) says, “Poets speak the language of images because they want readers to experience the content of their utterance *as image and concretion*, not simply as an idea. The meaning that literature conveys is affective, imaginative, and experiential as well as ideational.” Have you seriously thought of the poetry of Scripture in this way – and more, have you represented it as such in your translation? Explain your answer.

Figures of speech often occur in combinations as well as with other types of non-literal usage.

Find the metonyms amidst the metaphors of Isaiah 1:21–22.

Which of the figures of speech in the preceding examples might present a problem for translation into your language? Why?

Find another challenging set of images from the especially picturesque book of Isaiah and explain how you can reproduce them in a dynamic, *LiFE*-like manner in your language.

## D. Condensed expression

Poets do not waste words when writing poetry; every word is purposeful and made to count. Often certain expected words or concepts are deliberately left out. That is, they are not explicitly expressed in the biblical text but are left implicit so that the reader or hearer must figure them out from the context. Usually this is not difficult, but it does require the listener’s mind to be fully engaged with the text’s meaning. Such a condensed, compact manner of expression is what gives poetry its typical rhythmic form and evocative content.

Therefore, it is necessary to dig more out of a poetic text than the words themselves actually say. The listener must work a little harder in order to derive the author’s intended sense and significance. This includes the additional beauty, feelings, connotations, and cognitive associations that are connected with the subject at hand and render the text “rich,” or “pregnant” with meaning – hence memorable as well. At times the poet must use a more condensed form of speech in order to maintain a certain rhythm or flow of discourse that is pleasing to the ear.

It was pointed out earlier that a normal poetic line of the Psalms and other lyric and sapiential discourse averages three “words” (lexical units), each of which manifests a single major accent. The lines of Hebrew *prophetic* poetry, however, tend to be somewhat longer, depending on the genre. Another feature of prophetic poetry is the insertion periodically of a contrastive prosaic passage to provide some historical or descriptive background or a detailed *visionary prediction* (see Isa. 6; Jer. 1:11–19; Ezek. 37; and Dan. 7).

Scholars often use the presence of not only parallelism, but also condensation (see section 4.4) as a diagnostic clue to determine whether a particular prophetic passage is more or less poetic in nature (and less or more prosaic). They look for the relative absence of the prose particles in a text of poetry, which in their consonantal and transcribed form are as follows: the sign of the direct object (’eth), the definite article (h-), the relative clause marker (’asher), the inseparable prepositions (m-, b-, k-, l-), and the conjunction waw before the B line of a bicolon (cf. 4.4). The more of these particles that are manifested in a passage, the more prosaic it is likely to be. However, this criterion must always be employed together with the other main

characteristics of poetry in order to come to a reliable conclusion on the matter. (And even then, scholars do not always agree in certain ambiguous cases.)

There are three common, but quite different, kinds of condensation to be found in Hebrew poetry (although they are not the only ones). The first two, *verb gapping* and *pronominal reference*, are more formal in nature, while the third, *allusion*, involves a semantic contraction. Of course, it is often necessary to consult the Hebrew text itself or a good interlinear version in order to clearly discern such features in the biblical text.

### 1. Verb gapping

Do not take away my soul along with sinners,  
my life with bloodthirsty men. (Ps. 26:9)

Your men will fall by the sword,  
your warriors in battle. (Isa. 3:25)

Which verb is missing in the B line of the above passages?

Are they needed in YL? Explain why.

### 2. (Pro)nominal reference

They cry out and Yahweh hears,  
and from all their troubles he delivers them. (Ps. 34:17)

Check Psalm 34:16 to see what the referent of “they” in verse 17 is. Now look at verse 17 in the NIV and explain why the NIV translators felt it necessary to clarify this condensed reference.

It will not take place,  
it will not happen. (Isa. 7:7b)

In Isaiah 7:7b what is the referent of the pronoun “it” in each line?

How do you know?

### 3. Allusion

Sons of man, until when my glory to shame,  
you will love a delusion, you will seek a lie. (Ps. 4:2)

Psalm 4:2 makes no sense because of both allusion and ellipsis. Consult several modern translations to see how they have clarified such poetic condensation in the Hebrew text. Which wording would work best in YL?

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean. (Ps. 51:7)

Check a commentary or study Bible to find out the condensed meaning that lies behind the figurative allusions of Psalm 51:7. How can you best express the meaning in YL?

Do you have a close form-functional equivalent to “hyssop”?

What about the notion of being “clean”? Explain.

Perhaps these words cannot be used due to their cognitive and emotive association with pagan traditional religious beliefs and practices. Is this true in your cultural setting? If so, what alternatives do you propose?

## E. Emphatic devices

All literature is distinguished by a number of devices that signal and emphasize points of special prominence in the text, whether these have to do with form (discourse structure) or content (theme). They are common to both poetic and prosaic composition wherever there is direct speech or a text specifically written to be uttered aloud. Emphatic forms are therefore not in and of themselves diagnostic of poetry, but they serve to augment the rhetorical effect of the other more characteristically poetic features, such as parallelism. In this respect,



then, they also help to mark boundaries and thematic peaks in the discourse arrangement of both poetry and poetic prose.

We have already called attention to a common characteristic of parallel expression; namely, the tendency for the B line to be stylistically heightened in some way (e.g., extra focus, intensity, specificity, immediacy, descriptive color, direct speech): “A, and what’s more B” or “not only A, but also B” or “not A, and not even B.” (This does not always happen, but the feature occurs often enough for one to be on the watch for it.) Point out the different ways in which the indented B lines emphasize the thought of line A in the following examples from Psalm 3:

O LORD, how many are my foes!  
How many rise up against me!...  
But you are a shield around me, O LORD,  
my Glorious One, who lifts up my head....  
Arise, O LORD!  
Deliver me, O my God!  
For you have struck all my enemies on the jaw;  
you have broken the teeth of the wicked. (Ps. 3:1, 3, 7)

Listed below are several other techniques that provide special emphasis in Hebrew discourse: *intensifiers*, *exclamations*, *rhetorical questions*, *hyperbole*, *irony*, and *sarcasm*. These are seen especially in the prophetic literature and frequently in conjunction with imperative commands. Because they are quite obvious in their character and operation, they will just be noted and illustrated here. Some of these emphatic features are often very difficult to translate with similar impact in another language. This is true of hyperbole and irony in particular. As you study these examples, consider how you would render them with corresponding power and appeal in YL.

## 1. Intensifiers

*Intensifiers*, unlike exclamations (see below), are normally single words in Hebrew:

Surely (kiy) the joy of mankind is withered away! (Joel 1:12d)  
Alas (‘ahâh) for that day! For the day of the LORD is near... (Joel 1:15a)  
See (hinny), I am going to rouse them out of the places to which you sold them... (Joel 3:7a)  
Blessed (‘shrêy) is he whose transgressions are forgiven... (Ps. 32:1a)  
Praise be (bâruwk) to the LORD, for he showed his wonderful love to me... (Ps. 31:21a)  
Praise the LORD! (halluw-yâh)...Praise the LORD! (Ps. 146:1a, 10c)

We might also include in this category a number of familiar conventional formulae that function as semantic units, emphatically opening or closing a prophetic utterance. They also help establish the borders of poetic structures (see section 5.1.7). A good selection of these occurs in the prophecy of Amos:

“This is what the LORD says” (1:3)  
“says the LORD” (1:5)  
“declares the LORD” (2:11)  
“Hear this word the LORD has spoken” (3:1)  
“Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says” (3:11)  
“Woe to you who” (5:18)  
“The Sovereign LORD has sworn by himself – the LORD Almighty declares” (6:8)  
“says the LORD your God” (9:15)

## 2. Exclamations

*Exclamations* are short, intensified utterances that serve to emotively heighten a certain aspect of the prophet's message, usually one of rebuke or condemnation:

Wake up you drunkards and weep! (Joel 1:5a)

Go to Bethel and sin! (Amos 4:4)

Fallen is Virgin Israel, never to rise again... (Amos 5:2)

Seek me and live! (Amos 5:4)

Away with the noise of your songs! (Amos 5:23)

What are some of the poetic devices included within these exclamations?

