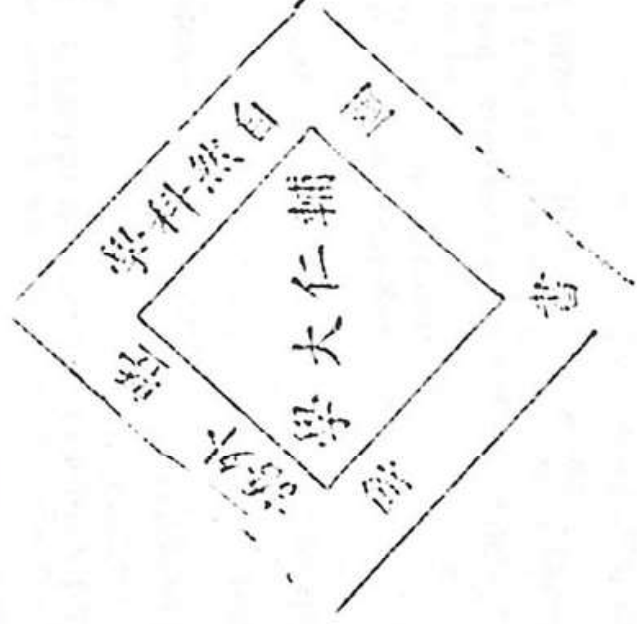




Interpreting Hebrew Poetry

by
**DAVID L. PETERSEN and
KENT HAROLD RICHARDS**



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INTERPRETING HEBREW POETRY

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Editor's Foreword

It is hardly possible to understand the Hebrew Bible without coming to terms with Hebrew poetry. Although unlike the poetry of modern Western languages in many important respects, Hebrew poetry is dense, rich, and often enigmatic language that calls for and evokes careful reading.

Until quite recently, however, biblical scholars felt confident about their understanding of most of the basic features of Hebrew poetry. But a number of important proposals have appeared that call older theories into question, making it clear that this language is not as simple as it appeared to be only a decade ago. The goal of this volume is to provide a guide both to the recent scholarly discussion and to understanding Hebrew poetry itself.

Petersen and Richards begin with the problems of definition, pointing out that it is not always easy to distinguish poetry from prose in the Hebrew Bible. Although virtually all modern translations of the Bible—unlike the earliest translations such as the Authorized Version—indicate the presence of poetry by the way the lines are set on the page, decisions about what is and is not poetry are subject to debate and disagreement. Petersen and Richards consider parallelism and meter, long taken to be the main characteristics of Hebrew poetry. They summarize and evaluate the major insights into these issues from the time of Bishop Robert Lowth and other early scholars to recent discussions, some of which call into question parallelism of lines as the distinctive mark of poetry. They point out both the usefulness and the limitations of theories of meter, preferring to speak in terms of rhythm.

In addition to these traditional topics in the analysis of Hebrew poetry, Petersen and Richards take up some of the recent literary critical

discussions of Hebrew poetics, the theory and practice of understanding poetic literature. They introduce some of the features of Hebrew poetic style, including stylistic devices, such as inclusios, chiasmic structures, plays on words, and assonance.

The authors illustrate some of the problems and possible solutions with examples taken from different types of biblical poetry. The reader of the Hebrew Bible, including in its English translations, is thus enabled to recognize and understand more of the depth and richness of its poetic expression.

Gene M. Tucker
Emory University

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BHK	<i>Biblia Hebraica Württembergensia</i>
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament
BibOr	Biblica et orientalia
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
CBCNEB	Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CTM	<i>Catwer Theologische Monographien</i>
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
GBS.OTS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship. Old Testament Series
GNB	Good News Bible
HBC	<i>Harper's Bible Commentary</i>
HBD	<i>Harper's Bible Dictionary</i>
HKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
ISBL	Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSS	JSOT Supplement Series

MT	Masoretic text
NAB	New American Bible
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OTL	Old Testament Library
PHPT	<i>The Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms</i>
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature, Dissertation Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
TANAKH	A New Translation of the Holy Scripture According to the Traditional Hebrew Text
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
UF	<i>Ugarit Forschungen</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum, Supplements
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
*	Author's translation

Understanding Hebrew Poetry

Virtually all texts from the ancient Near Eastern Bronze, Iron, and Persian ages present the reader with difficulties. Even when translated, literature from these periods is so different from the literature to which the contemporary reader is accustomed that various introductory matters must be addressed in order to make that literature understandable. This judgment applies to ancient prose as well as to ancient poetry. Just as with contemporary literature, however, poetry presents the reader with special difficulties. Poetry typically contains denser and richer language than does prose, even well-wrought prose, of the same period and sensibility.

Evidence of such difficulty in biblical poetry is easily presented. One of the brief essays provided by the editors of *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* is entitled "Characteristics of Hebrew Poetry." There is no analogous piece entitled "Characteristics of Hebrew Prose," although such an essay could be written. In a related vein, among the general essays in *The Literary Guide to the Bible* is a section entitled "The Characteristics of Ancient Hebrew Poetry."¹ Again, there is no corresponding section on Hebrew prose. In these two volumes and the essays they devote to Hebrew poetry, the editors provide evidence of their judgment that the reader of the Bible encounters special difficulties when reading ancient Hebrew poetry. It is a judgment with which we agree.²

Most general treatments of ancient Hebrew poetry emphasize two essential characteristics: parallelism and meter.³ As a result of recent scholarly developments, such treatments that use the categories of meter and parallelism as traditionally understood no longer suffice. To speak of parallelism and meter, assuming that there is a scholarly consensus about the definitions or even the existence of these phenomena

in Hebrew, would mislead the reader. Such a consensus no longer exists. Consequently, we provide this volume in order to explain why the old consensus has been laid aside and to suggest the groundwork for a new consensus, one based on recent linguistic and literary study of Hebrew poetry and on theories about poetry in all languages.

DEFINITION

Attempts to define Hebrew poetry are, in principle, no more difficult or simple than defining the poetry of any other language. However, since parallelism has usually been viewed as the single distinguishing characteristic of Hebrew poetry, scholars have focused on it. They have not regularly examined other features of that literary corpus in the same way that those who study English poetry treat the diverse features of that language's poetry. It is commonplace for readers of English poetry to study rhythm or meter, rhyme, stanzaic structure, and symbolism as important elements in English-language poetry. Few, however, have devoted attention to these or similar aspects of Hebrew poetry. As a result, important features that constitute Hebrew poetry have not been discussed.

Even discussions of English poetry reveal numerous critical and theoretical debates about what it is that makes English poetry poetic. This situation obtains even more so for Hebrew poetry. The lack of a consensus need not, however, prevent the reader from reading and understanding Hebrew poetry; it simply means that one could hold only a tentative notion about its essential nature while reading it.

In our judgment, it is useful to hold such tentative notions even about the fundamental features of Hebrew poetry. Here we need to make a distinction between what is necessary and what is helpful. We may do so by using an analogy drawn from the world of music. Any number of people have heard a sonata. Those who have studied neither music theory nor the history of music may well enjoy the performance or the recording of the sonata. They can perceive whether the artist plays well, whether the piece is interpreted in a suitable way. However, the person who has studied music theory is in a better position to understand the music fully, namely, to know something about the sonata structure and about the way in which that music might best be interpreted.

The situation with reading Hebrew poetry is analogous but more complex. One can read Hebrew poems in translation—for example, those in the Song of Songs—and enjoy them. If the reader is experi-

enced in reading literature, especially poetry, then that individual will be able to understand something about the poems, such as their rich pastoral imagery. However, the person who has some basic knowledge of the essential features of Hebrew poetry has a decided advantage because that reader will be attuned to the fundamental features of rhythm, parallelism, and the other stylistic features that are hallmarks of Hebrew poetry. Such an understanding is essential for a fuller comprehension of that literature.

At this point, however, the analogy with music breaks down, since our understanding of the theory of Hebrew poetry is much less precise than is our understanding of the sonata form. As a result, although some understanding of Hebrew poetry is apposite, one must hold those theories lightly when reading Hebrew verse.

PROBLEMS

The antiquity of Hebrew poetry presents a series of problems that one does not confront when studying or reading modern poetry. First, there are no extant discussions from antiquity about poetic theory within Hebrew or, for that matter, any other ancient Semitic language. Second, and in a related vein, our understandings of some poetic forms and poetic subdivisions, for example, stanzas, are sometimes imprecise. Our handicap here is most evident when we read the psalms. In the titles that introduce many of the psalms, there are Hebrew words that seem to indicate something about the kind of poetry in the psalm or, alternately, something about the type of musical accompaniment appropriate for that poem. For example, Psalm 32 is labeled a *maskîl*, Psalm 16 a *miktâm*. Knowledge of the meaning of these rubrics would tell us something significant about religious poetry in the Old Testament. So also the mysterious *selâh*, which recurs throughout the Psalter, defies convincing explanation. If one understood the significance of this term in its seventy-one occurrences in the Book of Psalms and three occurrences in Habakkuk, then one would know considerably more about the structure and performance of these texts than is currently known. Psalm 3, for example, uses the term three times in fewer than ten verses.⁴ At the moment, the significance of such terms, and thus their contribution to an understanding of Hebrew poetry, are lost in the mists of antiquity.

Second, and more important, since we have no original texts, it is not obvious how the poems were structured. Our lack of knowledge here involves both the length and the configuration of the individual

poetic lines and the putative existence of stanzas. The earliest biblical manuscripts for a poetic text—for example, the Isaiah scrolls from Qumran—do not present texts in the poetic forms that we are accustomed to seeing in current editions of the Bible. In these texts—the NRSV and the NIV among them—poetry is printed in a special fashion. To put it simplistically, modern translations print poetry with extra white space and with many parallel lines. One may note this by comparing Exodus 14 with Exodus 15 in any modern translation. Ancient biblical manuscripts themselves do not inform us about how these poetic texts should be printed. This formatting decision involves significant judgments about the structure of Hebrew poetry. For example, in one of the Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts of Isaiah (1QIsa^a), the first clause in Isa. 5:7 is written in no way different from prose sections in that scroll. In the NRSV, the text is formatted in the following way:

For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts
is the house of Israel,

By contrast, GNB prints it the following way:

Israel is the vineyard of the
LORD Almighty;

NAB does the following:

The vineyard of the LORD of
hosts is the house of Israel,

These three respected translations construe the line division of the poetry in three different ways. This is for good reason, since the Hebrew text itself does not provide information about how the lines should be divided.

This issue of lineation, or the stichometric division of the text, is not even satisfactorily addressed by the critical editions of the Hebrew Bible. Biblical scholars have had available either the *Biblia Hebraica Würtembergensia* (BHK), published in 1937, or *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS), published in 1983. Stichometric divisions of Hebrew poetry vary considerably between these two editions. For example, in the case of Isa. 5:7, the first line in Hebrew reads (our translation) according to BHS, "Indeed, the vineyard of Yahweh of Hosts (is) the house of Israel." BHS construes these words to comprise one

long line, an understanding different from all the modern translations cited above. *BHK*, by contrast, prints these words as if they comprised "parallel" lines:

Indeed the vineyard of Yahweh of Hosts
the house of Israel.

The verb "is" is understood and not written in the Hebrew text. To make matters more complicated, *BHK* and *BHS* even differ in their understandings about whether a particular text is prose or poetry. So, for example, Isa. 4:2 is printed as poetry in *BHK* and as prose in *BHS*. This debate is preserved as well in modern translations. NIV views Isa. 4:2, along with *BHS*, as prose; TANAKH and NAB, along with *BHK*, view it as poetry. To be sure, these matters involving the stylistic division of the text do not prevent readers from understanding the poem at a basic level. However, this disagreement about the division of the poetic lines, and even about whether or not a text is poetic, provides graphic evidence about the state of our knowledge (cf. pp. 13–14; 23–24 below).

This lack of knowledge about the theory and structure of Hebrew poetry is made even more problematic by the state of the texts that preserve classical Hebrew poems. They are obviously not the original autographs, that is, the actual copies that the ancient poets wrote. Nor do we have any reason to think that any Hebrew manuscripts reproduce accurately the autographs. Rather, they are copies of copies, most made several centuries after the original poems were composed. In the long process of transmission, either in oral or in written form, numerous changes occur in poetic texts. Even in English poetry changes occur, such as the shift in Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," where the phrase "sacred bower" sometimes appears in the third quatrain for the far more provocative "secret bower."⁵

Third, the form of the language in Hebrew poems is not always certain. The orthography, or spelling, present in the standard, critical editions of the Hebrew Bible represents the final stage in a long series of developments. So, when one attempts to determine the rhythm of a Hebrew poem, one must remember that the Masoretic text's vocalization includes a phonology, a system of sounds, that may not reflect the poem's original form. Adding to, subtracting from, or revising the sound and spelling of a word or line affects fundamentally the way it

works rhythmically. To be sure, all languages, including English, undergo change over time. However, the reader of English poetry perceives readily the differences between Beowulf, Shakespeare, and Pound. Such is not the case with readers of the Old Testament, even with those who read the text in Hebrew. These changes, which reflect shifts in the Hebrew language, create special problems for the student of Hebrew poetry.

A fourth problem confronting the study of Hebrew poetry is the isolation of the study of this ancient poetry from the study of non-Semitic poetry. As a result, the work of those who theorize critically about poetry in English and other languages has not regularly informed the analysis of Hebrew poetry. There are a number of reasons for this situation. Primary among them is Robert Lowth's notion of parallelism, which has shaped the analysis of Hebrew poetry.⁶ He took parallelism to be the dominant feature of Hebrew verse, a view that has often led to the conviction that Hebrew poetry was distinct from most other kinds of poetry. No modern English poetry, for example, is understood to have parallelism as "the only determinant of form."⁷ In fact, the definition of parallelism in *The Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms* focuses the discussion upon the notion of biblical parallelism, with the majority of references to biblical scholars, including Lowth. Although Lowth himself was conversant with discussions concerning the characteristics of classical Greek and Latin poetry, the effect of identifying parallelism as the primary feature of Hebrew poetry led him to avoid reflecting fully on Greek or English poetry, the theories associated with them, and how such literature or theories might illumine other features of Hebrew poetry.

In a related way, scholarly work on Hebrew poetry usually does not incorporate the broader discussions of poetry. With the recent exception of discussions that have utilized linguistics and poetics, this situation still obtains. One important goal of this book is to place the study of Hebrew poetry within the broader context of reflection about poetry, since Hebrew poets did have at their disposal diverse rhythmic patterns and various forms of parallelism as well as a whole series of other stylistic devices, the sorts of which appear prominently in poems composed in other languages.

THEORIES OF POETRY

Theories about poetry serve as maps. As with the science of cartography, diverse maps can be drawn. For example, any attempt to map

the surface of the earth presents problems. Since the surface of a sphere cannot be replicated on a flat surface without distortion, cartographers have developed many ways of representing the earth on a flat surface. Some maps maintain more accurate dimensions, whereas other maps preserve directions more precisely. In many ways, maps are compromises. No one map can serve as an all-purpose guide. Rather, one must create maps that provide, as faithfully as possible, the desired projections that one wishes to convey. In the case of Hebrew poetry, we hope to provide a map that will do at least three things: (1) assist the reader to think about Hebrew poetry within the context of poetry composed in other languages; (2) place the discussion of Hebrew poetry within the context of recent technical work on Hebrew poetry during the last decade, in particular; and (3) alert readers of Hebrew poetry to its literary features, many of which have often gone unnoticed. We will address the first of these issues in this introduction, the second in the chapter on parallelism and the chapter on meter and rhythm, and the third in the chapter on poetic style.

Many questions are involved in the definition of poetry in any language. We will not be able to examine all of these, even some that are interesting, such as the arguments about whether the text itself or the reader is the ultimate source of a poem's meaning.⁸ Instead, we will focus on the traditional issue regarding the distinction between poetry and other forms of linguistic expression. Discussion of this issue often centers on the distinction between art, *belles lettres*, of which poetry is one type, and other forms of expression. Within this nexus, the question of what makes poetry different from prose also arises.

We begin with the theories of poetry: What makes poetry poetic? Such theories tend to focus on a variety of issues. Some scholars have suggested that poetry is different from prose by dint of the peculiar set of grammatical rules that obtain in poetry when compared with those that undergird a language's prose. In the case of Hebrew poetry, one could say that a peculiar form of syntax, namely, parallelism, distinguishes poetry from prose. Others have maintained that the special features of poetry are not to be found so much in linguistic factors as in the composer's mind, psychological elements beyond language or, as some would say, poetic inspiration. Some who write on Hebrew poetry take this latter tack.

Those in the classical world of Plato and Aristotle debated about what such inspiration aroused. Inspiration was thought to provoke the "utterances of a madman" as well as to be a "divine release of the soul."⁹ Some maintained that inspiration enabled imitation. Does poetry im-

itate reality? And what portion of reality—only the beautiful and not the ugly? Is poetry less or more concerned with truth than with history? Certainly within Hebrew Bible studies we hear the debates about how various historical narratives compare to the poetic expressions related to important events in Israel's history. The relationship of the poetic traditions of the wisdom literature and psalms continues to be discussed over against the literature that portrays in narrative prose "God's acts" in history. Which is better, the prose or the poetry? Does one more accurately portray what must have been the reality than the other? The question of what inspiration arouses among true and false prophets within Israel, while different from the classical Greek world's debate on inspiration, is a fight over what undeniably were opposing views of the world.

Even as we turn more specifically to several theories of poetry we should keep in view the larger context of such discussions. Definitions of poetry are not developed in isolation from our experience of language or from our other conceptualizing tasks. From antiquity to the present, theories of poetry have included philosophical and philological issues and have been influenced by the prevailing assumptions of both disciplines. There is no single, definitive map regarding theories of poetry. It is more important to understand the ways in which the poem, the poet, and the creative process are interrelated.

The expressive or emotive theory of poetry is familiar to most students of English literature. In the English language, this notion may be identified with Wordsworth's classic preface to the second edition of his *Lyrical Ballads*, but one may trace its roots to *On the Sublime*, which has been attributed to Longinus of the third century C.E. Such a view emphasizes that poetry is a form of discourse that expresses powerful or profound human emotions and feelings. By contrast, literature without such origins is prosaic and discursive, language of the mind but not of the heart. Robert Lowth's works have often been placed in this category, as has J.G. von Herder's two-volume study of Hebrew poetry. Herder maintained, regarding Hebrew poetry, that "a poetical image exists only in its connection with the emotion that prompted it."¹⁰ Reading the commentary of James Muilenburg on Second Isaiah also gives one a sense of this emotive theory: "Isaiah 40-55 is a profoundly authentic product of the Hebraic mind and spirit. . . . The elevation of thought is matched by an intense lyricism."¹¹ Nonetheless, the work of most scholars on Hebrew poetry during the last decade is not guided by emotive theories.

Some who identify themselves as rhetorical critics, who focus on the self's (poet's) unique expression through imagination, metaphor, and intensity, seem as well to preserve this emotive theory.¹² The poet comes to the center. As Wordsworth indicated, he had "no right to the name of a Poet" unless he were to understand that "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."¹³ A section from Wordsworth's "Lucy" may serve to illustrate this theory. The speaker in the poem memorializes his now dead love. He never identifies the specific girl but allows the reader a glimpse of her significance through a piling up of metaphors. The halting rhythm in the next to the last line intensifies the finality of his loss.

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove;
A maid whom there were none to praise,
And very few to love.

A violet by a mossy stone
Half-hidden from the eye!
—Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.
She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!

This is not a poem that requires biographical or historical background or verifiability; in fact, no contemporary of Wordsworth or later critic has been able to identify the girl. The poem does not depend on narrative to express the emotion. Furthermore, as many recent critics have observed, such language stands in severe contrast to the referential quality of scientific language.

A theory such as this one, which focuses on the spontaneity of the poet, may seem more adequate to explain some kinds of Hebrew poetry than others. We should remember that theories, just as maps, serve diverse purposes. This particular theory reminds us of the emotive elements, which we must not forget even in the poetry that strikes any one individual reader as not particularly emotional. Moreover, this theory may also assist in the reading of Hebrew poetry, since it reminds the reader of the active role that individual poets—not just some impersonal setting in life—undoubtedly played in the composition of Hebrew poetry. We can lose sight of this expressive factor, given the anonymity of and our distance from this ancient poetry.

The mimetic or imitation of reality theory provides a second perspective. Both Plato and Aristotle thought of poetry as an imitation of human activities, even though their philosophical presuppositions provided different understandings of the object for and the means of mimesis. Whether realist or idealist, the mimetic theory highlights the poem, not the poet. The poem is the copy, the mirror, the representation. Therefore this theory focuses on the relationship between poem (imitation) and the world (that which is imitated). How well the image represents the reality becomes the mode of valuation, whether the representation is of a transcendent reality or a mundane beauty.

Some have thought that such mimesis is the essence of art. On the one hand, this could be thought of negatively as a kind of third-rate imitation that must be judged alongside all other endeavors. On the other hand, the peculiarity of the representation could be thought of as a unique opportunity to gain access to realities unattainable by law or politics or any other human activity. For example, proponents of this theory would maintain that history could not provide the same access to the deeper, more profound imitations of events expressed in poetry. Poetic mirrors permit a creative and provocative glimpse of reality not found in other forms of expression.

Shelley's *A Defense of Poetry* attests to one dimension of this incomparable quality that the poem embodies. In the first quarter of the eighteenth century, he wrote a response to an attack on poetry in which someone claimed that "in whatever degree poetry is cultivated, it must necessarily be to the neglect of some branch of useful study."¹⁴ Shelley countered:

All high poetry is infinite; it is as the first acorn, which contained all oaks potentially. . . . A great poem is a fountain for ever overflowing with the waters of wisdom and delight. . . . The most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably but a shadow of the original conceptions of the poet. . . . Poetry turns all things to loveliness.¹⁵

This stance suggests that all great poetry provides not only an imitation of but even our only access to the world's values and order.

The title of chapter 4 in Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, "Truth and Poetry in the Book of Job," appears to be an excellent contemporary example of the mimetic theory. When discussing the divine

discourses at the end of Job, he refers to them as a "revelation." Then he maintains, "Through this pushing of poetic expression toward its own upper limits, the concluding speech helps us see the panorama of creation, as perhaps we could do only through poetry, with the eyes of God."¹⁶ We should be cautious not to label Alter as one who uses this theory exclusively throughout his book, but here it is evident.

Third, goal-oriented theories move beyond imitation to focus on the rhetorical effect of a poem's persuasion and on the end to which a poem is directed. Here, neither the poem nor the poet is the primary focus; rather, the audience assumes center stage. Good poetry is a crafted product that evokes pleasure in or affects significantly the reader. Poetry is thought of as a crafted product of the poet. One can discern this theory at work in the statement of Shelley quoted above when he suggests that poetry turns "all things to loveliness." While the focus is on the effect brought on the reader, the poem itself was usually thought to be an object that was crafted according to a very specific set of rules. Thus, if the rules were followed, good poetry would result and the proper ends would be evoked in the reader.

Much of the last decade's work on Hebrew poetry has examined the poet's craft. However, attention has not been directed to what the crafted object achieves. Rather, the search for the "basic unit" of Hebrew verse has clearly involved the search for the craft's governing rules. Among the recent works, Michael O'Connor's has been criticized for its preoccupation with mechanics.¹⁷ James Kugel has been faulted for ignoring larger units, focusing only on "seconding" within "parallel lines" and being unaware of how the larger units—poems—function.¹⁸ Adele Berlin may best represent, in a positive sense, this pragmatic theory. She says that the value of studying biblical parallelism is not only to understand better the "elasticity" of parallelism but also to provide "our entrée into the message."¹⁹ Parallelism, like other formal features in a text, *does* help to structure the text and thereby has an impact on how its meaning is arrived at.²⁰

Finally, there are two theoretical perspectives that may be considered together. One has been referred to as the "objective theory,"²¹ which suggests that a poem is an object unto itself, not an imitation of any other reality. The other might be referred to as the indeterminacy theory, which may be associated with deconstructionist critics.²² These theories belong together for two reasons. First, both represent important positions in the late twentieth century while at the same time having foundations in the classical discussions. Second, and more im-

portant, both of these theories focus in a radical way on the poem itself and on the ways of reading that poem.

These two theories stress the power of art for art's sake. Both understand the poem as a self-contained, new reality with indeterminate, even conflicting, power for the reader. The reader may be understood as the poet. The one who reads also writes or constructs the text. Or the poet can be understood as an invisible creator, not imitating a reality somewhere out there but genuinely constructing a reality all its own. The poem is neither an imitation of another reality, a spontaneous expression, nor the result of manipulating some external elements. The poet is not a strategist who has mastered some rhetorical rules nor an instrumentality through whom words are transmitted nor an observer with special, acute sensitivities. The reader is not a passive receiver, not one looking at a poem as though it were a mirror of some reality, not one who might be persuaded by some set of external values crafted in the poem.

This theoretical position may seem ambiguous and even self-contradictory. According to the words of one interpreter, this should not be surprising, because "self-contradiction . . . is the very language of poetry, and the theory of poetry . . . must itself *be* poetry."²³ This viewpoint has led some to despair of ever understanding a poem. Others have taken up the ambiguity as a signal of language's metaphorical multiplicity, of the expansiveness of texts, and ultimately of the playfulness of words.

Few scholars interested in classical Hebrew poetry have taken up the radical dimensions of these ideas. It is interesting that several contemporary literary theorists have worked, using rabbinic traditions of interpretation, to develop their theories.²⁴ They have found warrants for the multivalence of texts, the play between poem and commentary, and the uneasy yet necessary balance between understanding and misunderstanding. Whether we opt for the more or the less radical of these ideas, we, as readers of poetry—literature that evokes strong responses—find ourselves involved in intense readings as well as intense discussions of its essential features. We need not think that the "meaning of a poem can only be another poem," but surely the reading of a poem may become a powerful component of the realities we experience and create.

It might appear that the seemingly unmanageable array of poetic theories illustrates the futility of such theorizing. In contrast, we think an awareness of these diverse theories serves readers and interpreters

by "establishing a point of vantage" that may yield "distinctive insights into the properties and relations of poems."²⁵ Consequently, it is important to consider four points of vantage as we turn either to the Hebrew poetry itself or to the literature about it:

1. The interrelationships of poet and poem.
2. The expression of either direct or indirect value.
3. The glimpse, sometimes given in the poem, of the process that called forth the poem.
4. The role of the reader.

We do not assume here a single theory of poetry, nor will we offer a conclusive definition of poetry or even of Hebrew poetry. Rather, we will offer ways to understand the poetry in the Hebrew Bible. Some suggest that naming a piece of literature a poem is to attribute value and importance to it. Robert Frost once said, "'Poet' is a praise-word." The Hebrew poets do not tell us that they have written a poem. They write in verse and it is our task, as both readers and interpreters, to determine whether a text is a poem and how that determination assists our reading.

POETRY-PROSE CONTINUUM

We return to the question of how to distinguish poetry from prose, since in the last decade this query has become a central issue within the study of Hebrew poetry. Kugel argues that the distinction is best understood as involving different points on a continuum, namely, that there is no sharp dividing line between poetry and prose. On another side is Alter, who maintains that Hebrew prose is a natural expression of ancient Semitic culture, whereas Hebrew poetry is related to the ethical monotheism unique to the religion of ancient Israel.²⁶ For him, there is a fundamental conceptual distinction between prose and poetry. Alter does maintain, however, that there are two primary generative forces in Hebrew poetry: intensification (parallelism) and narrativity. Since narrativity is important to prose composition as well, Alter's judgment, too, seems, finally, to blur the distinction between prose and poetry.

Without presenting the conclusions of this volume before the analysis and argument that lead up to them, it seems important to foreground the basic position that we will be advocating. There is literature that may reasonably be construed as poetry in the Hebrew Bible.

This literature shares fundamental affinities with poetic literature outside the Bible, and not just poetic texts from the ancient Near East. As a result, we reject the notion that there is no poetry in the Hebrew Bible. This judgment is not intended to deny that Hebrew prose and poetic literature share important features. Nonetheless, the distinction between poetry and prose is not an imposition of foreign Greek categories on Hebrew.²⁷ Rather, in Hebrew as with many other languages there is a body of literature that may reasonably be identified as poetry.