Would a literal translation cause any misunderstanding?

If so, how would you resolve the problem while preserving the intensity of the original text?

### 3. Rhetorical questions

*Rhetorical questions* (RQs) are question forms that do not expect an answer. They are a forceful expression of the speaker's attitude, opinion, and emotions with regard to a particular issue. At times they are simply a vigorous way to emphasize the known answer, often with added pragmatic (behavioral) implications. For example, the speaker may want to persuade the addressees to change their manner of thinking or acting. Thus RQs may serve as an indirect form of encouragement or, more likely, of criticism, reprimand, or the like. The more RQs that occur in a sequence, one after another, the more powerfully and insistently the speaker's psychological state and feelings are communicated.

The following are examples of sequential RQs in Jeremiah 8:4–5:

When men fall down, do they not get up?

When a man turns away, does he not return?

Why then have these people turned away?

Why does Jerusalem always turn away?

They cling to deceit; they refuse to return.

What did Yahweh desire to convey to his people by this sequence of RQs?

Can RQs be used in YL for this same purpose? If not, how would you convey the divine speaker's intentions with the same degree of force and emotion?

Observe that Jeremiah 8:4–22 (of which the above passage is a part) closes with another set of RQs, forming a literary-structural inclusio. But what difference in connotation and implication do you notice in verse 22, which is the concluding set of RQs?

Now look at the RQ in Jeremiah 8:12:

Are they ashamed of their own loathsome conduct?

No, they have no shame at all

How does this RQ differ from the ones above?

The utterance in Jeremiah 8:12 is called a *leading question* because it leads up to an explicit answer in the text. A leading question often serves to open or close a major discourse unit and announce its main theme.

Point out how this device operates in Psalms 15 and 121 and in Song of Songs 5:9–16.

Are you able to use questions in an introductory or preparatory way like this in your language? If not, what equivalent device might you substitute?

### 4. Hyperbole

*Hyperbole* is an obvious exaggeration that serves to emphasize and highlight a particular perspective or strong opinion. It is quite a common feature of biblical poetry, especially in the prophets. Hyperbole is not intended to be taken literally; rather, it foregrounds the topic that is being spoken about, usually with a

certain amount of strong feeling and a particular attitude as well. The following are examples of hyperbole in the Psalter:

All night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. (Ps. 6:6b)

Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. (Ps. 27:3)

Though you test me, you will find nothing; I have resolved that my mouth will not sin. (Ps. 17:3)

May they be blotted out of the book of life and not be listed with the righteous! (Ps. 69:28)

What is the meaning of each of these hyperboles in its context?

What sort of emotion or attitude is associated with each one?

Can they be translated literally in YL? If not, how must you render such expressions in order to preserve their connotative implications? Illustrate, using the passages cited above.

Note the special literary qualities of the following passage from 1 Samuel 18:7:

Saul has slain his thousands,  
and David his ten thousands!

What is the deeper meaning of this lyric hyperbole?

What problem did this implicit but obviously emphatic meaning cause for David?

Such poetic insertions in a narrative always foreground the content of what is being said. The hyperbolic nature of the utterance serves to heighten its level of emotive expression and the effect upon an audience.

Explain how this is manifested in Genesis 4:23–24.

Is hyperbole a common feature in your literary tradition? If so, is it found primarily in prose, poetry, or both?

Does hyperbole need to be overtly marked in a special way? If so, explain how, and illustrate this using one or more of the passages considered above.

## 5. Irony and sarcasm

*Irony* and the similar device of *sarcasm* are perhaps the most difficult devices to recognize and then translate with equivalent effect in another language. Irony is frequently used to convey an indirect complaint or criticism, but this is only implied by the words that are actually uttered. The speaker says one thing but means something else; the underlying intent of the words does not match their overt content in the setting of use. There is usually some manner of contra-expectation involved: something happens or is spoken that seems out of place. Thus the listener(s) must search for relevance elsewhere in the speech situation.

Sarcasm is a more intense and forceful type of irony. The speaker clearly desires to ridicule, reprove, rebuke, warn, condemn, or verbally injure the addressee. In the tense debate between Job and his friends, irony and even sarcasm often appear, as in the following examples:

Doubtless you are the people, and wisdom will die with you! (Job 12:1)

If only you would be altogether silent – for you, that would be wisdom! (Job 13:5)

Will your long-winded speeches never end? What ails you that you keep on arguing? (Job 16:3)

How you have helped the powerless! How you have saved the arm that is feeble! (Job 26:2)

Here Job is criticizing the faint “comfort” of his friends. Notice that the rhetorical questions, which abound in this debate, may have an ironic tone as well, as in the following example:

Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations? Tell me if you understand.  
Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! (Job 38:4–5a)

Thus Yahweh himself employs irony to help Job recognize his problem – that he is God and Job is a mere mortal. The aim is to correct Job's point of view and to provide him with a glimpse of things from a divine perspective, which often differs radically from a human point of view.

How do you express the chiding tone of Yahweh's questions in YL?

## F. Shifting patterns

The category of *shifting patterns* includes a miscellaneous collection of linguistic forms that may be manipulated for particular rhetorical impact. Such a pointed shift is manifested in a poetic text whenever the poet utilizes a deliberate departure from the norms of discourse in order to foreground a specific aspect of content or create some special artistic or emotive effect, perhaps also to help mark a new unit within the larger text (as discussed in section 5.1.7).

There are four types of shift that are exemplified below: *pronouns*, *word order*, *insertion*, and *style*. Once again it will be necessary to inspect the Hebrew text or an interlinear version, if possible, to see what is going on in each case.

### 1. Pronouns

Observe where a prominent pronominal shift (*enallage*) occurs here in Psalm 46; the pronouns change, but the personal referent remains the same:

- <sup>8</sup> Come and see the works of the LORD,  
the desolations he has brought on the earth.  
<sup>9</sup> He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth;  
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear,  
he burns the shields with fire.  
<sup>10</sup> Be still, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth.  
<sup>11</sup> The LORD Almighty is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

What discourse function does such a variation serve in this case?

Does a literal rendering work in your language? If not, do you have a functional equivalent that would serve the same purpose?

Observe the pronoun shift in the following passage from Joel 3:

- <sup>16</sup> The LORD will roar from Zion  
and thunder from Jerusalem;  
the earth and the sky will tremble.  
But the LORD will be a refuge for his people,  
a stronghold for the people of Israel.  
<sup>17</sup> Then you will know that I, the LORD your God,  
dwell in Zion, my holy hill.  
Jerusalem will be holy;  
never again will foreigners invade her.

What purpose does this pronoun shift carry out in this case?

Is there any additional marking that you must use in YL to make this discourse boundary clear?

### 2. Word order

The normal *word order* for finite verb clauses in Hebrew prose is Verb + Subject + Object. For non-finite verb clauses it is Subject + Verb + Object. For verbless clauses it is Topic + Comment. Word order, along with other devices such as pronominalization, syntactic dependency relations, additional qualifying attribution, and varied transitional expressions, is used to establish as well as to modify the information structure of a discourse.

Where the default syntactic pattern is not observed, and the subject or object (or some other nominal constituent) is *fronted* to the beginning of a clause and before the main verb, or in some other way dislocated,<sup>3</sup> one of two things is signaled: Either a new topic is introduced (or reintroduced) into the discourse (*topicalization*) or some information in the text is marked as being in focus (*focalization*), meaning that the information is somehow novel, more important, or topically contrastive in relation to the cotext.<sup>4</sup> The current topic is “given” and engages a listener’s attention throughout a sequence of utterances, while an element in focus manifests a higher level of cognitive salience, but usually for only a single sentence. The term *emphasis* may then be used in a specific sense to indicate the particular semantic stress or emotive intensity that is placed (e.g., through repetition) upon a given word or phrase within a clause unit. The wider context and perhaps also some special linguistic marking such as a distinctive intonational pattern or discourse particles, usually indicate what is in focus versus what is emphasized (see Dooley and Levinsohn 2001, chap. 11).

These rules for prose may or may not apply to poetry, however; there are other reasons for moving certain syntactic elements around within the short poetic clause (colon). Such reasons would be (1) for the sake of euphony (a pleasing sound), (2) for the sake of a flowing *rhythm*, or (3) to create topical focus by means of an *antithetical* chiasmus (especially in Proverbs). It requires a rather close and careful analysis to determine which function is being effected by the word order shift – a study that translators may have to leave to the commentators to sort out. But if translators can consult the Hebrew text, it is worthwhile to note any prominent departures from the syntactic norm (by means of a discourse chart, as described in section 3.6.6). Any such modification may prove to be supplementary evidence to support their interpretation of a point of special emphasis, a change in subject, a reinforcement of the basic theme of a passage, or a structural boundary (normally a new beginning).

Note the word order in Psalm 12:5a–b. What sort of syntactic constituent begins this verse?

“Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy,  
I will now arise,” says the LORD...

Check out the cotext of this verse and suggest what this front-shifting helps to mark in terms of the overall structure and/or the main theme or argument of Psalm 12.

Is word order used similarly to indicate focus in YL? If not, which devices are used instead?  
Illustrate with reference to Psalm 12:5a–b.

The following are literal renderings of Nahum 1:7a, 8a, 9a, and 11a:

<sup>3</sup> At times, an element may be foregrounded (focused) by placing it at the end of the clause outside its expected position (termed back-shifting). In a recent insightful article, Stephen Levinsohn (2006b:14) has clarified what is going on in such cases: According to the “Principle of natural information flow” (Jan Firbas) non-verbal constituents that convey old, established information are placed before those that convey new, non-established information, with the most important piece of non-established information coming last in the sentence/clause. An example is found in 1 Cor. 2:7b – ἣν προώρισεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν, literally, ‘which he ordained God before the ages for the glory of us’. The amazing fact that sinful mortals—those indwelt by God’s Spirit—will one day be glorified thus occurs last in the clause.

<sup>4</sup> This is admittedly an inadequate, oversimplified treatment of a rather complex, though very important subject in the linguistic (and literary) analysis of biblical discourse. For more detailed studies, see Floor 2004, Lunn 2006, and Levinsohn 2006b. Over 30 years ago, K. Callow pointed out a threefold distinction in types of “prominence,” which refers “to any device whatever which gives certain events, participants, or objects more significance than others in the same context” (1974:50). We thus have topic, “‘This is what I’m talking about’...[which] contributes to the progression of the narrative or argument,” focus, “‘This is important, listen’...[which] picks out items of thematic material as being of particular interest or significance,” and emphasis, “which says to the hearer either, ‘You didn’t expect that, did you?’, or ‘Now, I feel strongly about this.’ In other words, emphasis has two different functions: it highlights an item of information which the narrator [author/speaker] considers will be surprising to the hearer, or else it warns the hearer that the emotions of the speaker are quite strongly involved” (1974:52). In cases where **two** syntactic constituents occur before the main verb, the **first** will be a new (or resumed) **topic**, while the **second** constitutes the information having some special contrastive or emphatic **focus** (Levinsohn 2006b:13).

Good (is) Yahweh, for a refuge in a day of trouble...

And with an overwhelming flood, an end (of Nineveh) he will make her place...

Whatever you (pl.) plot against Yahweh, an end (to it) he is bringing...

From you (Nineveh) he came forth, the one plotting against Yahweh evil...

Observe the front-shifted syntactic constituents within the wider context of each of the above passages from Nahum 1 and then consult different translations and perhaps the *Translator's Handbook on Nahum* (Clark and Hatton 1989).

Can you suggest why these particular features are positioned at the head of their respective clauses?

Is it to heighten a contrast, to spotlight a participant, to mark a strophic boundary, to emphasize an aspect of Nahum's primary theme, or to effect some combination of these?

How would you signal the distinct rhetorical functions that you find here in YL?

### 3. Insertion

Insertion is a poetic device that involves a very specific shift in Hebrew word order. It is patterned according to the formula A – X – B, where A–B is a standard grammatical construction that has an unexpected, seemingly misplaced or added element, X, inserted within it for special effect (especially for focus or emphasis). The included text may be a single word, a phrase, or an entire clause (colon). The following is an example (rendered literally):

For not you delight in sacrifice,  
and (or) I would bring (it);  
burnt offering not you take pleasure in. (Ps. 51:16 [v. 18 in the Hebrew text])

The added verb in the middle (וְאִנִּי אֶבְרֹךְ) falls outside the regular accent pattern of the surrounding A and B cola, but semantically it could apply to either line, which thus emphasizes its content. It also anticipates the climactic meaning of the next verse, verse 17 (v. 19 in the Hebrew text), which concludes the strophe.

In the next example the first and third lines are grammatically very similar, while the inserted middle line manifests some noticeable differences, including the shift from a third person to a second person singular pronoun (enallage). In this case, the absolute medial utterance reinforces the descriptive praises on either side of it.

There is no Holy One like YHWH,  
indeed, there is no (One) besides you (sg.);  
and there is no Rock like our God! (1 Sam. 2:2)

How could you reproduce this heightening effect in YL?

Can you retain the word order of the biblical text, or not? Explain your answer.

In Psalm 24:6, below, there is a double insertion, A – X + X' – B: The initial construct clause "This is (these are) the generation(s) of Jacob" is interrupted by two descriptive expressions that characterize the sort of persons who are being referred to. The verse may therefore be expressed prosaically as "The true descendants of Jacob are people who seek after God and long to come into his presence."

This [is the] generation of  
the ones who pursue him [God],  
the seekers of your [God's] face,  
Jacob. Selah. (Ps. 24:6)

Notice how this verse is rendered in the standard English versions. Does any one of them get it right?

The NEB has: "Such purity characterizes the people who seek his favor, Jacob's descendants, who pray to him." Suggest any improvements to this rendition that come to mind.

How will this affect its translation into YL?

#### 4. Style

The category of *style* covers a variety of distinctive cases – features that are difficult to classify anywhere else. The Hebrew poet or prophet may creatively employ his literary skills, his personal style, to inject some formal and/or semantic surprise into the text. Usually, he does this through a pronounced modification in the current referential content, an ordinary linguistic construction, the prevailing connotative tone, or the general communicative purpose. Style is not a gratuitous flourish, however, or simply an attempt to display one's artistic technique; rather, it is applied to serve the poet's message. Therefore, an analyst must always study the text from several different literary perspectives in order to determine a form's most likely communicative function.

Compare the two passages below and note the variations between them:

Therefore because-of-you they-have-withheld the-heavens their-dew  
and-the-earth it-has-withheld its-crops. (Hag. 1:10)

and-the-ground it-will-produce its-crop  
and-the-heavens they-will-drop their-dew. (Zech. 8:12)

Did you notice the chiasmus in the Haggai text? Could there be any special significance to this?

If Zechariah is quoting Haggai (as seems likely), what effect do his changes have on the specific meaning and rhetorical impact of these words?

In this case, the different situational settings and communication goals of the two prophets probably provide the explanation for this contrastive type of intertextuality.

Can you suggest any reason for these differences, based on changed religious and rhetorical circumstances (cf. the general order reflected in Deut. 28:11–12; see also Hag. 2:19)?