The three basic categories that we use to discuss Hebrew poetry—parallelism, rhythm, and style—are important for the discussion of all literature. Parallelism of various sorts occurs in prose as well as in poetry. Rhythm, which is basic to all human speech, is important in prose as well as in poetry. And figures of speech, for example, metaphor or personification, appear prominently in prose as well as poetic texts. As a result, we may reject various and competing claims that either parallelism (so Lowth) or meter (so Freedman) serves as *the* hallmark of Hebrew poetry. Instead, we maintain that all three of these features occur prominently in poetry, though in a more intense, denser, or more compact way than they do in prose. Neither rhythm/meter, parallelism, nor other poetic techniques can, in and of themselves, serve as a hallmark for identifying poetic expression. Poetic expression constitutes a subtle interplay of the rhythmic expression of carefully crafted human speech wrought with special attention to artistic effect. Hebrew poetry constitutes these features along with a perceptible, elastic parallelism.

THREE APPROACHES

Study of Hebrew poetry today is indebted to generations of scholars who have analyzed the corpus of biblical and nonbiblical Hebrew poetry. Since the perceptions, vocabulary, methods, and conclusions of these thinkers have so significantly colored the way we now think about Hebrew poetry, attention to some key figures is important as we move toward new ways of thinking about and understanding this poetry. Given the scope of this volume, it is not possible to survey all those who have contributed to our understanding of Hebrew poetry. Throughout the discussion, however, we hope to highlight those figures who have been most influential in the history of reflection about this ancient Semitic poetry, including both authors from antiquity,

such as Philo, and more recent writers, such as Lowth, Herder, and Gray.

The last several decades have seen the appearance of numerous important studies, many of which advocate a fundamental rethinking of classical Hebrew poetry. Such recent work on Hebrew poetry has proceeded on at least three tracks: technical studies of Hebrew prosody (which, despite the strict sense of prosody, have often involved considerably more than attention to metrics and versification), concern for reading and understanding the Bible as literature, and the practical work of interpretation of the biblical text involving, as that study often does, standard historical-critical methods (e.g., form criticism and redaction criticism).²⁸

The first of these concerns, prosodic analysis of Hebrew poetry, has, particularly in North America, been associated with the work of Frank Moore Cross, David Noel Freedman, and their students.²⁹ As Cross and Freedman explain, their style of analyzing Hebrew poetry stands in the tradition of metric analysis, particularly that of Julius Ley, Eduard Sievers, and W. F. Albright.³⁰ It was, however, the impulse of epigraphic discoveries—ancient texts written in the original script and orthography and composed in languages that were very similar to ancient Hebrew, for example, Ugaritic—that provided the impetus for prosodic analysis in the mid-twentieth century.³¹ By assessing what they took to be the earliest exemplars of Hebrew poetry and by comparing that canon to the extrabiblical texts, Cross and Freedman thought it possible to discover the prosodic, that is, metrical, structure of ancient Hebrew poetry (see p. 40 below). Others, such as Terence Collins and Michael O'Connor, have examined Hebrew poetry in an attempt either to discern its essential features or to examine how it works grammatically. Valuable as much of this work is, it often stops short of the larger interpretive task, namely, discussing poetics or poetry.³² Furthermore, because some recent work has been extremely technical in character, those involved in the literary study of the Bible or more general interpretive efforts have not availed themselves of the resources that these technical works provide.

The other two approaches are quite different. One is a relative newcomer to the study of the Bible—the Bible as literature movement—whereas the other constitutes a long-standing tradition in both Christian and Jewish circles, namely, the learned interpretation of canonical literature. The former approach, reading the Bible as literature, has recently flourished in a variety of journals, monograph series, and in-

dividual books. David Robertson's *The Old Testament and the Literary Critic*, published in this series (GBS.OTS), is one example of this way of reading biblical literature, as is Alter's more recent *The Art of Biblical Poetry*. The obvious goal of scholars who advocate this approach is to read biblical prose and poetry in ways not fundamentally different from the ways they read Milton, Dickens, Eliot, or Frost. The interpretive categories are those of the literary critic, for example, the analysis of characterization, plot, theme, motif, symbolism, and the like. Our volume depends, in some ways, on the results of this approach.

The latter perspective, that of the learned interpretation of biblical literature, is one that has often stood in the service of religious communities. Calvin's and Luther's Old Testament commentaries were designed, essentially, to serve the interests of their respective churches. Even today, when commentaries are written for a scholarly audience, they are often published by church-related publishing houses, for example, the Hermeneia series of Fortress Press or the Interpretation series of John Knox Press. The authors of such commentaries, whether ancient or modern, were interested in explicating the meaning(s) of the text by utilizing whatever perspectives—allegorical, philological, historical-critical, or theological—they deemed appropriate. In these commentaries, authors working on Old Testament poetic texts have been forced to reckon with the problems of Hebrew poetry. As a result, it is not unusual to find an excursus or a special chapter devoted to the Hebrew poetry of Psalms or of one of the prophets. Sometimes these treatments have offered insights beyond the scope of the specific biblical literature under examination. However, and this is as true for modern as it is for ancient commentaries, they have often not been in dialogue with recent developments in the study of Hebrew poetry.

These three approaches—analysis of Hebrew poetry, reading Hebrew Bible poetry as literature, and interpretive work generally—deserve to stand in dialogue so that they may mutually enhance the goal of reading the biblical literature with understanding and appreciation.

RELATIONSHIP OF METHODS

One final question deserves a response: What is the relationship between the study of Hebrew poetry and other ways of examining biblical texts? It is commonplace for grammatical and prosodic study of poetic texts to operate in something of a vacuum. Along with text-

critical study, these perspectives are traditionally termed "lower criticism." They have in common an interest in establishing and translating the text. However, questions about the date of composition, authorship, editing of the text, as well as its overall meaning, are not typically addressed from these perspectives. Rather, source criticism, form criticism, tradition history, redaction criticism, and the general application of the historical-critical method (the so-called higher-critical perspectives) have proved useful for addressing these concerns.³³ Ideally the interpreter will use various perspectives, both philological and historical-critical, in order to formulate the interpretation of a biblical text. To be sure, scholars sometimes use one or another of these methods in isolation from other perspectives. However, scholars, whether in commentaries or other interpretive pieces, are obliged to demonstrate how the discrete perspectives may be integrated within the larger interpretive task.

Recent technical work on Hebrew poetry has not been integrated into commentaries and more general interpretive publications—with some exceptions, such as Patrick Miller's *Interpreting the Psalms*. The work of O'Connor and Collins, to cite obvious examples, is so fully devoted to the grammar and syntax of Hebrew poetry, and so technical in its presentation, that the task of integrating their work with other interpretive perspectives, which the authors themselves do not pretend to attempt, remains for others to accomplish. To date, this has not occurred.³⁴ Cataloging poetic lines by grammatical type, though an important exercise, is not identical with understanding the meanings of a poem.

In addition, there are important reasons for the study of Hebrew poetry to be held in dialogue with diverse methodological perspectives. Textual criticism may serve as an example. References to the term *metri causa* illustrate the point we make. This phrase, often used by text critics, refers to a judgment, *causa*, based on an understanding of Hebrew meter, *metri*. The judgment typically involves the proposed addition or deletion of a Hebrew word from the text. The scholar thinks the word or phrase in question either is necessary for, in the case of addition, or disturbs, in the case of deletion, the meter presumed in that text. To make matters especially difficult, such *metri causa* proposals frequently are presented without the support of ancient manuscripts. The metric disturbance to which they refer generally is presumed to have occurred before variant manuscript traditions developed. So, for example, one may refer to an influential study of

Israelite religion that includes metric analysis of Hebrew poetic texts, that of Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*.³⁵ In that volume, Cross reconstructs a number of such texts as they may have occurred in their pristine form. In this regard, *metri causa* arguments occur with some regularity. For example, when working on Judg. 5:23, Cross argues that the first poetic line should be translated "Curse ye Meroz, saith Yahweh."³⁶ Most modern translations read something similar to NRSV, namely, "Curse Meroz, says the angel of the LORD." The word that NRSV translates as "angel" (one could also translate "messenger") did not, in Cross's judgment, occur in the original text: "We have omitted *mal'āk* as secondary for metrical reasons." This is a classic *metri causa* argument. There are no ancient manuscripts that support the judgment. Rather, the argument rests solely on a decision based on the metric regularity presumed to exist in the verse.³⁷ In our judgment, such decisions are risky indeed, though to be sure sometimes necessary, because they presume so much about something about which we know so little, namely, meter in classical Hebrew poetry.

In a similar vein, recent literary-critical study of Hebrew poetry has not regularly been integrated either with lower- or higher-critical perspectives. In fact, one senses a certain iconoclasm on the part of some literary critics, namely, that higher-critical concerns are of minimal value and that the literature may be comprehended without attention to the date of composition or the origins or development of a particular text. Alter's work on prophetic poetry may serve as an example. When attempting to define the salient features of this type of Hebrew poetry, he treats several examples of poetry found in Isaiah. His argument involves what he perceives as a tendency for prophetic poetry "to lift the utterances to a second power of signification, aligning statements that are addressed to a concrete historical situation with an archetypal horizon."³⁸ Such poetry, Alter suggests, tends to place historical events within a cosmic perspective; history is viewed from an almost mythological vantage point. As a way of developing this position, he cites Isa. 14:4-21; 5:26-30; and 24:17-20. After commenting on the last of these texts, he states: "But whatever Isaiah may have had in mind historically, it is clear that the sweep of his poetic language has become prophetic mythological, catching up in its movement the beginning and end of all things."³⁹ Such a claim presents serious problems to the student of Israelite prophecy, to the student of apocalypticism, and to the person who specializes in the study of Isaiah. The reason is quite simple.

Most scholars who have worked on the Book of Isaiah, particularly on Isaiah 24–27, regard these chapters as an exilic or postexilic supplement to the preexilic literature that may properly be attributed to Isaiah of Jerusalem. Isaiah 24–27 is often called “the Isaianic Apocalypse,” a label that highlights its almost apocalyptic character and that serves to distinguish those four chapters from other material in First Isaiah.⁴⁰ It is the case that deutero-prophetic literature such as the Isaianic Apocalypse does tend to present Israelite religion in an almost mythic vein, in a way removed from the world of mundane reality. This perspective, however, is really a step beyond that of classical Israelite prophecy, and not necessarily typical of it. As a result, Alter’s judgments about prophetic poetry, based in part on his inclusion of Isa. 24:17–20 in an assessment of Isaiah and, more generally, Israelite prophecy, are skewed because his work does not take into account other scholarship on the literature that he examined. Although he draws “historical” conclusions about the prophet, he has not relied on the results of historical scholarship. Thus it is difficult to integrate his judgments about the Book of Isaiah and about prophetic poetry into other discussions concerning these topics. Such an approach places literary considerations in unfortunate isolation from other ways of analyzing biblical literature. One of our goals is to demonstrate how such literary considerations can be related to broader scholarly discussions.

2 Parallelism

Anyone who interprets Hebrew poetry must understand parallelism. This has been the case since the mid-eighteenth century, when Robert Lowth presented his lectures on the subject. Terms such as synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic parallelism are common in introductions to Hebrew poetry written after the time of Lowth. They continue to be used but with some significant variations in meaning from what Lowth intended.

The language of parallelism doubtless will continue. However, the major thrust of the last decade has involved the development of better theoretical models for conceptualizing parallelism. Moreover, scholars have provided detailed poetic analyses of selected Hebrew texts using these new models. Before we summarize the most prominent of these recent developments in the analysis of parallelism, it is necessary to understand the seminal contributions of Lowth.

ROBERT LOWTH

Robert Lowth's lectures marked a major advance in understanding "the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews," and they remain seminal in virtually every discussion of Hebrew poetry. Nearly two hundred and fifty years after he wrote his lectures, one finds reference to them in scholarly monographs, in detailed articles reporting research on the most technical aspects of parallelism, and in introductions to the characteristics of Hebrew poetry. Lowth argued that the dominant feature of that literature "consists chiefly in a certain quality, resemblance, or parallelism, between the members of each period; so that in two lines (or members of the same period) things for the most part shall answer to things, and words to words, as if fitted to each other by a kind of

rule or measure."¹ For Lowth, parallelism was the hallmark of Hebrew poetry.

In order to appreciate fully the significance of Lowth's lectures, it is important to identify three simple factors that have often been forgotten. First, he was participating in a long-standing debate regarding the relationship of poetry and prophecy as well as a discussion of the origins and purpose of poetry. Put another way, his assessment of Hebrew poetry involved other important topics in Hebrew Bible studies, especially the nature of prophetic literature, which he maintained was poetry, as were the psalms. He had not set out to revolutionize the understanding of Hebrew poetry.

Second, following Lowth's two introductory lectures comes what, in the English edition, is called the "first part," a lecture on meter. This section recognizes the problems of attempting to discern meter in Hebrew poetry. In the published edition of the lectures, there is an appendix disproving Bishop Hare's metrical system known to Lowth's audience. Lowth's own views on meter seem not altogether clear, as is exemplified by his observation that within the parallelism one "apprehends a considerable part of the Hebrew metre."² It would appear that, for Lowth, meter and parallelism were integrally related. Since he focused on the line (and the relationship of lines to each other) and since much of Hebrew poetry yields lines of reasonably regular length, it is not surprising that he suggested relationships between parallelism and meter.

Third, it is only in the third part of his tome,³ on the "specific species" of Hebrew poetry, that Lowth develops the notion of parallelism. In lecture 19, which is part of his discussion of prophetic poetry, he discusses synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic (or constructive) parallelism.

Lowth's division of parallelism into three basic types remains dominant in virtually every introductory discussion of Hebrew poetry published through the 1980s.⁴ Of these three types, synthetic parallelism had, until the last decade, received the most attention. Discussion of synthetic parallelism usually amounted to a series of refined distinctions to explain the diverse ways the parallel lines were really not "true" parallelism.⁵ The author of one helpful description of Hebrew poetry suggested that his own work was merely an "elaboration and enrichment of Lowth's viewpoint."⁶ As we will see, this situation has changed substantively in the last decade.

BASIC NOMENCLATURE

The nomenclature used in the discussion of Hebrew poetry has been less consistent than the fundamental concept of parallelism. Scholars have used diverse terms (e.g., *stich*, *line*, *hemistich*, *verset*, *colon*) to name the two entities that correspond with each other to constitute the parallelism. Throughout this work we will refer to each constituent part of the parallelism as a *colon* or *line*. A relationship of various sorts, grammatic or semantic, between lines constitutes parallelism.