There is an unexpected utterance and a decided stylistic shift in the following text (Amos 9:1b–4):

Strike the tops of the pillars  
so that the thresholds shake.  
Bring them down on the heads of all the people;  
those who are left I will kill with the sword.  
Not one will get away,  
none will escape.  
Though they dig down to the depths of the grave,  
from there my hand will take them.  
Though they climb up to the heavens,  
from there I will bring them down.  
Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel,  
there I will hunt them down and seize them.  
Though they hide from me at the bottom of the sea,  
there I will command the serpent to bite them.  
Though they are driven into exile by their enemies,  
there I will command the sword to slay them.  
I will fix my eyes upon them  
for evil and not for good.

Where does the unexpected change in content and stylistic shift occur?

What is their apparent purpose?

Would a literal rendering in YL convey this effect? If not, what would do this in a subtle, but perceptible way?

Notice that the rhythmic pattern established by the prolonged sequence of concessive clauses is broken at the end of Amos 9:1b–4 with a summary statement featuring a strong anthropomorphism that reverses the usual application and connotation of this figure (cf. Pss. 33:18 and 34:15). Notice too that the closing

mention of a sword of judgement echoes a similar utterance at the beginning, thereby marking a partial *inclusio* for this strophe. Amos is full of these suddenly introduced, shocking pronouncements of judgement upon a people who were proud and complacent in their pious godlessness. Often a pointed *reversal in expectation* is expressed within the context, like the concluding refrain “yet you have not returned to me” in chapter 4. The prophet thus suggests that people who continually refuse to heed God’s call to repentance will one day, perhaps all too soon, hear his summons for punishment.

## G. Discourse structure

The discourse arrangement of a literary text normally displays the unity of a particular discourse “design,” though with varying degrees of clarity.<sup>5</sup> This verbal framework is constituted by the interaction of several compositional forces within a given text as a whole, each of which manifests a particular structure or pattern that is relatively more regular and predictable. Such organizational devices are distinct from the use of conventional genres, which results from a deliberate holistic choice on the part of an author. They are, probably, for the most part the product of a given author’s intuitive skill in terms of artistic compositional strategy and technique.

The different aspects of textual architecture need to be considered both individually and also in combination during any discourse analysis of a complete book, section, or pericope. These design features serve to identify the principal *units* of a given text, the spatial *arrangement* of these units with respect to one another, and the semantic *relationships* they have to each other as well as to the composition as a whole. After a brief definition of each type of structural variable, I will attempt to show how they interact in the realization of a familiar biblical passage well known for its outstanding literary-rhetorical quality—that is, its power of aesthetic attraction, emotive expression, and persuasive appeal.

The chief elements of discourse design, or textual tectonics, may be categorized for ease of reference into four distinct but interrelated compositional *processes* (functions)—segmentation, connection, projection, and progression—and also four corresponding stylistic *techniques* (forms), namely, recursion, interruption, concentration, and condensation. Each of the processes (which, taken together, normally characterize a well-formed literary text) is effected by the application of one or more of the techniques. This occurs either sequentially or in combination during the creation—or subsequent translation—of an artistic, affective verbal composition.<sup>6</sup>

### *The four PROCESSES of discourse design:*

The four primary processes of discourse design may be defined as follows:

- **Segmentation**—refers to the explicit and implicit demarcation of a text into a hierarchy of discrete but interrelated and diachronically organized compositional units from beginning to end, as well as inclusively from top to bottom, from the most to the least extensive structural segments.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> “Every literary analysis needs to deal with structure, since themes, images, ideas, and actions must be revealed through a literary framework” (P. House 1988:55). Furthermore, “one must discern the intent of a structure before making statements about it” (ibid.:56), for example, the manner in which the Book of Zephaniah is structured thematically around the notion of the day of the LORD—its present relevance and future implications.

<sup>6</sup> A literary approach to discourse analysis as proposed here is rather different from a strict linguistic methodology, but I would expect the respective results to correspond and converge in a number of important areas. The occurrence of any clashes or contrasts may mark points that require further study from one perspective or the other. No single method is sufficient to analyze a literary text completely, accurately, and relevantly; the most credible and helpful study normally involves a combined approach that selects and applies the principles and techniques of several different modes of analysis. Notable examples of a helpful linguistic procedure applied to biblical discourse include Longacre 1989 and Wiklander 1984 for the Old Testament, Guthrie 1994 and Levinsohn 1987 for the New.

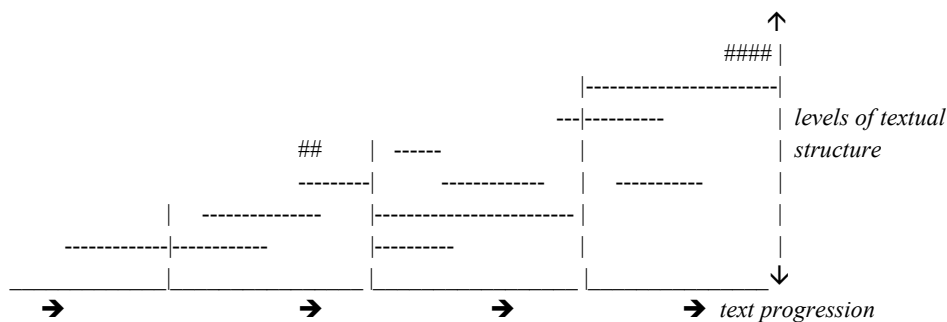
<sup>7</sup> The earliest (pre-Mishnaic) effort to segment the Hebrew text appears to be by means of intratextual markers to initiate longer and shorter sections, *petuah* or *peh* (π) and *setuma* or *samek* (σ) respectively. This ancient system forms the basis for the new “pericope series” of structurally oriented commentaries, e.g., Korpel 2001.



- **Connection**—refers to the internal bonding of a text in terms of varied spans of cohesion (formal junction), stretches of coherence (semantic and pragmatic linkage), and points of greater or lesser transition (the junction between and among different structural units).
- **Progression**—refers to the tendency for the semantic significance of a well-composed literary discourse to be teleological in nature, that is, purposefully forward-moving (goal-oriented) and cumulative in its overall development, with subsequent syntagmatic (contiguous) and paradigmatic (analogous) elements building resonantly and relationally upon those that have preceded them in the text (intra- and intertextuality).
- **Projection**—refers to the formal highlighting and marking of larger “areas” and foregrounded “points” of particular structural importance (“peak,” narrative or nonnarrative), emotive prominence (“climax”), and thematic salience (e.g., “topic” or “focus”), either within a part of the discourse, or with respect to the text as a complete whole.

These four processes that merge in the construction of any verbal text may be shown diagrammatically (in a very idealized and schematic fashion) as follows:

( [ | ] = segmentation, [----] = connection, [ ➔ ] = progression, [ # ] = projection)



#### **The four TECHNIQUES of discourse design:**

The four principal techniques of literary discourse design are defined as follows:

- **Recursion** has to do with the various types of verbal *reiteration*—complete or partial; synonymous, contrastive, or antonymous; phonological (e.g., rhythm, alliteration), grammatical (e.g., a repeated syntactic frame or verbal tense), and lexical (e.g., a key term or opening formula)—that occur on a significant scale locally or globally within a given text. It includes the repetition of items selected from the same set of semantically related words, concepts, or topics as well as the recursion of formal elements that create extended discourse linear or concentric patterns.
- **Interruption** is the opposite of recursion in that it involves a clear disjunctive *break* of some sort in the flow of forward discourse movement. For example, a novel element (or feature set) may be introduced, or there may be a *shift* in an existing component—a new: topic, imagery, point of focus, logical move, time, place, character, speaker, mood, or text type/genre.
- **Concentration** involves a conspicuous convergence, juxtaposition, or piling up of similar or diverse stylistic features (e.g., figurative language, intensifiers, rhetorical questions, repeated items, formulas, vocatives, or direct speech) intended to mark a compositional peak or border at a particular place in the discourse.
- **Condensation** is a deliberate deletion or shortening of overt text material (e.g., ellipsis, asyndeton, nominalization, pronominalization, allusion, summary) intended to create suspense, enigma, rhythm, or some special pattern of elements. It may also be employed as a marker within the larger discourse (e.g., to signal an initial or final compositional boundary) or used for stylistic purposes in keeping with a particular genre or subgenre (e.g., poetry > lyric > lament > penitential psalm).

The presence and operation of any of these techniques is established, described, and assessed with greater credibility and consequence on the basis of the criteria of quantity and quality. In this respect, *quantity* refers to the sheer number of compositional features that are present in a given text; by *quality* is meant their relative objectivity, diversity, compatibility, perceptibility, and novelty.

The application of any individual or combination of the preceding techniques, *recursion* in particular, serves to create symmetrical arrangements and significant patterns of textual material such as parallelism, alternation, terracing, *inclusio*, *exclusio*, chiasmic transposition (from the A-B-A “ring” to much longer element inversions), *anaphora*, *anadiplosis*, *epiphora*, refrains. These different tectonic devices may be represented in formulas as follows (The brackets designate a discrete structural unit):

- **parallelism** = A+A', B+B', C+C' ...;
- **alternation** = A+B, A'+B', A''+B'' ...;
- **terracing** = A+B, B'+C, C'+D ...;
- **inclusio** = [A ... A'];
- **exclusio** = A [...] A';
- **chiasmus** = A+B+C ... C'+B'+A';
- **anaphora** = [A...] + [A'...] + [A''...] ...;
- **anadiplosis** = [... A] + [A' ...];
- **epiphora** = [... A] + [... A'] + [... A''] ....
- A **refrain** is similar to either anaphora or epiphora, but does not necessarily occur as part of a given structural unit.

For further explanation and illustration of such markers, see Dorsey 1999, chap. 2, Wendland 1995b, chaps. 2-3, and Wendland 2002b:208-210. Other, more specific linguistic markers should also be noted, for example, the occurrence of progressive, pragmatically determined variations in main topic and central focus throughout a given text, for example, in ancient Hebrew narrative by means of a NP + *qatal* clause (see Heimerdinger 1999:261–263).

There are also a number of important structural *markers* in biblical literature that along with the recursion patterns help us to identify the organization of a particular text. These appear with significance at the following points of compositional prominence:

- initial **aperture**, exemplified by typical opening formulas and expressions, intensifiers (vocative, rhetorical question, imperative), a preview summary or thematic orientation, asyndeton, contrast, change in setting, scene, subject matter, or major linguistic or literary form;
- final **closure**, exemplified by a concluding saying, maxim, formula, summary-conclusion, emphatic utterance, transitional expression (i.e., transitioning to the next topic or unit of discourse), and the ending of a particular linguistic, literary, or rhetorical pattern;
- internal **climax**, exemplified by vigorous action, a “crowded stage,” direct speech, a concentration of key terms, figurative language, theological focus, or some significant repetition of form or content, this last being the most usual. In the case of many biblical pericopes, prosaic or poetic, it is possible to distinguish two distinct high points—one thematic in nature (i.e., “peak”), the other emotive/pragmatic (i.e., “climax”).

A thorough architectural analysis of the Scriptures is essential for both exegesis and translation. Not only does it contribute to a better understanding of a given biblical text, but it also makes possible a more accurate representation of the original message in any TL (whether by textual or extra-textual means). A case in point is the value of discovering the pattern of synonymous transitional refrains in Matt. 7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 19:1, and 26:1 (“When Jesus had finished saying these things...”). This pattern suggests “a five book pattern that pays tribute to the Pentateuch and to Jesus as the new Moses” (Wilson 1997:42–43). Thus each “book” consists of an initial narrative and a subsequent discourse, for example, 3:1–4:25 (narrative) and 5:1–7:28 (discourse). Similarly, Guthrie’s detailed study (1994, chap. 6) of key-term constituted transitional constructions in the

Book of Hebrews uncovers several major and a few minor patterns that help explain in a credible way the intricate and meaningful (motivated) discourse structure of this seemingly repetitious and disconnected pastoral document. These different types of transition play a key role in functionally interrelating the blocks of exposition and exhortation that alternate throughout most of the text of Hebrews to embody the Christological macrotheme: “God has spoken to us in [his] Son” (ibid.:144). Guthrie concludes, “The author of Hebrews was a highly skilled individual, a ‘Mozart’ of oratory, and his discourse a ‘symphony’ of form” (ibid.:147).

Any systematic, comprehensively applied Literary-Rhetorical (L-R) study will reveal many more of these “musical” passages of the Scriptures, from the one-line motifs to the full-score overtures. Hopefully it will also motivate translators to make them resound more audibly, even beautifully in their mother tongue.

Thus the skillful application and varied combination of such literary processes and techniques (including overlapping, enclosed, and interlocking structures) has the potential to accomplish a variety of important text-rhetorical *functions*. These include the creation of discourse unity (harmony, wholeness, etc.), textual shaping (symmetry, balance, etc.), aesthetic appeal, emotive impact, stylistic appropriateness, semantic movement or transition (“interlude” as in Job 28), a progression to climax or resolution, topical focus (similarity or contrast), thematic emphasis, and message memorability.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, a biblical author (whether viewed as real or implied) utilized these design features in order to carry out certain communicative (interpersonal or “pragmatic”) purposes in relation to his intended audience and the exigencies of the particular rhetorical situation in which they are living, which in turn elicited the message at hand (see sec. 6.1). More specific, speech-act functions may then be designated according to the content and context at any given point in the discourse, for example, to instruct, warn, encourage, rebuke, inform, or console a text’s primary receptors as well as a more general readership or audience.

### A closer look at Hebrew poetic design, with reference to Joel

It behooves any biblical exegete, commentator, or textual critic to clarify at the outset the particular analytical approach that s/he has adopted for the task. My investigation of the “literary” (artistic-rhetorical) character of biblical poetry begins with the notion of *parallelism* and Roman Jakobson’s familiar, albeit rather enigmatic description of the essential parallel structure of all poetry: “The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the [paradigmatic] axis of selection into the [syntagmatic] axis of combination. Equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence” (1960:358; cf. Adele Berlin’s emphasis on “contiguity” as well as “equivalence” (1985:2). Hence, “[p]ervasive parallelism inevitably activates all the levels of [poetic] language” (1966:423). In short, where there is poetry, linguistic *correspondence is concentrated: similarity is superimposed upon sequence* (cf. Wendland 2007).

In other words, multiple formal and semantic resemblances are packed within standard poetic units (bicola, strophes). Thus, manifold *recurrence*—prosodic, morphological, lexical, syntactic, and as we will note especially in this study, *imagistic* reiteration—of various types, is artfully selected and harmoniously combined or condensed into line-forms, patterned sets of lines, and even larger parallel structures. The more distinct correspondences there are between the A and B segments, the more “poetic” the pairing normally sounds, and the more “marked” it is in terms of semantic and/or pragmatic significance. This is the creative motivation and compositional manner for all well-formed poetic texts, most notably in biblical Hebrew, and this feature must therefore figure prominently in any method that one uses to analyze and interpret them.