Even the concept of the line in Hebrew poetry has become the focus of debate.⁷ Some contemporary analysts use "line" to refer to *bicolon* or *tricolon* (Alter, Collins, Kugel, and Pardee), while our practice follows that of Berlin, Geller, O'Connor, and Watson. Part of the debate has hinged on whether or not one was identifying the line through an identification of stress. It is generally agreed, however, that the colon is the basic unit (not the *bicolon*) and that it most frequently occurs together with one or two other cola.⁸

The delineation of lines often presents problems. That is, it is not always obvious where a colon begins and ends, since few ancient Hebrew manuscripts have set out Hebrew poetry in the lineation of our modern critical texts or translations. There is additional terminological variation beyond that associated with the use of line. Some will use the term "verse" to refer to the basic unit, whether a single colon or more. We will generally avoid the term "verse." In fact, we will contend that there is no basic or fundamental Hebrew poetic unit other than the line. It seems to us more helpful to distinguish the separate cola in whatever combination they occur rather than to assume any basic or ideal combination, such as the *bicolon*.

The *bicolon*, or two-colon unit, occurs most frequently. It is sometimes called a couplet or line-pair. While this is the most typical combination in Hebrew poetry, there are other units. *Monocola* even exist—for example, Ps. 1:1. The presence of *monocola* suggests that parallelism is not the only factor in the creation of Hebrew poetry. While a *monocolon* does not have a direct relationship to another line, it does provide variation to other units—for example, a *bicolon*—and thus creates contrast with the more frequent parallelistic structures.

Before we turn to the *bicolon*, a word about other combinations is important. The *tricolon*, a combination of three cola, appears fre-

quently enough that all readers should anticipate finding this three-line unit in Hebrew poetry. A tricolon appears in the familiar opening to Psalm 100.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.
Worship the LORD with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

Although some have suggested that the bicolon is the basic unit, even when considering a tricolon, this contention is problematic. Stephen Geller understands the tricolon as a sequence of interrelated bicola (A + B and B + C) or three lines understood as a monocolon plus bicolon.⁹ However, the example from Psalm 100 illustrates a parallelism that surely is best understood as A / A' / A" (cf. Hos. 5:1). There are other significant examples where both semantic and grammatic reasons support three parallel lines (cf. in the examples the discussion of Ps. 1:1, p. 93 below).

The consensus among scholars is that there are indeed multi-colon units even beyond the tricolon. Watson¹⁰ provides examples of some of these combinations of cola beyond the tricolon. In some cases one could contend that instead of a tetracolon (or, as Watson calls it, a quatrain), one has either two bicola or even a tricolon plus a monocolon. However, when semantic and grammatic reasons are introduced into the discussion, there is no reason in principle that should preclude finding various multi-colon combinations.

The bicolon (more than one bicolon = bicola) is the most frequently occurring combination, for example,

It is good to give thanks, O LORD,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High.
Ps. 92:1

A short pause is implied at the end of "LORD" and a longer pause after "Most High." This can be graphically represented in the following manner: _____ / _____ //. The single slash indicates the short pause and the double slash indicates the longer pause.

SYNONYMOUS, ANTIITHETIC, SYNTHETIC PARALLELISM

We turn now to Lowth's description of parallelism. Both citations from Psalms in the previous section exemplify what Lowth would have

called synonymous parallelism. He considered this "species" of parallelism the most sublime.¹¹ It "consists chiefly in a certain equality, resemblance, or parallelism" where "the same sentiment is repeated in different, but equivalent terms."¹²

By way of contrast, antithetic parallelism "is not confined to any particular form; for sentiments are opposed to sentiments, words to words, singulars to singulars, plurals to plurals."¹³ Lowth takes examples from Prov. 27:6-7, which includes two antithetical bicola. The "but" reinforces the semantic antithesis for the English reader.

The blows of a friend are faithful;
But the kisses of an enemy are treacherous.
The cloyed will trample upon a honey-comb;
But to the hungry every bitter thing is sweet.¹⁴

The concluding bicolon of Psalm 1 in our examples also illustrates what Lowth would have called antithetic parallelism.

For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

Lowth calls the third "species" of parallelism "synthetic." He defines it as syntax in which "sentences answer to each other, not by the iteration of the same image or sentiment, or the opposition of their contraries, but merely by the form of construction."¹⁵ Lowth recognized that cola could be related even if there was no semantic parallelism. He offered Hos. 14:5-6 (Heb., 14:6-7) as an example:

I will be as dew to Israel:
He shall blossom as the lily;
And he shall strike his roots like Lebanon:
His suckers shall spread,
And his glory shall be as the olive-tree,
And his smell as Lebanon.

In these verses there is neither apparent semantic synonymy nor antithesis; rather, in Hebrew the lines are of similar length and involve other kinds of semantic development, and grammatical devices that enforce parallelism, for example, simile. Furthermore, Lowth and his followers have used the repeated bicolon in Amos 1 and 2 to illustrate synthetic parallelism that involved repetition but no antithesis or synonymy.

For three transgressions of
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment . . .

Lowth's recognition that parallelism went beyond the semantic levels presaged the developments that have emerged in the last decade.

There was, however, a problem with the variety of constructions designated as synthetic parallelism as well as the more general issue of what was to be regarded as the basic features of parallelism. As a result, Lowth may be credited with much of the confusion that derives from the term "synthetic parallelism." He suggested that synthetic parallelism occurs where neither semantic antithesis nor synonymy exists but where there are formal ties (grammatical and metrical) between cola. Unfortunately he neglected to distinguish adequately a series of issues that certainly should be clear by now, even if they were not when George Gray wrote his major critique of Lowth's synthetic parallelism over sixty years ago.¹⁶ Synthetic parallelism¹⁷ had become a summary category for everything in Hebrew poetry that did not belong to synonymous or antithetic parallelism. Lowth's third type of parallelism did seem necessary, since it is clear that varieties of parallelism beyond semantic antithesis and synonymy exist. Both Lowth's awareness of this fact and the subsequent attempts to develop the category of synthetic parallelism are major factors that have generated much of the last decade's work on parallelism.

Lowth's lectures gave a broad definition of parallelism, but the definition lacked precision. He did not have at his disposal the linguistic tools that would have enabled him to articulate carefully the interrelationship of semantic parallelism with other types of parallelism. He could identify the three types of parallelism within a single text because he understood that at the root of parallelism was the idea of correspondence. His categories permitted him to identify the mingling of diverse parallelism within a single text. Psalm 14:1-2 illustrates the shifting from one type of parallelism to another. The bicola, according to a Lowthian perspective,¹⁸ shift from synthetic to synonymous:

Fools say in their hearts,
"There is no God."

They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds,
there is no one who does good.

The LORD looks down from heaven
on humankind,

to see if there are any who are wise,
who seek after God.

synthetic

synonymous

synthetic

synonymous

Use of these identifications does not allow one to identify grammatic elements that are clear in the Hebrew text, for example, contrasting verbal and nonverbal cola. They do not enable the reader to see the relationships between the repeated "there is no . . ." (*'ên*) in the first synthetic and synonymous bicola or the repetition of God (*'êlôhim*) in the first and last bicola. More important, these Lowthian categories do not assist the interpreter in establishing from the beginning of this psalm its major semantic antithesis between the fool and the deity.

NEW UNDERSTANDINGS

The term "parallelism" continues to be used to describe the relationship between cola. New terms such as "matching," "intensifying," and "seconding" have emerged to clarify the kind of correspondence meant by parallelism. New concepts, largely derived from linguistics, have enabled us to move beyond Lowth's categories in fundamental ways. The first such development is the fact that we can no longer equate parallelism and Hebrew poetry. The second development consists of drawing our attention from the poetic line to the "unit of sense." This entails both greater attention to individual words, sounds, and forms, as well as to the connections between these elements. After looking at these developments, we will elaborate some of the different aspects¹⁹ of parallelism, namely, grammatic and semantic parallelism.

First, until the last decade few would have questioned the equation: Parallelism equals poetry in Hebrew. Lowth may have implied that parallelism existed in prose as well as in poetry, but the dominant thrust of his work suggests that where parallelism is found, there is Hebrew poetry. However, Kugel has pointed out that Hebrew prose yields a variety of features that may be termed parallelism. For example, one may examine the following prose from Genesis 22. When it is set out on the page as poetry, one can readily observe the correspondence between lines.

I will indeed bless you,
and I will make your offspring as numerous
as the stars of heaven
and as the sand that is on the seashore.

Gen. 22:17

In addition, Kugel displays Num. 5:12-15 in parallel lines.²⁰ In fact, as he notes, there are parallel structures in every telephone book in the

world! Lists provide excellent examples of lines that may be understood as parallel.²¹ Some lists indeed function in poetic texts to further the poetic effect (Ps. 148:7-13), but not all lists are poetry.

Moreover, Kugel observed that some poetic texts include lines that are difficult to identify as parallel on almost any grounds. Psalm 119:54 presents two lines that can hardly be designated parallel: "Your laws were my songs/ in my dwelling place//" (Kugel's translation). It has been argued in a study of early Hebrew poetry that 12 percent of the corpus exhibits nonparallel lines.²² In sum, an easy equation between poetry and parallelism is no longer possible.

Most contemporary interpreters of Hebrew literature agree that poetry and prose are on a continuum. However, contending that poetry and prose are best understood on a continuum is not to suggest that we must abandon the distinction between poetry and prose.²³ There are pieces of Hebrew literature—some refer to texts like Genesis 22—that use parallelism and are terse or even paratactic—qualities often associated with poetry. But no one would contend that Genesis 22, the "binding of Isaac," is poetry. A reader's identification of a text as poetry is determined by a variety of complex factors. It would take us much too far afield to review the diverse perspectives surrounding this notion of a poetry-prose continuum. It is important to discard our often simplistic ideas of the distinctions between poetry and prose when coming to Hebrew poetry, whether the distinctions are between parallelism and no parallelism, "high" and "low" style, or rhyme and no rhyme.²⁴

As indicated in chapter 1, most readers rely on the format of the printed page, whether looking at the standard critical edition of the Hebrew text or at some English translation, to determine whether a text is prose or poetry. A prose text is printed from margin to margin, whereas poetic texts are indented so as to "look" poetic.²⁵ Such formatting makes the distinction between poetry and prose for most readers.

Although we will not attempt to make the case that any one particular text is or is not poetry, we must not ignore the issue, particularly as regards its importance for the assessment of a text's meaning. Said another way, "Poetry and interpretation are not matters that should be dealt with separately; rather, a deeper sensitivity to the poetic character of a text can enhance our understanding, and attention to poetic features may aid the interpretive process and its results."²⁶

If parallelism is not coextensive with poetry in some straightforward

way, and if parallelism involves more than semantic synonymy and antithesis, then some new conceptual scheme is necessary. For some, the study of linguistics provides the basis for a new approach, one that moves beyond the poetic line to words, grammar, sounds, and syntax. As Berlin has said, "Linguistics is fast becoming the prism through which poetry is viewed."²⁷ She correctly observes, however, that "if the grammatical aspect provides the skeleton of the parallelism then the lexical and semantic aspects are its flesh and blood."²⁸ Linguistics has assisted our precision in identifying the panoply of elements enriching parallelism, but not at the expense of ignoring semantics.

Linguistics includes the study of language, the principles of its organization, and the exploration of theoretical understandings. Since language is the medium of poetry, it seems appropriate that linguistics has become central to the interpretation of poems. This does not mean that extralinguistic factors are insignificant in the writing of or the interpreting of poetry. We saw in chapter 1 that there are various theories of poetry which, indeed, extend the understanding of a poem beyond a purely linguistic phenomenon.²⁹

It has been said that the single poetic line is a "unit of attention" but not necessarily a "unit of sense."³⁰ Those discussing Hebrew poetry, while certainly interested in the line, have turned to the diverse elements that make up both units of attention and units of sense. The fact that parallelism is so central to Hebrew poetry demands attention to the word as well as to the way words are linked. Attention to these matters is accomplished through turning to what may be termed grammatic and semantic parallelism.

Recent scholarly work on Hebrew poetry has advanced our understandings of grammatic parallelism.³¹ These studies have identified syntactic, morphologic, and phonetic forms of parallelism. One of the earliest studies of the last decade, O'Connor's, examined word order (syntax) in each poetic unit. With diverse nomenclature the constituent parts in each colon—subject, verb, object, and modifiers—were identified. Isa. 9:6 (Heb., v. 5) illustrates a bicolon where each colon includes a subject, a verb, and a modifier:

For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;

On many occasions the grammatic parallelism coincides with the meaning or semantic parallelism, as in the Isaiah example. Child and

son are synonymous terms, the verbs convey a sense of equivalence, and the prepositional phrase is identical. Repetitive parallelism, such as the prepositional phrase "to us," should not be neglected. Even when repeated at some distance, repetitive parallelism brings together every level of equivalence—semantic as well as several levels of grammatic parallelism (morphologic, syntactic, and phonetic).³²

However, the relationship of semantic and grammatic parallelism is not always immediately apparent. Observe Ps. 111:5 (Berlin's translation):

Food he gives to his fearers;
He remembers his covenant forever.

In both cola, the word order, although slightly different in the Hebrew, includes a subject, a verb, an object, and a modifier. The semantic parallelism, despite grammatic equivalence, is not transparent. Can remembering a covenant and giving food be understood as identical or similar activities? The grammatic parallelism enforces the correspondence between the lines. But what of the meaning?

Berlin provides an answer that derives from linguistics. She has borrowed from linguistic studies the notions of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships.³³ If one understands the relationship between lines or phrases as one in which the thought expressed in the first colon continues into the second colon, one may speak of a syntagmatic relationship. On the other hand, if one understands the relationship between lines or phrases as one in which the thought expressed in the one colon substitutes for a line or phrase in another colon, then we understand a paradigmatic relationship. Syntagmatic relationships continue or advance the relationship. Paradigmatic relationships substitute. Her translation of Isa. 40:9 serves as a good illustration of both.

Ascend a high hill, herald to Zion;
Lift your voice aloud, herald to Jerusalem!