This poetic principle of *paradigmatic selection* superimposed upon *syntagmatic progression* in literary discourse may be readily illustrated from the current text. Take **Joel 1:10**, for example, as it has been spatialized in the following diagram:

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<sup>8</sup> Closely related to this final motive is *synopsis*, that is, skillfully condensing a much longer literary discourse down to its essentials for effective reporting, as in Paul’s sermon at the Areopagus. In this case, each clause or key word probably represents or is abstracted from a paragraph or more of actual speech (Acts 17:22–31).

field	it-is-destroyed	שָׂדֶה	שָׂדֶה
ground	it-mourns	אֲדָמָה	אֲבֵלָה
grain	it-is-destroyed <i>indeed</i>	דָּגָן	כִּי שָׂדֶה
new-wine	it-is-dried	תִּירוֹשׁ	הוֹבֵישׁ
oil	it-fails	יֵצֵהָר	אֲמָלָל

This passage reveals the recursion of linguistic elements as the text unfolds in time (as it is being heard) or in space (visually). The same two-word syntactic frame (V-S) is repeated, and this is filled with several interrelated sets of lexical fillers, i.e., for the subjects: field + ground, grain + new wine + oil; and for the verbs: it-is-destroyed, mourns (personification), destroyed (reiterated!), dried, fails. There are also instances of phonological reduplication, namely, through alliterated pairs of predications, e.g. שָׂדֶה שָׂדֶה, אֲבֵלָה אֲדָמָה, and הוֹבֵישׁ תִּירוֹשׁ. The overall pattern of parallelism that is produced serves to audibly underscore the speaker's point: the (once luxuriant) land has been totally depleted due to the devastating locust plague.

Thus, the feature of parallelism, as suggested by Jakobson's definition of the poetic principle above and illustrated in Joel 1:10, involves an even more basic literary device, namely, "recursion," which I consider to be the fundamental process within all elevated discourse, whether the emphasis is on form (artistry) or function (rhetoric). Such recursion may be manifested with respect to form, content, and/or function—and may involve the *exact* reiteration of elements (i.e., "repetition") or some manner of *correspondent* recycling (i.e., features that are synonymous, contrastive, logically associated [e.g., cause-effect], etc.).

The function of such a recursive use of poetic forms and meanings may be *pragmatic* (e.g., for topic, focus, emphasis) or *poetic* (esthetic, architectonic) in nature. In either case, there is some sort of *prominence* that is created by the recurrent elements (e.g., the command + vocative + reason syntactic pattern that is repeated at the onset of each new strophe in the first stanza [A] of Joel, 1:2-14). However, recursion can also serve as a *background* against which other, foregrounded features may be inserted (e.g., in the final, climactic strophe of stanza A [1:13-14], which now includes reference to the priests and the "house of YHWH")—or, which can signal prominence when the recursive pattern is suddenly broken (e.g., the recursive pattern of strophe-initial imperatives comes to an end at 1:15 with the exclamation, "Alas for the day!").

There are, in turn, four essential architectonic, or structural, functions: *bounding*, which pertains to the segmentation of a literary work into distinct units of structure; *bonding*, which pertains to the formal (cohesion) and semantic (coherence) unity of a given text segment; *pointing*, which pertains to areas of prominence that are created by a convergence of literary features within a given text; and *patterning*, which pertains to the various parallel structures (unfolding, alternating, chiasmic, introverted, etc.) that are created through recursion within a larger or smaller portion of text. These four functions were termed segmentation, connection, projection, and progression earlier (*use the descriptive terms that seem to fit best!*).

However, the structural operation of textual "bounding" on the basis of recursion needs further explanation. This function has various manifestations in biblical discourse (in the Former as well as the Latter Testament). Its main forms are summarized by way of formula and definition below with examples given from Joel (where A = a significant instance of recursion and [...] = a distinct discourse unit; cf. Wendland 2004:123-137):

- **Inclusio:** [A ... A'] – the A elements demarcate the *beginning* and *ending* of the *same* discourse unit, whether large or small, e.g., Joel 2:1, 11 (i.e., enclosing Stanza C of Oracle 2):  
For the day of the LORD is coming; indeed, it is near! ... Indeed, the day of the LORD is great and very terrible...
- **Chiasmus:** [A + B +/- C ... +/- C' + B' + A'] – this is a case of *inverted parallelism* within the same discourse unit, e.g., Joel 2:30-31 (i.e., delineating strophe 2 of Stanza B'):  
A "And I will give portents in *the heavens*  
B and on the *earth*,  
B' *blood* and *fire* and columns of *smoke*. (The chiasmic pattern reveals the earthly location of these signs.)  
A' The *sun* shall be turned to darkness, and the *moon* to blood, (**Note:** B'—*blood* + *smoke*; A' *darkness* + *blood*.)  
before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes."

- **Anaphora:** [A] ... [A'] – the key recursive elements demarcate the respective *beginnings* of *different* discourse units, whether adjacent or separated within the text, e.g., Joel 2:1,15 (begin Stanza C-1; D-2):  
*Blow the trumpet on Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Tremble, people of Judah! ...*  
*Blow the trumpet on Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly!*
- **Epiphora:** [...A] ... [...A'] – the key recursive elements demarcate the respective *endings* of *different* discourse units, whether adjacent or separated within the text, e.g., Joel 2:17, 3:20-21 (end Part I & II):  
*"Spare thy people, O LORD, and make not thy heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations.*  
*Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?' "...*  
*But Judah shall be inhabited for ever, and Jerusalem to all generations. ...*  
*Indeed, the LORD dwells in Zion!"*
- **Anadiplosis:** [...A] [A'...] – the recursive elements demarcate the distinct *beginning* and *ending* of *adjacent* discourse units within the text, e.g., Joel 2:17, 18-19 (strophes 2 and 3 of Stanza D):  
*"Spare thy people, O LORD, and make not thy heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations.*  
*Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?' "*  
*Then the LORD became jealous for his land, and had pity on his people.*  
*The LORD answered and said to his people, "...and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations."*  
*(The example of 2:17 reveals that the same text can carry out several demarcative functions.)*

The critical linguistic features which, by their *recursion* in a text, serve to establish poetic equivalence—whether *analogous* or *antithetical* in nature—may incorporate four basic types of discourse organization. These linguistic levels may be ranked according to their putative degree of perceptibility and perhaps also translatability in written (read) discourse as follows: **phonological** (e.g., alliteration, punning, intonation); **lexical-semantic** (e.g., use of synonyms and antonyms); **syntactic** (e.g., the phrasal order of clause constituents); **morphological** (e.g., the progression of tense, number, gender, etc.). Jakobson's abstract axiom—sameness superimposed upon the sequence of form and meaning—is reflected more concretely then in the device of poetic **parallelism**, which in one verbal manner and means or another characterizes more from less "poetic" works (oral or written) in every language. In Hebrew poetry, for example, this is normally manifested in the series of coupled lines, or cola, which comprise a given text.