One ascends the hill and then the voice is lifted. There is a continuation, a sequence of action. One can then say that the relationship of the actions in the bicolon is syntagmatic. On the other hand, the herald to Jerusalem substitutes in the second colon for the herald to Zion in the first colon. These are certainly meant to refer to the same individual. In other words, it is not one herald going up the hill and an-

other lifting a voice, since Zion and Jerusalem are identical entities. The one substitutes for the other. We can say, then, that the addressees in this bicolon function paradigmatically.

To return to Ps. 111:5, the grammatic parallelism assisted us in seeing the correspondence through the essentially equivalent syntax in each colon. At the semantic level the correspondence is not transparent, because the relationship between giving food and remembering a covenant are not synonymous, nor are they antithetical. If we consider the paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships, however, we gain new perspectives. The notion of giving food to those in a relationship with the LORD (the ones fearing God) may be easily extended by the expression of the remembering of a relationship, namely, the covenant. The interpreter is reminded of the covenant meal in Exod. 24:11 at which Moses and the chief people of Israel "ate and drank" with God.

GRAMMATIC, MORPHOLOGIC, SEMANTIC PARALLELISM

Grammatic parallelism may function at any of the diverse levels of language. In the current discussions of Hebrew poetry, there are different ways of distinguishing the parallelism we have chosen to group under the category of grammatic. Some will separate grammatic from phonetic (or phonologic) elements, even going so far as to understand sound in Hebrew poetry as something entirely distinguishable from parallelism itself.³⁴ Others we have mentioned limit grammatic parallelism almost exclusively to syntactic levels.³⁵ Still others, such as Berlin, who have been influenced strongly by linguistic theorists such as Roman Jakobson, will distinguish grammatic, lexical, and semantic as well as phonologic.

Because of the way they are translated in English, morphologic parallels are difficult for the non-Hebrew reader to identify. The simplest example of the problem can be observed by noting that in English, gender is not indicated by different morphologic endings. On the other hand, Hebrew nouns indicate gender by different endings for masculine plurals as well as for feminine singulars and plurals. Despite the fact that some of these morphologic parallels are difficult for the non-Hebrew reader to recognize, one needs to be aware of the tremendous range of options that Hebrew poetry had at its disposal to further parallelism. Morphologic contrasts and equivalences do not call attention to word order but to the substitution of words in one

colon for functionally equivalent words in another colon. These contrasts or equivalences can be articulated through gender (masculine or feminine), number (singular and/or plural), definiteness ("the" or "a"), conjugation, tense, and a number of other elements. The following examples are illustrative of several kinds of morphologic parallelism that are observable to the English reader.

1. Number

The singular, "innocent individual," in the A colon is contrasted with the plural, "upright ones," in the B colon:

- | | |
|---|---|
| A | Think now, what innocent individual perishes; |
| B | or where the upright ones have been ruined? |
- Job 4:7*

The singular, "father," is contrasted with the plural, "elders":

- | | |
|---|--|
| A | Ask your father, and he will inform you; |
| B | your elders, and they will tell you. |
- Deut. 32:7

2. Tense

The perfect in the A colon is contrasted with the imperfect in the B colon:

- | | |
|---|--|
| A | The LORD at the flood sat enthroned; |
| B | The LORD sits enthroned, king forever. |
- Ps. 29:10*

3. Proper noun and pronoun

In the A colon, "LORD," a proper noun, is used, and a pronoun substitutes for "LORD" in the B colon.

- | | |
|---|--|
| A | Praise the LORD with the lyre; |
| B | make melody to him with the harp of ten strings. |
- Ps. 33:2

These morphologically diverse parallelisms draw our attention to the semantic correspondences. The semantic parallelism in each of the examples is enforced by grammatic parallelism.

Among some of the other types of morphologic parallelism more problematic for the English reader are the following: a masculine noun in one colon and a feminine noun in the other colon (Prov. 14:13; Jer 46:12), sometimes referred to as gender parallelism; a kind of voice or conjugational parallelism that uses an active construction in one colon and in the next a passive conjugation (Ps. 24:7).

While morphologic parallelism focuses more on the word or lexical element, other types of grammatic parallelism hinge on syntactic levels. One of these has been identified as gapping, ellipsis, or deletion. By paying careful attention to the individual words that make up each of the cola, one can notice that a word is missing, usually from the second colon. Nonetheless the force of that word in the first colon carries into the second colon. Again we examine the Deut. 32:7 example, which also exhibited morphologic parallelism:

Ask your father, and he will inform you;
your elders, and they will tell you.

The imperative "ask" is not stated in the second colon; nonetheless its semantic force is presumed. Jeremiah 51:31 (Watson's translation) serves as another example of gapping. The verb ("does run") carries into the second colon. Just as runners run to meet runners, so do messengers run to meet messengers:

Runner to meet runner, does run,
messenger to meet messenger.

Psalm 78:51 carries the force of the verb "struck" from the first colon to the second:

He struck all the firstborn in Egypt,
the first issue of their strength in the tents of Ham.

"All the firstborn" and "the first issue of their strength" are equivalent.

These examples show how attention to syntactic matters assist the interpreter in identifying parallelism at work with and beyond the semantic level. At a semantic level in gapping one can also detect a number of paradigmatic elements. For example, the "firstborn" and the "first issue" certainly have a kind of paradigmatic relationship.

In addition to the above types of grammatic parallelism, we suggest that the interpreter capable of reading Hebrew be aware of phonetic

or phonologic parallelism and repetition. These features will enforce other aspects of parallelism. Berlin has developed the argument for phonologic parallelism. She defines it as "the repetition in parallel words or lines of the same or similar consonants in any order within close proximity."³⁶ Sometimes one dimension of phonological parallelism is referred to as alliteration, that is, the repetition of a consonant. It has been observed that the letter "q" occurs eight times in the short span of Joel 2:15-16.³⁷ A variety of issues (historical and linguistic) associated with the Hebrew vowel system make assonance, that is, the repetition of a vowel, an even more debated issue. In any case, these phonologic dimensions of parallelism are especially difficult for the non-Hebrew reader.

SUMMARY

In summary, several factors are essential for us to identify Hebrew parallelism and to use an understanding of it in the interpretation of poetry. First, Lowth was correct: parallelism is a matter of correspondence. There is, however, considerable variety in identifying what is at the heart of the correspondence. Some scholars demand that the correspondence be construed rather strictly, taking grammatical identity between A and B as the single criterion. This, of course, would rule out much of what Lowth deemed to be synthetic parallelism. One of the valuable recent contributors, E. Greenstein, contends that parallelism exists only where one has strict identity or repetition in the syntactic patterning of a sentence.³⁸ He relies entirely on grammatical identity at the level of deep structure.

Others delineate new categories to unravel what is at the heart of the correspondence. For example, Watson states that parallelism "belongs within a larger group of mathematical analogues and cannot be exalted to the rank of 'the characteristic of Hebrew poetry.'"³⁹ His chapter on parallelism is divided into six categories: gender-matched, word-pairs, number, staircase, noun-verb, and "Janus" parallelism.⁴⁰ Geller uses another set of six categories to delineate parallelism: synonym, list, antonym, merism, identity, and metaphor. These various attempts at categorization use semantic and grammatic elements, but they seem to run the risk of being mere revisions of Lowth's categories. They neither better state what is at the heart of the correspondence nor assist the interpreter in using the identification of parallelism to understand a poem better.

PARALLELISM

We take a very broad understanding of parallelism. It occurs in the interaction of semantic and grammatic equivalence and opposition. The juxtaposition of an A and B provides the opportunity for an almost infinite number of correspondences. The equivalence or opposition within the correspondence may be furthered at grammatic and semantic levels. "A is so, and *what's more*, B is so"⁴¹ is too limiting a description of the correspondence. A is related to B at a multiplicity of grammatic and semantic levels. The correspondence of A and B is not merely $A + B$, nor $A > B$, nor $A < B$. As one recent contributor to the discussion has said, "The whole [bicolon] is different from the sum of its parts because the parts influence and contaminate each other."⁴² Parallelism is not something that is predictable, and no mechanical system or set of categories can confine it. Rather, we must carefully observe the individual words as well as their relationships at the level of the colon, multi-colon, and entire poem in order to comprehend the range of parallelisms utilized in the Hebrew Bible.

It is common to associate poetry with the presence of meter. However, even the reader of English-language poetry knows that some poets practice their art without using meter—for example, the free verse of Ezra Pound. In addition, there is considerable debate about meter in Hebrew poetry. A number of recent analyses of Hebrew poetry argue that meter *per se* is not present.¹ Others dispute this judgment. Consequently, it is necessary that one think critically about the notions of meter and rhythm before commenting on the presence of either in classical Hebrew poetry.

In the previous chapter we argued that the notion of parallelism may be understood more accurately and fully by employing the analytical categories that derive from the study of grammar. As we proceed to a discussion of meter and rhythm, it will be useful to continue this same perspective. Put another way, it is appropriate that one use the discrete categories that derive from grammatical analysis when investigating the complex issues of rhythm and meter. One should note that the categories of morphology and phonology, and particularly those of accent or stress, are important for an assessment of rhythm in Hebrew poetry.

DEFINITIONS

In order to provide some measure of uniformity at the beginning of this discussion, we understand rhythm to be “a cadence, a contour, a figure of periodicity, any sequence perceptible as a distinct pattern capable of repetition and variation.”² On the other hand, meter may be construed as “more or less regular poetic rhythm; the measurable rhythmical patterns manifested in verse, or the ‘ideal’ patterns which poetic rhythms approximate. . . . If meter is regarded as the ideal

rhythmical pattern, then 'rhythm' becomes meter the closer it approaches regularity and predictability."³ Meter may be viewed as a subspecies of rhythm, one that occurs within the poetic provenance.⁴

Another term prominent in many discussions of Hebrew poetry is "prosody." Prosody has often been used as if it were synonymous with metrics, that is, some scholars write as if they thought prosodic analysis equals metrical analysis. But prosody involves more than a description of meter. Again, we use the *Princeton Handbook* as a touchstone: "Prosody is the most general term used to refer to the elements and structure involved in the rhythmic or dynamic aspect of speech. . . . Literary prosody studies the rhythmic structure of prose and verse."⁵ Hence it is misleading to speak of prosody or prosodic analysis and mean by that metrics or study of rhythm only in poetic texts.

Prosodic analysis typically eventuates in the identification of rhythmic structures, whether something relatively loose, like cadence, or something very regular, like meter. In such rhythmic structures the primary variables are those of intensity, duration, and pitch. If one highlights the factor of duration, then, when analyzing Hebrew poetry, one would end up counting syllables. If, on the other hand, one were focusing on intensity, then one would count stresses or accents. As a result, it is important to be clear about the distinction between meter and prosody, since scholars using these two categories may end up pursuing quite different forms of analysis.

Most theories about Hebrew prosody and meter identify one or another recurring element in the poetic line, for example, repetition in the numbers of syllables or in the numbers of stresses or accents. Much of the debate about the presence of meter or the various types of metrical systems hinges on precisely what it is in the language that is being repeated. It is possible to maintain that there are four primary types of meter: "the syllabic, the accentual, the accentual-syllabic, and the quantitative."⁶ From this perspective, debates about meter in Hebrew poetry may be viewed as debates over whether Hebrew poetry involves syllabic or accentual meter, that is, over whether what is being repeated is essentially numbers of syllables or numbers of stressed words.

METER

Having broached some of the basic terms that appear in discussions of meter—meter, rhythm, prosody, accent, and stress—we are now in

a position to address the question of meter in Hebrew. That Hebrew poetry includes meter is a notion that dates to the Greco-Roman period. As Gray and Kugel among others have observed, Philo and Josephus maintained that meter was present in Hebrew poetry. In Philo's case, the claim probably refers to postbiblical Hebrew texts. With Josephus, however, the assertion deals specifically with biblical poetry, namely, that it was composed according to certain metrical constraints, which he understood according to the principles of meter in Greek poetry. He once wrote, "And now David . . . composed songs and hymns to God of several sorts of meter; some of these he made with trimeter, some pentameters."⁷ The reasons for Josephus's judgment are surely complex, although one motive is obvious. For Jews interested in defending the excellence of their religious poetry in a culture that defined poetry, at least in part, in terms of meter, it was appropriate to maintain that their canon's poetry was metric in character as well.

This contention, that Hebrew poetry was metric, continued with surprising vigor over the centuries. Scholars such as Origen and Jerome argued that one may identify meter in various poetic sections of the Hebrew Bible. In our judgment, however, no attempt, whether by ancient or modern scholars, to identify the presence of something like classic Greek metric forms in Hebrew poetry has proved successful.⁸

Because it has been difficult, if not impossible, to discern a metrical system in Hebrew poetry, some scholars have revised the notion of meter itself to accommodate the data presented in the Masoretic text. As a result, no recent treatment that makes a claim for the presence of meter in Hebrew poetry has argued the case for metric patterns of the sort found in Greek, Latin, or English poetry. Put another way, although contemporary Hebrew Bible scholars may include discussion of meter within their treatments of Hebrew poetry, they typically do not understand this meter as fundamentally similar to that of Greek, Latin, or English poetry.

If by meter one means various forms of rhythmic regularity, however, then the search could go on for regularity of a sort different from, for example, iambic pentameter. In the case of biblical Hebrew, scholars have claimed to find regularity based on the patterns of Hebrew accentuation.⁹ This regularity is said to be based not on the presence of a series of unaccented and then accented syllables, as is the case with classic Greek meter, but rather on the repetition of the number of accents in parallel lines.¹⁰ This scansion is based on the fact that in Hebrew each word has its own accent. So, for example, in Isa. 5:3b,

the line "judge between me" contains two accents, and so too does the ensuing line, "and my vineyard." Some scholars have described that bicolon as one constructed according to a 2 + 2 meter. Such an assessment is based on a count of the word accents in the Hebrew text. An alternate system, one often associated with the names of Cross and, especially, Freedman, focuses on the number of syllables in a particular colon or bicolon. In the case of Isa. 5:3, the syllable count is 5 + 4. This particular form of analysis may be quite complicated, since it is sometimes deemed necessary to reconstruct the syllabification of the Hebrew word in order to make it reflect the presumed form of the word that would have existed when the poem was composed.

A metrical scansion (to scan is to analyze poetry by counting accents or syllables) based on an assessment of word accentuation has enabled scholars to provide numeric, "metrical" analyses of Hebrew texts. So, for example, Hans Wildberger analyzes the structure of Isa. 5:1-7 in the following way:¹¹

v. 1	3 + 3, 3 + 2
v. 2	2 + 2, 3 + 2, 3 + 2
v. 3	3 + 2, 3 + 2
v. 4	2 + 2 + 2, 2 + 2 + 2
v. 5a	4 + 4
v. 5b	2 + 2, 2 + 2
v. 6	(2) 3 + 3, 3 + 3
v. 7	3 + 2, 2 + 2, 2 + 2, 1 + 2

At the minimum, one may say two things about this form of analysis. First, capable scholars disagree over the particulars of accent-based scansion.¹² It is possible to analyze Isa. 5:2 as comprising 3 + 3, 3 + 3, 3 + 3 or 2 + 2, 3 + 2, 3 + 2. Much depends on what one thinks might be the possible minimum length of the poetic line or colon. Another variable is, of course, whether one scans syllables or accents. The key issue in Isa. 5:2 involves the first colon. Does it have the same weight, whether determined by accent or syllable, as does the second? In transliteration the verse reads as follows:

way'azzēqēhû (he digged it) *waysaqqēlēhû* (he cleared it of stones)

wayyit(ā'ēhû (he planted it) *sōrēq* (with choice vines)

If one follows the view that each word has only one accent, then a 2 + 2, 2 + 2 pattern is clearly evident. If one focuses on syllables, then

the first colon is decidedly longer: ten syllables in the first, seven syllables in the second. (And since a 3 + 2 pattern is evident in the rest of vv. 1-2, one is tempted strongly to construe the colon in question so that it will agree with the pattern present in surrounding bicola.) But there is a second and more fundamental issue. Even if individuals agree on one accentual scansion, one must ask if such an accentual pattern truly identifies meter. Or, put in a slightly different way, does Wildberger's scansion reveal a rhythmic structure consistent throughout the text and, in fact, consistent with other stylistic features of the text?¹³ In our judgment, the answer to both questions is no. There are no regular and predictable patterns of rhythm.

Some scholars have redefined meter so that it may be used to describe classical Hebrew poetry. Such efforts, however, make the notion of meter mean something quite different from what that term normally describes. Hence these revisions deprive the term of its normal explanatory power. The terms "mixed meter" and "irregular meter" do not clarify the matter.¹⁴

"Mixed meter" is used to describe the occurrence of bicola and tricola in a poem, each of which may have an accentual pattern different from what precedes or follows it. For example, a two-accent bicolon may follow a three-accent bicolon. "Irregular meter" is used to describe differences within the bicolon or tricolon itself. One might think of a tricolon made up of two three-accented lines followed by a two-accent line. In neither case, "mixed meter" or "irregular meter," does the poem present rhythmic constructions of the sort that would typically be described as meter.

Consequently, it would be wise to avoid the language of meter in favor of the broader term "rhythm" for Hebrew poetry. Seymour Chatman, in a seminal work on meter and rhythm, quotes the following typical and recent definition of rhythm. It is "the serial recurrence of a given time interval or group of time intervals marked off by sounds."¹⁵ By way of contrast, "meter is basically linguistically determined 'secondary rhythm'—linguistic events grouped regularly in time, such that each group has unity in its internal composition and in its external relations."¹⁶ On the basis of these definitions, one may note that a key issue in the decision about the presence of meter in any text involves a judgment about the regularity of the linguistic, especially phonetic, events that occur in the poetic line as well as the extent to which such regularity provides for unity throughout the composition. If, for example, one finds a poem with an accentual pattern of 2 + 2,

3 + 3, 2 + 2, does such a rhythmic pattern count as meter? In our judgment, one should answer this question in the negative. Despite the regularity with which lines that may be construed as 2 + 2 or 3 + 3 occur, the ordering of such lines within one poem or among multiple poems is so haphazard as to disallow the notion of meter.

An increasing number of scholars share the judgment that meter cannot be observed in Hebrew poetry. Both Kugel and O'Connor argue against the presence of meter in Hebrew, although from quite different perspectives. Kugel writes: "Nearly two thousand years of scanning, syllable-counting, and the like have failed to yield a consistent metric structure."¹⁷ O'Connor is equally decisive: "We have proposed that no consensus had ever been reached in the matter of Hebrew meter because there is none."¹⁸ Collins too, although attempting to identify some basic syntactic, one might even say rhythmic, patterns in Hebrew, hesitates to describe them as meter.¹⁹ Alter also expresses reservations about discerning meter in Hebrew as if it were in any essential way similar to meter known in ancient Greek or Latin poetry: "And so the term meter should probably be abandoned for biblical verse."²⁰ Pardee, as well, demurs about finding meter in either Ugaritic or Hebrew poetry: "Neither of the two primary meanings of the term 'meter' is properly ascribed to Ugaritic and Hebrew poetry: that these poetic systems do not have anything corresponding to the classical foot, and that there is not discernible in them a 'predominant form of rhythm.'"²¹ Even earlier expositions provide only guarded affirmations about the presence of meter in classical Hebrew: "The metric hypotheses rest upon a combination of inference from parallelism and application of the Masoretic accents, rather than on any intrinsic evidence from biblical Hebrew."²² On the basis of these judgments, made as they are from a significant variety of theoretical perspectives, it is possible to discern an emerging scholarly consensus that denies the existence of meter in classical Hebrew poetry.

In sum, it seems appropriate to delete meter as a category for understanding biblical Hebrew poetry. Rather, the language of rhythm and rhythmic patterns is more consistent with the texts in view. So, for example, Alter speaks about the "free rhythm" of biblical versification.²³ However, to use the language of rhythm instead of meter is not new; thus Johann Döllner, "Biblical Hebrew poetry is rhythmic, but not metric."²⁴

Most linguists would maintain that human language, including poetry, inherently involves rhythm, even patterns of rhythm. The pres-

ence of such patterns—for example, in the way that one typically pronounces the phrase “Auf Wiedersehen”—does not, however, mean that all human utterance is metric, even poetic. Nonetheless it is correct to conclude that poetry, as human utterance, is rhythmic. The task of defining rhythmic variety and regularity as they are manifest in Hebrew poetry and without forcing such variety and regularity into the analytical categories of meter constitutes the task at hand.

RHYTHM

The perspective expressed here stems from the so-called Ley-Budde-Sievers tradition, with closest ties to the work of Julius Ley, namely, the primary data used in an assessment of Hebrew rhythm is provided by accented syllables. Even though we affirm the Ley-Budde-Sievers tradition, analysis of Hebrew poetry based on stress or accent presents problems. There are at least two reasons for the use of caution when one examines accented syllables. First, the Masoretic text includes a complicated system of primary and secondary accentuation markings, a system that is considerably later than the poems themselves. Second, during the earliest period that the Hebrew poetry was being created, there were several major developments in the language that affected the position of accents on given words. For example, in the languages spoken in Syria-Palestine during the Late Bronze Age, case endings were present on nouns. The word for “word” in the nominative case would have been written *dabaru*, with the *u* serving as the nominative case ending. During the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age, these case endings fell out of use. Through a process of conditioned phonetic change, the syllabic structure and stress of words that had occurred with case endings became different. So the word for “word” became *dābār*, with the accent on the second syllable of the word instead of the first syllable as it had earlier. Any poem that had the word “word” in it would now sound different. Such is one example of the history of change in the Hebrew language. Despite this development, the very fact that the word for “word,” whether *dabaru* or *dābār*, had one accent allows us to capture something of essential importance in the language, something that enables us to identify, even today, patterns of rhythm that are constituent for ancient Hebrew poetry.

We propose to use the term “rhythmic patterns” as a way of thinking about and describing rhythm in Hebrew poetry.²⁵ Such patterns may

be discerned on the basis of careful attention to the occurrence of stressed or accented words in Hebrew poetry. Rhythmic patterns in poetry typically involve four elements: regularity, variation, grouping, and hierarchy.²⁶ These four elements have been identified in the poetry of many languages. Precisely how do these elements work in Hebrew poetry?

As for the first category, regularity, Hebrew poets composed lines of similar length. This similarity of line length created parallel lines, the regularity of which is based on regular occurrences of stress, for example, 2 + 2, 3 + 3. These groupings of at least two poetic lines may be described as rhythmic patterns. A two-accent bicolon is one sort of rhythmic pattern, and a three-accent tricolon is a different kind of rhythmic pattern. Such balance between parallel lines provided the rhythmic regularity that one normally associates with poetry.

The second category, variation, occurs primarily as a result of the number of syllables present in the coordinate cola. Put another way, in a bicolon that appears regular because of the primary accentual pattern, there is some variety because the number of syllables in the two lines normally varies. For example, in Isa. 5:1 the first bicolon comprises a 3 + 3 accentually defined rhythmic pattern. As such, it may be viewed as "regular." If one counts syllables, however, one discerns a bicolon with seven syllables in the first line and six in the second line. Variety occurs within a regular structure.

Third, the notion of grouping is directly related to the first category, that of regularity. The very existence of a rhythmic pattern presupposes a beginning and an end of the pattern. In Hebrew poetry, there are really two basic forms of grouping: the grouping of words that forms the individual poetic line, typically two or three accented words, and the grouping of bicola and tricola. In this regard, "the most natural groupings [in Hebrew poetry, we should think of accent-based patterns] seem to be twos and threes, the prime numbers which can be added together or repeated in various combinations to produce every possible larger group."²⁷ As a result, it is surely no accident that the primary rhythmic patterns in biblical Hebrew are 2 + 2 and 3 + 3, given the prominence of these numbers in the poetry of various languages.

The integrity of the grouping is created by the phenomenon of "end-stopping."²⁸ There is typically some form of grammatical stop at the end of each poetic line. Such stops are often, although not always, indicated by a comma or a semicolon in English translation. For ex-

ample, Isa. 24:19 presents a tricolon in which each Hebrew line has three accents:

The earth is utterly broken,
the earth is torn asunder,
the earth is violently shaken.

The punctuation present in this translation is, of course, not present in the Hebrew text. Such punctuation is required in a translation, however, to express the rhythmic groupings present in the poem. There is a full end stop at the end of the verse, as indicated by the period. After each line, there is a comma, which indicates a less powerful stop, one that identifies the end of the line but not the end of the rhythmic pattern. Scholars describe such stops in various ways. O'Connor's language is rather technical, "medial caesura," which he uses to describe the end stop that occurs at the end of a line. Kugel's terminology is less technical, namely, "slight pause" and "full pause."

The phenomenon of end-stopping in Hebrew grows out of the syntactic units, which conclude in identifiable ways. Parallelism is crucial in determining the end stops.²⁹ Semantic parallelism, as in the example of Isa. 24:19, often assists in the creation of end-stopping. In the Hebrew text of this verse, the word "earth" occurs at the end of each of the three lines. In addition, Hebrew phonology allows for the creation of so-called "pausal" forms, words that have a slightly different structure when they occur at the end of a sentence or poetic line. So, for example, in Jer. 22:29 there is a brief poetic line:

O land, land, land,
hear the word of the LORD!

The word "land" in Hebrew is normally written *'ereš*, and so it is in the first two occurrences in this first line of the bicolon. At the end of this line, however, the word is written *'āreš*. The "ā" vowel signifies a pausal form, which one would expect to occur at the end of the poetic line. In sum, semantics, syntax, or phonology may contribute to the creation of end-stopping.

The fourth and last category important for analysis of rhythmic structures is hierarchy. Hierarchy may be defined as "patterns on lower levels of rhythmic series that are frequently repeated across wider spans on higher levels."³⁰ Of the four elements used in discuss-

ing rhythmic structures, this is the least important in Hebrew poetry, but it can be recognized. The phenomenon of what some have called external parallelism, namely, correspondences between various bicola, presents a graphic example of hierarchy in classical Hebrew, for example, Isa. 1:3:

The ox knows its owner,
and the donkey its master's crib;
but Israel does not know,
my people do not understand.

These two bicola stand in what Norman Gottwald termed "external antithetic parallelism." This label means that there are two bicola, each of which involves internal synonymous (in at least semantic terms) parallelism. However, when these two bicola are juxtaposed, they create a new and larger structure, which involves antithetic (again in semantic terms) parallelism.

Hierarchy does not appear to be as significant an element in the creation and function of the rhythmic pattern in Hebrew poetry as do regularity, variation, and grouping. It may well be that the relative unimportance of hierarchy inhibits the strong sense of formal or structural coherence in some Hebrew poems, something that we have repeatedly found to be the case.

Rhythmic patterns of various sorts occur within single poems, for example, $2 + 2$, $3 + 3$, or $3 + 2$ sequences. However, identical sequences recur infrequently, that is, a sequence of $2 + 2$, $2 + 2$, $2 + 2 + 2$. If one looks, for example, at Wildberger's scansion of Isa. 5:1-7, one discovers that the longest sequence of a repeated accentual pattern occurs four times, $3 + 2$ in vv. 2-3.³¹ Some Hebrew poetry does offer far more significant evidence for the repetition of identical rhythmic patterns, for example, Psalm 29 with its predominately $2 + 2$ pattern. Most classical Hebrew poetry, however, such as that found in the Book of Job, is made up of combinations of diverse rhythmic patterns. Repetition of identical patterns, unlike repetition of lines in iambic pentameter, does not typically provide coherence or unity for an entire Hebrew poem. Rather, diversity among patterns provides variety within the poem, especially in poems that involve various types of similarity or synonymy.

Hebrew poetry is marked by a delicate balance between regularity and variation. The rhythmic pattern itself allows for both qualities: regularity of stress as in a $2 + 2$ bicolon; and variation, either diverse

rhythmic patterns in one poem or semantic opposition or contrast within one bicolon. The rhythmic patterns available to the Hebrew poet function something like building blocks. There are a finite number of frequent rhythmic patterns, basically two- and three-accent bicola and tricola. Out of these limited but nonetheless rich structural possibilities, individual writers were able to compose poems of astonishing formal and rhythmic variety, even in as short a piece as Isa. 5:1-7.