It is important to recognize that a poetic couplet, whether consisting of the usual three or sometimes more lines, may be **contiguous** (adjacent) or **detached** (distant, or displaced) in nature, as illustrated in the hypothetical (and greatly simplified) diagram below. In this figure **W**, **X**, **Y**, and **Z** symbolize individual words (accent-units) or phrases that exhibit one or more reiterated and equivalent linguistic features (i.e., phonological, morphemic-affixal, syntactic, or lexical-semantic); a **O** refers to a word having no significant feature that either corresponds or contrasts with those just mentioned; [/] indicates a colon-half line boundary and [/ /] a verse (bi-/tri-colon) boundary:

W	X	Y	Z	/	Z	W	X	/	X	Y	O	//	O	/	O	//	O	O	O	/	O	O	O	//	O	Y	Z	W	//
O	X	Z	/	O	O	O	//	O	O	O	/	O	O	O	//	O	O	/	O	O	O	//	O	O	Z	/	W	Z	

This formulaic sequence would indicate a poem of 16 lines. It leads off with a 4:3:3 tricolon and ends with a 3:2 bicolon that features three elements, Z-W-X, which are parallel to those occurring initially in the text (i.e., an *inclusio*). The discourse appears to be divided up into two equal parts (stanzas) of eight lines each, with the final monocolon of part one (OYZW) also constituting an *inclusio* through verbal resonance with its beginning. In addition, the first line of stanza two (XOZ) illustrates another important area of equivalence in the form of detached parallelism with the initial line of the poem (i.e., similar unit openings = *anaphora*), as well as the feature of a hinge, or overlap construction (*anadiplosis*) with the immediately preceding line (i.e., in the repeated 'Z' element). However, one would expect that at least one significant element in the line that leads off the second strophe (OXZ) should indicate a semantic "break" at that point, e.g., a new topic-focused subject (O). Finally, the endings of both stanzas have similarities too (i.e., OYZW and OZYX), a structural correspondence termed *epiphora* (as defined above). The following spatial diagram may display the various distinctions discussed above more clearly:

1. **WXYZ**
2. **ZWX**
3. **XYO**
- //
4. **OOO**
5. **OO**
- //
6. **OOO**
7. **OOO**
- //
8. **OYZW** (inclusio—1)
- //
- //
9. **OXZ** (anaphora—1, anadiplosis—8)
10. **OOO**
- //
11. **OOO**
12. **OOO**
- //
13. **OO**
14. **OOO**
- //
15. **OOZ**
16. **WYZ** (inclusio—1, epiphora—8)

To illustrate how the preceding principles of recursion operate within a longer poetic text, a sample analysis of **Joel 3:9-19** is given below. One important aspect to note in the following discussion is that the device of *inclusio* is not the only one operating to determine these unit boundaries (as seems to be the case in many commentaries). Rather, *inclusio* is just one of several indicators of structural boundaries, whether aperture or closure (cf. also *anaphora*, *epiphora*, *anadiplosis*, etc.), and these bounding features must also be used in conjunction with the other principles noted (bonding, pointing, patterning) in order to derive a more accurate picture of the discrete section and how it fits within the context of the structural whole that encloses it.

<p><sup>3:9</sup> Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare war,  stir up the warriors. Let all the men of war draw near, let them come up.  <sup>10</sup> Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears;  let <u>the weak</u> say, “I am <u>a warrior</u>!” <sup>11</sup> Hasten and come, all you nations round about, gather yourselves there.  Bring down thy warriors, O LORD!</p>	<p><sup>9</sup> קְרֹאוּ־זֹאת בְּגוֹיִם קִדְּשׁוּ מִלְחָמָה הַעִירוּ הַגִּבּוֹרִים יָגִשׁוּ יַעֲלֹו כָּל־אֲנָשֵׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה: <sup>10</sup> כְּתוּ אֶת־יֶדְכֶם לַחֲרָבוֹת וּמִזְמֶרְתֵּיכֶם לְרִמָּחִים הַחֲלֵשׁ יֹאמֶר גִּבּוֹר אָנִי: <sup>11</sup> עוֹשׂוּ וּבָאוּ כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם מִסָּבִיב וְנִקְבְּצוּ שָׁמָּה הַנִּתַּח יְהוָה גִּבּוֹרִיד:</p>
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Oracle 4 (3:1–17)

**Stanza D'** (3:9–17): **The nations are summoned for slaughter** <sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> There is considerably more diversity of scholarly opinion regarding the boundaries as well as the internal strophic divisions of this stanza (3:9-17). Some commentators appear to construe the entire section as a collection of topically related group of “restoration promises, all of which in one way or another give reassurance that Israel’s

**D', Strophe 1 (3:9–11)**

A string of commands marks the onset of Stanza D', as Joel takes over the discourse from the LORD (cf. “for YHWH has spoken—**כִּי יְהוָה דִּבֶּר**: **ס** in 3:8c), announcing a final implementation of the LORD’s prediction of 3:1-2 (thematic *anaphora*). These imperative forms (or jussives) continue throughout the unit (a prominent sequence of initial **י**- sounds). The paired commands “proclaim...sanctify” (**דַּשְׁק...קְרֹא**) pointedly recall (in reversed order) the very different scenario of 2:15, while the verb “stir up” (**עֹרֵר**) in v. 9 with reference to the pagan “nations” (4x in this strophe) duplicates its usage in v. 7 with reference to the Jews (i.e., all these are instances of contrastive *anaphora*). There is more powerful *irony* operating here: Instead of a “holy war” being waged against the enemies of YHWH (e.g., Isa. 8:9-10; Jer. 46:3-6, 9-10; Ezek. 38-39), the same militaristic terminology is being used, ostensibly to rouse those very enemies to battle. The concept of reversal is further foregrounded in v. 10 as an obvious allusion to Isaiah 2:4 (Micah 4:3) is transformed into the opposite, and even “the weak man” (ironic new topic) is called upon (in direct speech) to be a “warrior” (predicate focus; cf. Deut. 20:3-4)! Such a semantic inversion prefigures the strophe’s content on a larger scale with respect to “the (pagan) nations” (**גּוֹיִם**) (vv. 9a, 11a; i.e., *inclusio*). The end of this strophe in v. 11c is marked (*closure*) by the prophet’s personal interjection—an emotive, exclamative plea to God for immediate judicial and punitive action: **הִנֵּה יְהוָה גְּבוּרִיד** (another ironic *inclusio* with v. 9)—which YHWH forcefully and decisively responds to in the very next strophe.

<p><sup>12</sup> “Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for <u>there is where</u> I will sit to judge all the nations round about.”</p> <p><sup>13</sup> Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe</p>	<p><sup>12</sup> יַעֲזֹרוּ וַיַּעֲלֵוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֶל-עֵמֶק יְהוֹשָׁפָט כִּי <span style="border: 1px solid black;">שָׁם</span> אֵשֵׁב לִשְׁפֹּט אֶת-כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם מִסָּבִיב: שְׁלַחוּ מִגֶּל <sup>13</sup> כִּי בִשָּׁל קֶצֶר</p>
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enemies will be dispensed with so that Israel (Judah and Jerusalem) may have peace” (Stuart 1987:265; cf. Finley 1990:93-94, and Barton, who adds, “What is not clear is where the unit ends”; 2001:103). Others discern 3:9-11 as an independent strophe, but do not differentiate the following material (e.g., Dillard 1992:305, 308; Sweeney 2000:181-182; Garrett puts vv. 9-12 together, but only loosely connects the material in vv. 13-17). Allen comes the closest to my proposed demarcation, differing only at v. 12, i.e., coherent strophes comprising 9-12, 13-14, 15-17 (1976:106-107, 116). However, Allen also considers vv. 9-12 to be the concluding strophe of the larger unit (stanza) covering 3:1-12, viz. “The last section [9-12] resumes vv. 1-3 and so rounds off the unit” (*ibid.*:114). This is indeed a viable alternative, including his incorporation of v. 12 into this section. But for the literary-structural reasons cited below, I prefer my own macro-segmentation, which is supported by Barton 2001:102, Dillard 2002:305, Garrett 1997:384, and Sweeney 2000:181. Most English translations begin a new principal section at 3:9, but there is much disagreement as to where this unit ends and how it is internally segmented. A few versions like REB do not incorporate any strophes at all within vv. 9-17, while others posit as many as six (e.g., NRSV). Several popular translations (e.g., NIV and GNT) end the stanza at v. 16 instead of v. 17, as suggested above, which is possible, but as I argue below, less likely.

So, what difference does such paragraphing make within a text? If, as commonly defined, a *paragraph* is a group of sentences (or utterances) that are related by a common topic that differs in one or more respects from surrounding paragraphs, then its significance becomes clear: The paragraph is a vital element in the organization of thought and discourse, and therefore great care must be taken both when composing a text into paragraph units and also when using these units to interpret the meaning of a given text, whether oral or written.