Rhythm in Hebrew poetry works in a way quite distinct from the way in which meter is often understood to function in the poetry of many other languages. Literary critics often note that meter in a Greek or English poem provides unity or overall coherence in the work. For example, repeated lines in heroic verse provide stylistic glue. The case with rhythmic patterns in classical Hebrew poetry is more complex, involving both regularity and variety. Use of diverse rhythmic patterns in one poem provides for variety, not consistency, within one Hebrew poem. As a result, to attribute the role of meter to what we have described as rhythmic patterns would be fundamentally to misconstrue one important aspect of Hebrew verse. Hence, simply to dissolve the link between meter and Hebrew poetry allows for a fresh understanding of that literature. Rather than seeking or expecting the sort of uniformity that meter typically generates in poems written in other languages, one anticipates a delicate balance between regularity and variation.

In sum, Hebrew poetry possesses rhythm, not meter. Such rhythm, often described in rhythmic patterns, is distinctive because it functions differently from meter. As a result, one may read Hebrew poetry looking for both rhythmic regularity and variety, not metric predictability.

To devote so much attention to the issues of parallelism and rhythm in a basic discussion of Hebrew poetry may seem odd to the student of English poetry. Considerations of theme, imagery, figurative language, perhaps even poetic diction, would have been expected much earlier in the analysis. These topics have, in fact, become increasingly prominent in the study of Hebrew poetry.¹

We will consider two literary devices other than parallelism and rhythm—namely, simile and stanza—under the rubric of style. This is by no means a comprehensive listing of all stylistic devices. Moreover, the category of style is not without its problems.² For some analysts, style is something that inheres within the entire poem; for others, one or another element in the poem constitutes a stylistic feature, for example, a particular metaphor. For some, style is characteristic of a particular author, for example, Pope's style; for others, style describes commonalities between several authors' works in a given period, for example, Elizabethan tragedies. Although all these uses are appropriate, style in this context refers to the elements that the poet employs, including parallelism and rhythm, to create a particular poem. In a very real sense, the previous two chapters have been dealing in unusual focus with matters of Hebrew poetic style. Such treatment was necessary because those two topics, parallelism and rhythm, have been so prominent in the history of reflection upon Hebrew poetry. However, various forms of parallelism and rhythmic patterns are only two among many stylistic features of Hebrew poetry.

Of the stylistic elements we discuss in this chapter, the first could and does appear in prose as well as in poetry. To that extent such elements are not, in an exclusive way, poetic. As we pointed out in chapter 1, however, poetry is literature in which such elements appear in

a particularly rich and concentrated, one might even say constitutive, way. Just as parallelism and rhythm occur both in poetry and in prose, so too do some of the elements considered here.

SIMILE

The first stylistic element, the simile, is common to poetry the world over. A simile is a figure of speech in which two entities are compared. The comparison is normally created morphologically, namely, by an indicator of resemblance, such as the word "like" or "as." A typical simile might be: This rainbow trout glistens like fire. A simile differs from a metaphor, another figure of speech in which two entities are compared, by having an identifiable indicator of resemblance. A metaphor has no such explicit indicator, for example: The fish is a stroke of lightning. In the cases of both metaphor and simile, one may, using the vocabulary of I. A. Richards, speak of tenor and vehicle. "The tenor is the idea being expressed or the subject of the comparison; the vehicle is the image by which this idea is conveyed or the subject communicated."³ In the example of the simile used earlier in this paragraph, the coloration of the fish is the tenor and fire is the vehicle, whereas in the metaphor, the speed of the fish is the tenor and lightning is the vehicle.

The distinction between simile and metaphor, however, involves more than the mechanical presence of an explicit indicator. Harold Fisch maintains that "simile distances tenor and vehicle, metaphor approximates them."⁴ Nonetheless, at least on semantic grounds, Berlin has argued, "It is but a small step from simile to metaphor."⁵ For our purpose, however, the presence of a grammatical marker, not semantic considerations, will serve primarily to identify a simile.

Because similes are so prominent in Hosea, it is appropriate to treat similes in this prophetic book as an exemplary poetic trope. In biblical Hebrew, several particles or words may be used as the indicator of resemblance, that is, *kē* ("like"), *māšal* ("become like"), *ʾim* ("like").⁶ However, in Hosea's poetry, only *kē* or *kēmō* is used. In Hos. 4-14, such particles occur over forty times to introduce a simile (we exclude 13:15, "as the reed plant," since this translation requires a conjectural emendation of the Hebrew text).⁷

Several observations may help the reader understand and appreciate Hosea's similes.⁸ First, the vast majority of vehicles that Hosea

employs come from the world of nature. Rain (6:3), birds (11:11), animals (13:7), and plants (10:4) populate the clauses introduced by the indicators of resemblance.⁹ Such imagery is not surprising, since Hosea was involved in a radical critique of Baalistic religion, which involved the claim that Baal was responsible for fecundity in the natural order. There is less variety in the tenors. Either Yahweh's positive (6:3) or punitive action (5:12) or Israel's malfeasance (7:6-7) provides the standard subjects.¹⁰

Second, and more fundamental, there is remarkable diversity in the ways in which Hosea's similes function. One may begin to recognize this diversity by noting that there is structural variety in the similes. Some may work within a single line or colon:

his appearing is as sure as the dawn
Hos. 6:3

Others occur within a single bicolon, wherein the first line provides the tenor and the second line the vehicle:

Samaria's king shall perish
like a chip on the face of the waters.
Hos. 10:7

More frequently, however, several similes are constructed in parallel lines, for example, Hos. 5:14a. The repetition of the indicator of resemblance ("like"), the repeated preposition ("to"), and the identical word order create morphologic and phonologic parallelism. Syntactically, gapping often exists; the second colon depends on the first colon's use of the personal pronoun "I."

For I will be like a lion to Ephraim
and like a young lion to the house of Judah.
Hos. 5:14¹¹

Despite the structural diversity of the above-mentioned similes, each presents a paradigmatic equivalence, that is, a substitution through the use of the vehicle. The vehicle or parallel vehicles capture one or more salient features of the tenor: the regularity and brilliance of the dawn expresses Yahweh's military appearance; the demise of a king before Yahweh is as inconsequential and easily achieved as is the

bouncing of a wood chip on, and then its disappearance in, the sea; the powerful and devouring lions exemplify Yahweh's response to Ephraim.

However, not all of Hosea's similes are so straightforward in structure or meaning. On the one hand, there are relatively short and yet complex similes:

Like a stubborn heifer
stubborn is Israel,
will Yahweh feed them;
like a lamb in a broad pasture?
Hos. 4:16*

This pair of bicola comprises two similes, the second builds on the first. This is similar to the syntagmatic relationships considered in chapter 2 on parallelism. The comparison of Israel to an animal is made, then the one feeding the animal (Yahweh) is named, and finally the location of feeding is identified. Moreover, the bicola are chiastically structured: vehicle-tenor, tenor-vehicle. The subject in the first simile is the proper noun, "Israel," which finds its equivalent expressed in the second simile as an object pronoun, "them." The noun-pronoun and subject-object provide a morphologic parallelism. The substitution of the pronoun for the noun suggests a paradigmatic relationship (cf. chapter 2 on parallelism). The reader anticipates a synonymous tenor. However, different vehicles, "heifer" and "lamb," are used within these tight confines. The first ("heifer") is feminine, although it more frequently appears as a masculine noun (Hos. 14:3). The second vehicle ("lamb") is masculine, although it also can appear in the feminine gender (2 Sam. 12:3, 4, 6). This gender contrast enforces the other grammatic parallelisms, suggesting that there is not mere substitution but progression of thought. Israel's stubbornness is highlighted specifically in the first simile by the repetition of the word *srr*, "stubborn." This word is most often used to describe willful children, thus developing, along with the connotations of "heifer," the idea of youthful rebels. However, the second bicolon, with its new vehicle, treats Yahweh's willingness to act as shepherd toward a lamb. Furthermore, the second simile is carved out as a rhetorical question, with a presumed negative answer. This presumption depends on the first simile, namely, Yahweh will not feed them because of their stubbornness. Put another way, the negative answer to the second simile de-

pends on the point of the first simile. Without the first bicolon, one might be tempted to answer affirmatively the question embedded in the second bicolon. This second bicolon exhibits external and contrasting, morphologic parallelism. The indicative mood of the first bicolon is developed syntagmatically through the interrogative mood of the second bicolon.

Finally, the two similes are related as indictment to sentence. Because Israel has been stubborn, they will not be fed and, presumably, will become malnourished and die. Within this development, there is an element of semantic continuity, namely, the heifer-lamb conveys the dominant image of youthfulness, which may involve stubbornness and palpable hunger.

Hosea also creates some long and complex similes. The editors of Hosea have placed multiple similes near the end of the book. The first involves two oracles of judgment, Hos. 13:1-3 and 13:4-8. In both cases, the indictments, vv. 1-2 and 4-6, include virtually no figurative language. However, in both cases, the sentences, vv. 3 and 7-8, comprise lengthy similes. For the interpretation of these individual oracles, it is important to assess the way these similes work individually and then together.

The first oracle indicts Ephraim for Baal veneration and for the use of images in religious ritual. This indictment is expressed in direct language, for example, the making of molten images. The character of the poetry changes radically in v. 3.

Therefore they shall be like the morning mist
or like the dew that goes away early,
like chaff that swirls from the threshing floor
or like smoke (rising) from a window.

Following the particle *lākēn*, "therefore," which often introduces the sentence portion of a judgment oracle, there are four clauses in which an indicator of resemblance introduces a separate simile. In these similes the repeated indicator as well as the preposition "from," which is drawn in the second bicolon, provides morphologic and phonologic parallelism. By contrast, there is a chiasmic form of grammatic parallelism, which links the elements syntactically. The first and last similes are made up of nominal clauses, whereas the middle two similes are verbal clauses. One might argue that the verb of the second simile controls the first, that is, the mist goes away early, and that the

verb of the third simile controls the fourth, that is, that the smoke swirls.

The sentence that governs these similes is straightforward: "They will be like . . ." However, the subject of the similes is not altogether clear. The indictment is, of course, directed against the people for perpetrating practices inimical to Yahweh. Hence the "they" could be the people. Such an interpretation would appear to fit the logic of a judgment oracle. It would be more proper grammatically, and perhaps semantically as well, to identify the "they" with the idols in which the people have put their trust. In either case, some party or object is depicted in similes that emphasize transience or impermanence. The first pair of similes had occurred earlier in the book, in Hos. 6:4 ("like a morning cloud, like the dew"). There, however, they functioned as an indictment. The tenor was Israel's love, which the similes depicted as impermanent. These vehicles function differently in 13:3, where they are part of the sentence. Either Israel or the idols will vanish like the morning cloud, like the dew that disappears early in the morning. Both vehicles point to evanescent water, mist or dew, that vanishes during the course of the day. Rather than suggesting simple impermanence, however, the simile works to report punitive removal. The simile in 13:3, therefore, works in a quite different way from 6:4 because the tenors are different; in Hosea 6, the author focuses on the people's love, in Hosea 13 on religious malfeasance, and this despite the identical wording of the similes. The emphasis in 6:4 is on the impermanence of the people's affection for Yahweh, whereas the emphasis in 13:3 is on the ease with which the removal, whether of people or of idols, can be accomplished.

Hosea 13:3 includes two more similes, "like chaff that swirls from the threshing floor/ like smoke (rising) from a window//." There is no verb in the second colon (e.g., gapping), thus creating some ambiguity. If the first two similes present something of a pair, so also do the last two. Instead of something that disappears, the focus shifts to things that are easily driven away by the wind. The tenor remains the same, but the vehicle has changed. They, the people or the idols, can be blown away as easily as chaff, as easily as smoke is blown away from a window, through which it leaves a building. The simile emphasizes active force against an object—wind on chaff, draft on smoke—rather than neutral disappearance as exemplified by the disappearance of dew. To that extent the second set of similes progresses, at least in its punitive connotation, beyond the first set. The people or the idols can be driven away easily, they do not simply disappear.

Hosea 13:3 provides two pairs of similes, each set providing a slightly different tenor. There are four vehicles—mist, dew, chaff, and smoke—and two tenors—people and idols. The two sets are ordered in a meaningful fashion, from neutral evaporation to something visible. The second series of similes that is set within the sentence of a judgment oracle occurs in 13:7-8:

So I will become like a lion to them,
 like a leopard I will lurk beside the way.
 I will fall upon them like a bear robbed of her cubs,
 and will tear open the covering of their heart;
 there I will devour them like a lion,
 as a wild animal would mangle them.

Like the similes in 13:3, those in 13:7 commence with an image that had been used earlier in the book. In Hos. 5:14, the author creates two similes, both of which involve the lion as the vehicle: "I will be like a lion (*šahal*) to Ephraim, and like a young lion (*kēpîr*) to the house of Judah." Then, using the figurative language of the simile, Yahweh reports his intent: "I, even I, will rend and go away, I will carry off, and none shall rescue." The similes in 13:7-8 commence with the statement, "so I will be to them like a lion," a clause that uses the same noun for lion, *šahal*, that was used in the first simile in 5:14. Unlike 5:14, however, the author of 13:7-8 explores Yahweh's punitive action by using a variety of animals rather than merely substituting Hebrew words for lion. Hosea uses four of the six Hebrew terms for lion (*ʿar-yēh*, 11:10; *lābîʾ*, 13:8). The variety of ravaging beasts rather than one predator is a hallmark of these similes.

In Hos. 13:4-6, the indictment varied in its description of the guilty party. Sometimes it was "you" (vv. 4-5), but at the end of the indictment the poet had moved to less personal discourse, "they" (v. 6). And this third person rhetoric obtains in the judgment similes. The various animals are likened to "them." One senses that the simile and the third person rhetoric serve to distance Yahweh from those whom he will punish, since elsewhere, when Yahweh contemplates the destruction of Israel, and when he speaks about them in personal terms (so Hos. 11:9), God's heart recoils. By contrast, similes serve to distance the people from Yahweh and so enable Yahweh to contemplate their destruction.

One can recognize various kinds of grammatic and semantic development in the similes of Hos. 13:7-8. The first is created with the vehicle of the lion (*šahal*) and the tenor is again ambiguous. Yahweh

will be a lion, but in what way? With the second simile, both tenor and vehicle are explicit. Yahweh will be like a leopard, the vehicle. And he will lurk, the tenor, along the roadside. Not only is a predator defined, but its ominous presence is localized. Still, however, the author does not mention the specific predacious act of the animal. That remains implicit in the second simile, just as did the tenor in the first simile.

In the third simile, matters develop further in two ways. First, the animal, in this case a bear, is especially vicious, since it is a bear that has lost its young. Second, for the first time the poet describes the predator's specific action, namely, ripping open the abdominal cavity of a person. This simile serves to elaborate the tenor, the particularly rapacious action of the predator animal. Even by the standards of animals thought to be dangerous, this attack would be especially vicious.

The fourth simile in the series provides something of a semantic if not phonetic inclusion. The animal is, as in the first simile, the lion, although with a different word for lion, *lābī*? This linking of the fourth simile to the foregoing ones is enhanced by the presence of the word *šām*, "there," in the first colon. One is forced to contemplate the image of a lion coming upon the prey of a bear and then driving the bear away. Put another way, the presence of "there" creates a narrative quality in this sequence of similes. If the bear is the killer, then the lion is the devourer, the animal that completes the predatorial process until virtually nothing is left but carrion. Hence this tenor, the lion as devourer, is appropriate at this point in the series. In order to lend weight to this final act, the poet has depicted the lion as devourer with an implicit simile, that is, "as a wild beast would devour them," which, however, does not include the indicator of resemblance.¹²

In sum, this series of similes involving different animals provides a striking case of paradigmatic though subtle syntagmatic development, that is, there is not only substitution but also a building action. The grammatical repetition of the first person verbs and the indicators of resemblance suggests equivalence, especially with the lion inclusio. However, the character of the tenors builds the action, syntagmatically from the lurking presence, to the violent killing, and finally to eating. Through this series of similes, the poet conveys in clear and vivid language the violent fate that will befall the victim, Israel.

When one compares the similes of the two judgment oracles that occur in Hos. 13:1-8, one sees several sorts of pronounced development. There is a move within 13:3, from neutral dissolution to active

removal. Then in 13:7-8 the predator similes denote Yahweh's active destruction. And within the similes of vv. 7-8 there is a progression, from animals, to animals lurking, to animals attacking, to animals devouring. Multiple similes allow for development or progression, a syntagmatic pattern common in this book.

The second major complex simile occurs in Hos. 14:4-8 (Heb., 14:5-9). It is surely the most complex simile construction in the entire book. In addition, its theme is unusual, since the topic is weal rather than woe for Israel. The rhetorical unit is larger than the simile. H. W. Wolff thinks the larger unit includes vv. 1-9, which is itself segmented into a prophetic summons (vv. 1-4) and a divine speech (vv. 5-9).¹³ The simile occurs in, but does not exhaust, the divine speech. The speech, which commences in first person language, reports what Yahweh will do on Israel's behalf, namely, heal their erroneous ways and love them totally. However, after this initial tricolon, the deity begins to use the language of simile. The first simile, "I will be like the dew to Israel" (v. 5a), focuses on what the deity will do. The choice of words is remarkable. In Hos. 6:4, the same word, *tal*, "dew," was used in a simile to describe the unreliability of Israel's love. It is like dew because it disappears. In 14:4-5, the same vehicle occurs, as does the notion of love for the tenor. Here, however, the subject is Yahweh's, not Israel's, love. Because of this difference in tenor, *tal* or dew works differently as a vehicle from the way it worked in 6:4. On the basis of the ensuing similes, the reader learns that Yahweh as dew means fructifying water, which enables plants to blossom, germinate, and grow. A kind of syntagmatic progression develops within nearly identical grammatic structures of linked similes.

In the ensuing similes, Israel is personified and described by the use of botanical vocabulary. Beginning with the second colon of v. 5 and continuing through the end of v. 6, the poet speaks entirely within the realm of simile.

He shall blossom like the lily,
He shall strike root as the poplar.
His roots shall spread out;
His beauty shall be like the olive,
and his fragrance like Lebanon.*

These lines are not grammatically synonymous, nor are they semantically identical. Just as there was progression of action in 13:7-8, so too

there is development here. The poet describes Israel's reaction to Yahweh as dew by using the imagery of organic growth. And the poet diversifies this imagery. Instead of one plant, there are three: lily, poplar, and olive. Moreover, there is a meaningful order within the lexicography, from small plant to tree to larger tree. Also striking is the movement from the natural to the human perspectives. The language of the first three cola—blossoming, striking root, spreading root—is that of an emerging plant. However, the next two cola are evaluative, the sorts of evaluation that humans make—that something is beautiful to the eye and pleasant to the nostril. Put another way, the plant grows and matures, but it is also able to affect others when it is mature. Others may perceive the olive tree as delightful in various ways. The focus is decidedly unpragmatic. The olive tree is not valued because of the oil it produces but because of its beauty.

The poet moves out of the imagistic world in the first part of v. 7 and back to the vocabulary with which this rhetorical unit began, "return." However, the imperative rhetoric in v. 1, "Return!" now becomes predictive, "they shall return."¹⁴ But as soon as the language of return has been adduced, the poet reintroduces symbolic language in which Yahweh casts a shadow.

They shall return and dwell in his shadow,
they shall grow grain;
they shall blossom like the vine,
his remembrance like the wine of Lebanon.*

There are numerous difficulties in the Hebrew text. Moreover, to what is Yahweh compared such that he can cast a shadow? The reader receives no answer. In any case, the poet turns again to Israel using the vehicles of plants and the tenor of Israel's restoration. The plants have changed. Instead of lily, poplar, and olive tree, the poet now refers to grain, vine, and wine. Unlike the earlier series, the focus has shifted to plants that have commercial value or are agricultural commodities themselves, such as wine. These cola represent the culmination of this botanical imagery, the final bounty that certain plants afford. Yet even here, the final note struck is not that of commerce but that of the memory, or even the ethereal fragrance (NRSV translates "fragrance"), of good wine.

In the final verse of this divine speech, the deity addresses Ephraim

directly in a challenging voice, much as at the beginning of the chapter:

O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols?

It is I who answer and look after you.

I am like an evergreen cypress;

from me comes your fruit.*

As before, the first person address turns to simile. With yet another type of flora, the poet likens Yahweh to a tree, and in so doing explains retrospectively the source of the shade mentioned in v. 7. Moreover, just as the poet understood Yahweh to fructify Israel as dew moistens a plant (v. 5), so now Yahweh will provide food for Israel, just as this tree (the tree of life?) provides fruit for consumption.

This concluding simile ties together various elements of this series of similes and the direct discourse that interpenetrates the similes as well. Yahweh remains the ultimate source of growth. Hence, with the conclusion of the simile, Yahweh and not Israel, as in vv. 5b-7, is likened to a plant. Israel, through the technique of personification, remains a person, whether known as Israel or Ephraim. The poet treats them as a person fed by the deity, even though, through the rich symbolism of these similes, Israel had itself been likened to both plant growth and agricultural produce. In the final analysis, Yahweh is the one who provides food for growth.

In sum, similes are prominent literary devices in the Book of Hosea. The analytical vocabulary of vehicle and tenor helps us understand the basic character of similes. Moreover, there is significant variety in the ways that similes work. For example, two identical similes function quite differently depending on their respective literary contexts. Furthermore, similes, when combined with other similes, work to create meanings different from situations in which one simile stands by itself. The semantic relationships, just as with all parallelism, may be paradigmatic or syntagmatic, that is, the vehicle or tenor in one simile may substitute for the vehicle or tenor in the next simile, or the similes may build upon each other. In addition, to use the language of vehicle and tenor, the specific identity of the tenor is often remarkably ambiguous, as seen in our discussion of 13:3 and 13:7-8. Similes become effective because the vehicle may express a tenor that is not initially clear. As a result, the listener or reader is challenged to enter the

world of the simile and to reflect upon one and another aspect of the tenor. Rather than a wooden device, the simile can be complex, both in its grammatic structure and in its rhetorical demands.

STANZA AND STROPHE

As demonstrated, simile is a stylistic device frequently used in Hebrew poetry. However, the importance of stanza and strophe in Hebrew poetry is much debated. Watson's encyclopedic work on Hebrew poetry deals with these terms in a chapter directly following the chapters on "metre" and parallelism. O'Connor employs the idiosyncratic terms, batches and staves, which he revitalized from other poetic studies to describe the strophes and stanzas.¹⁵ Some discussion of strophe and stanza continues in assessments of Hebrew poetry, but it is generally conceded that stanzaic groupings do not exist.¹⁶

In the broader literary discussions, strophe and stanza are not particularly prominent. The *Princeton Handbook* has a two-paragraph discussion on strophe and three paragraphs on stanza. To be sure, there have been times in the history of various literatures when either strophe (the ode in classical Greek drama) or stanza (Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*) was a rhetorical device utilized by the poet. To add to the problems, the two terms are often used synonymously. This is frequently the case in discussions of Hebrew poetry. If they are distinguished, more frequently than not, one designates the stanza (stave à la O'Connor) as the larger unit, which is made up of varying numbers of strophes.

Watson uses the terms more carefully. For him, strophe is synonymous with the terms for the various colon combinations (bicolon, tricolon, and others). Stanzas are based on content and include certain stanza markers (such as the refrain). However, in the end he says, "There are no hard and fast rules which can be applied. It is, to some extent, a matter of feel."¹⁷ Given these definitions, the term "strophe" affords little explanatory power. Moreover, if stanza is determined only by "feel," it is doubtful that the interpreter gains much precision by using the term or its equivalent. On the other hand, most agree that readers segment poems into sense units as they read. Nevertheless elements signal these sense units to the reader.

The term "stanza" is most frequently understood to be a semantic unit, that is, a unit of meaning. Some scholars have tried to identify the stanza as a grammatically or metrically regular unit. This task, of

course, has been difficult with Hebrew poetry, since regularity of rhythm, number of cola combined, series of identical parallelistic strategies, and so forth, are difficult to find.¹⁸ It is not our contention that groups beyond the bicolon or tricolon never occur, rather that stanzaic style does not appear in Hebrew poetry. Groupings occur within the constraints of parallelism, rhythm, and other stylistic devices. There are delimiters, both grammatic and semantic, that signal the reader that units external to the bicolon, or any other configuration of cola, hold lines together and separate them. However, the delimiting is not accomplished through breaking units into stanzas.

The term "stanza," even if understood not to suggest any kind of regularity, provides little leverage for the interpreter of Hebrew poetry. The term "verse paragraph," which is defined as "one or more sentences unified by a dominant mood or thought,"¹⁹ also appears to have minimal analytical value for the understanding of Hebrew poetry. Mood and thought are problematic terms, since they are open to such diverse interpretations. It is more important to identify those grammatic and semantic elements that link and separate cola, of whatever arrangement. The delimiters found in Hebrew poetry to separate or bind various numbers of lines reside at multiple grammatic and semantic levels. Our discussions of parallelism and rhythm have already pointed to some of these devices.

Many elements signal segmentation and contiguity, but we will highlight only a few of them. There are efforts to list these elements, much as one attempts to list the types of parallelism.²⁰ However, to date no one has provided a comprehensive taxonomy, since the variables are so numerous. It makes far greater sense to identify sense units²¹ that are held together—and reported from other sense units—by various grammatic and semantic devices.

The similes in Hosea present several examples. First, the linked similes of Hosea 13 demonstrate how the rhetorical device of the similes, coupled with the structural elements derived from the oracle of judgment, both separate and draw together the poetry. In both oracles (13:1-3 and 4-8) the indictments (vv. 1-2 and 4-6) are expressed in direct language. The similes appear in the sentences that conclude the oracles. It serves little purpose to discuss this segmentation in terms of stanzas. The fact that the sentence following the indictment in 13:7-8 is cast in similes, chiasmically structured, with both paradigmatic and syntagmatic semantic development serves far better the purposes of understanding the internal and external relationships of the cola and

of identifying a discrete rhetorical unit. One might even refer to these units as sense units.

The refrain and the chorus are stylistic devices that segment poems. A refrain can be formulated as an exact repetition, such as the five clauses iterated in Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11 ("yet you did not return to me, says the LORD"). Or they may vary slightly, as the refrains in the first two chapters of Amos: 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6 ("for three transgressions of . . . , I will not provoke the punishment"). The chorus of Psalm 136 in every other colon is identical ("for his steadfast love endures forever"). This repetition within the bicolon draws the reader's attention to an identity that continues from beginning to end. On the other hand, the other portion of the bicolon is constantly changing. In fact, the non-chorus segment of almost every bicola tells of a new event, yet the new event always makes the same claim, namely, that God has provided in diverse times and places for all humankind. These actions by the deity in turn deserve continuing thanksgiving.

The stylistic devices available to the Hebrew poet for delimiting and connecting larger units are, more frequently than not, detected after the reading or hearing. The first time we read or hear the refrain or chorus we do not know it is a repeated element. Only after we have seen it the second time do we begin to grasp the rhetorical significance. The so-called inclusio, or enveloping structure, in which a word or phrase or even bicolon segments a text by appearing at the beginning and at the end of a unit, further illustrates this point. Psalm 8, following the superscription, begins and ends with the same lines.

O Yahweh, our LORD,
how majestic is your name
in all the earth!^{*}

The inclusio brackets the entire psalm. Each of Psalms 145–150 begin and end with the so-called imperative colon, "Praise Yahweh." Individual bicola and tricola may commence and conclude with identical or nearly identical words, phonologic elements, or morphologic equivalents. The repetition of key words and phrases also serves to hold cola together and to segment them. The repeated "voice of Yahweh" in Ps. 29:3-9 segments the praise of Yahweh from the call to praise in vv. 1-2 and the concluding praise from the temple in vv. 10-11. The repetition of this key phrase holds together a diverse semantic and grammatic unit. The pounding sevenfold repetition of the phrase appears among

nominal and verbal cola, bicola utilizing the phrase elliptically, others not using ellipsis, and similes with diverse vehicles, just to mention several stylistic devices present in this section of Psalm 29.

All of this suggests that rather than rely on stanzaic language, which often assumes some extraneous semantic or grammatic strategy, we look to multiple stylistic devices, including parallelism and rhythm, which indicate the organization of poetic lines. The purpose of our discussing briefly these stylistic features suggests the diversity of devices open to the Hebrew poet and also reminds the poetic interpreter of the interdependence of parallelism, rhythm, and numerous other stylistic devices.