Go in, tread, for the wine press is full.	בָּאוּ רָדוּ כִּי־מְלֵאָה גֶּת
The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great.	הַשִּׁיקוּ הַיְקָבִים כִּי רַבָּה רָעָתָם:
<sup>14</sup> Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision!	<sup>14</sup> הַמוֹנִים הַמוֹנִים בְּעֶמֶק הַחֲרוּץ
Yes, the day of the LORD is <u>near</u> in the valley of decision.	כִּי קָרוֹב יוֹם יְהוָה בְּעֶמֶק הַחֲרוּץ:

# **D', Strophe 2 (3:12-14)**

The wicked may think that they are mustering for a war against YHWH and his people “in the Valley of Jehoshaphat” (אֶל־עֶמֶק יְהוֹשָׁפָט - cf. 3:2, *anaphora*), but in fact they are gathering themselves for judgment “there” (שם—front-shift focus) before the LORD, as the meaning of “Jeho-shaphat” implies (i.e., an onomastic pun with dramatic irony)! What a surprise: The pagan nations come all prepared for battle, but instead they arrive only to experience the punitive “harvest” of the LORD’s “judgment” (a thematic reversal of passages like Isa. 17:4-6; Hos. 6:11; Amos 8:1-3)! YHWH (apparently) shouts out commands to his “warriors” (perhaps in response to the prophet’s poignant appeal of v. 11c) to destroy the “multitudes” of defeated enemies (הַמוֹנִים הַמוֹנִים—an onomatopoeic phrase; cf. Isa. 13:4, 17:12), which alludes back to the locust hordes (e.g., 2:11). Familiar grape harvest imagery (v. 13b-c; cf. Isa. 63:3; Jer. 25:30; Lam. 1:15) is now applied to a war scenario, as the “Valley of Jehoshaphat” (v. 12) turns out to be the “Valley of Decision” (עֶמֶק הַחֲרוּץ)—i.e., YHWH’s punishment implemented (v. 14).

There is high emotive tension that accompanies this highly animated scene in which God has turned the tables on all the adversaries of his people. Figurative language colors the vast panorama that is being depicted, and from v. 13 a fast, two-foot meter propels the action taking place at the LORD’s winepress forward to reach a thematic peak in the repetitive, judgment imagery at the end (v. 14). A strophic peak as well as *closure* is also signaled by the non-verbal utterance of v.14 with its reference to “YHWH’s day” being “near” (predicate focus, 14b, which is introduced by a fourth, now climactic כִּי; cf. 1:15; 2:1,11) and “the valley of decision” (cf. 3:2,12— double *inclusio*; cf. Obad. 15). Thus, the dramatic stage has been broadly set by the LORD for the subsequent, even more impressive strophes of this prophecy-concluding stanza.

<sup>15</sup> <u>The sun and the moon</u> are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.	<sup>15</sup> שֶׁמֶשׁ וִירַח קִדְרוּ וְכּוֹכְבִים אָסְפוּ נִגְהָם:
<sup>16</sup> And <u>the LORD</u> roars <u>from Zion</u> , and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shake.	<sup>16</sup> וַיְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁאַג וּמִירוּשָׁלַם יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ וַיִּרְעֹשׁוּ שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ



<p>But the LORD is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel.</p> <p><sup>17</sup> “So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who dwell in Zion, my holy mountain. And Jerusalem shall be a sanctuary, <u>and strangers</u> shall never again pass through it.”</p>	<p>וַיְהִי הָיָה מְחֻסָּה לְעַמּוֹ וּמְעוֹז לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>17</sup> וַיֵּדְעוּתֶם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם שׁוֹכֵן בְּצִיּוֹן הַר־קֹדֶשׁ וְהָיְתָה יְרוּשָׁלַם קֹדֶשׁ וְלֹא־יַעֲבֹר־בָּהּ עוֹד: ס</p>
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<p><b>D', Strophe 3 (3:15-17)</b></p> <p>Eschatological “sun-moon-stars” (all darkened!) imagery (v. 15, initial topic shift; = 2:10, with contrastive content and structural <i>anaphora</i>; cf. 2:31) dramatize the continued battle scene as YHWH executes (lit. “roars”- שָׁאָג) judgment “from Zion...Jerusalem” (with locative constituent focus to highlight צִיּוֹן; cf. Amos 1:2; Jer. 25:30-31). This strophe’s description of יְהוָה (v. 15) echoes those found in earlier segments of Joel (2:10-11 and 30-32, now with a decidedly cumulative impact. A sudden introduction of the impressive <i>divine recognition formula</i> (וַיֵּדְעוּתֶם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם) in v. 17a forges an important thematic linkage between the deliverance (2:27) and vindication of God’s people vis a vis their erstwhile enemies (topical <i>epiphora</i>). This segment of momentous direct speech by YHWH also acts as a transition to the final culmination of the prophecy (3:18-21). Verse 17 is marked by the key locative terms and their qualifiers (“Zion, my holy mountain...Jerusalem holy”) to further underscore this passage (coupled with v. 16) as being the <i>peak</i>, not only of the present strophe and stanza, but also of Part Two of Joel’s message. A very specific prophetic blessing concludes the strophe: “strangers” (a new topic, זָרִים), i.e., those who are alien to the LORD and his covenant community, will never again pollute their sacred space! (a thematic reversal of 2:11,17—contrastive <i>epiphora</i>; cf. Obad. 17; Isa. 35:8). The personal presence of YHWH himself will forever ensure the holiness of “Zion” (צִיּוֹן)!</p>
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## Summary

In biblical poetry, the factor of *equivalence* governs the mode of syntagmatic combination with respect to the principle of poetic *balanced* lineation. Thus, there appears to be a phonological (rhythmic-lexical, or metrical-syllabic) constraint that operates in a more or less rigorous fashion to determine the syntactic limits of line length. Psalmic verse, for example, is fluid in this respect, the average colon ranging between two and five accent units (the average is three “phonic words” of this nature); this seems to compare reasonably well with the example from Joel above. The regularity manifested in the Hebrew poetic tradition is not as tightly symmetrical nor as rigidly controlled as in other literatures. But this is a significant feature nevertheless, for such freedom allows for the interruption of established linguistic patterns, in effect creating a “break” or point of meaningful discontinuity within the text.

Furthermore, the relative brevity of line length accounts for another typical characteristic of such poetic composition, namely, its *conciseness* or terseness. The result in terms of style is a formally and semantically condensed mode of expression in which each word, indeed every single morpheme, is carefully (often sonically) positioned to play an essential part in generating the concentrated, semantically resonant message that the poet (psalmist, prophet) wishes to convey—whether directly by word, or indirectly by allusion.

The normal psalm or prophetic oracle in its canonical context thus embodies a dense and dynamic communication *network*, in which associative (connotative, expressive, aesthetic) meaning also plays a crucial role. It is a complete, unified verbal composition consisting of many overlapping *syntagmatic* (horizontal) and *paradigmatic* (vertical) connections. These textual links manifest an unfolding, progressively amplified, yet

closely integrated system of semantic representation and pragmatic function. The individual text also resonates *intertextually* with other texts in the tradition (e.g., the Psalter's corpus of five "books") and *extratextually* with the entire cultural-religious framework of Israel (e.g., the concepts of "law," "covenant," "prophecy," and "YHWH"). Individual instances of continuity and discontinuity tend to permeate an entire poetic piece, variously combining and interrelating with each other to structure and shape the discourse more intricately by means of prominent patterns and points of significance. Such an artistically embellished form serves in turn to magnify a work's overall communicative potential—cognitively, emotively, and volitionally as well. Both compositional forces are necessary, for *patterns* cannot be created without *points* to establish limits and boundaries, while *points* have no meaning in isolation from larger *patterns* of linguistic organization.

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