THE IDEA OF BIBLICAL POETRY

PARALLELISM AND ITS HISTORY

JAMES L. KUGEL

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THE PARALLELISTIC LINE: "A IS SO, AND *WHAT'S MORE*, B"

1

The songs and psalms of the Bible were not written in quantitative meters, as were the songs of the ancient Greeks, nor do they have regular rhyme or alliterative patterns, as do the songs of many other peoples. Rather, the basic feature of biblical songs—and, for that matter, of most of the sayings, proverbs, laws, laments, blessings, curses, prayers, and speeches found in the Bible—is the recurrent use of a relatively short[1] sentence-form that consists of two brief clauses:

אשרי איש ירא את ה' במצותיו חפץ מאד

Happy the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments. Psalm 112:1

The clauses are regularly separated by a slight pause—slight because the second is (as above) a continuation of the first and not a wholly new beginning. By contrast, the second ends in a full pause. The structure might thus be schematized as

_____ / _____//

with the single slash representing the pause between the clauses (short) and the pair of slashes representing the final pause (long).[2] Here and there ternary sentences

_____ / _____ / _____//

also occur, but the binary form is definitely the rule in Hebrew and ternary the exception.

Often, the clauses have some element in common, so that the second half seems to echo, answer, or otherwise correspond to the

1. This basic fact about biblical songs is often overlooked or taken for granted, yet it is most significant; see on this point the commentary of the (medieval) Tosafot on b. *Baba Batra* 14b; Judah Alharizi singles out the "poetic" books of the Bible as having פסוקים קצרים וקלים [verses that are short and simple]; on both see chapter 5.

2. That is, it would be punctuated by a period or a semicolon in English. There are not a few lines where this full pause is nevertheless not "final"; see below.

first. The common element is sometimes a word or phrase that occurs in both halves, or the same syntactic structure, or commonly paired concepts ("by day . . . / by night . . . //"), or some similarity in the ideas expressed. For example, Psalm 94 begins:

אל נקמות ה' / אל נקמות הופיע //
הנשא שפט הארץ / השב גמול על־גאים //
עד מתי רשעים ה' / עד מתי רשעים יעלזו //
יביעו ידברו עתק / יתאמרו כל פעלי און //

God of retribution, Lord / God of retribution, appear! //
Rise up, earth's ruler / give the arrogant their due //
How long shall the wicked, Lord / how long shall the wicked rejoice? //
They brag, speak arrogance / all the evil-doers do act haughtily //[3]

The common element in the first verse is the repetition of the phrase "God of retribution." In the second, each half begins with an imperative addressed to God ("rise up . . . / give . . . //"). The third verse repeats a phrase, just as in the first. The fourth verse describes successively aspects of the evildoers' arrogant behavior.

Though Psalm 94 is an extreme example, it illustrates the general tendency of this biblical style to establish, through syntax, morphology, and meaning, a feeling of correspondence between the two parts. For that reason the style is called *parallelism*. The name has in the past proven somewhat misleading, for some students of the phenomenon have understood the term to imply that each half must parallel the other in meaning, or indeed that each word of the first must be matched by a word in the second. As will be seen, such complete correspondence is relatively rare.

2

The clauses of a parallelistic verse have been referred to by a bewildering variety of names: hemistichs, stichs, versicles, cola, bicola, half-verses, or (as we shall most often call them) A and B.[4] It is not known how they were referred to in biblical times; the earliest

3. While the meaning "salvation" for נקמה has clarified many previously puzzling texts, Dahood is correct (*Psalms II*) in asserting retribution as the theme here. See his p. 347 for the possibly implied "how long" in v. 4.

4. Terminology is important. Obviously stich and hemistich analogize parallelism to poetry; colon and bicola were terms used in Greek rhetoric (i.e., prose as well as poetry). When Robert Lowth called his discovery "parallelismus membrorum" he was certainly aware that *membrum* was the standard Latin translation of Greek *colon* in all writings on rhetoric, but his term has since been grievously misunderstood to mean "the parallelism of all the members [= words] of A with all the members of B"! Cf. *YGC* p. 5n. On the equivalence colon = member = clause for Lowth, see A. Baker, "Parallelism: England's Contribution," *CBQ* 35 (1973): 430.

postbiblical references speak only of "the beginning" and "the end" of a verse. Perhaps they did not need a name, for this two-part form, A + B, was as much a habit of mind as a formal prescription. And it was on everyone's lips, commoners' and kings'; rumors and facts, cures, rules of conduct, rules of thumb, things one heard and things one might make up spontaneously[5]—all were framed in parallelisms. Indeed, this is the first thing to be grasped about parallelism: it was an extraordinarily versatile and popular form of expression, one that almost anyone could use almost anywhere. Parallelistic lines appear throughout the Bible, not only in "poetic" parts but in the midst of narratives (especially in direct discourse),[6] in detailed legal material concerning the sanctuary and the rules of sacrifices, in genealogies, and so forth.

The relationship between the two parts varies. In verses such as those seen in Psalm 94 one finds a very obvious correspondence. Indeed, in many psalm verses the second half seems nothing more than a restatement of the first in different words:

אהללה ה' בחיי / אזמרה לאלהי בעודי //

I will praise the Lord in my life / I will sing of my God while I live //
Psalm 146:2

At the same time one finds an almost equal number of lines in which the feeling of correspondence between A and B is so slight as to disappear entirely:

חנה מלאך־ה' סביב ליראיו / ויחלצם //

The Lord's angel stays about his worshippers / and [i.e., so that he] delivers them //
Psalm 34:8

ברוך ה' / שלא נתננו טרף לשניהם //

Blessed is the Lord / for he did not make us fall prey to their teeth //
Psalm 124:6

Not only do these latter verses lack the sort of correspondence-establishing elements seen earlier, they do not even seem to have a clear break dividing the verses in two (and in any case the "halves" are somewhat lopsided).

The majority of parallelisms in the Bible fall between such

5. See John Gray, *The Legacy of Canaan*, *SVT* 5 (Leiden, 1965): 304.

6. On this and the following, see chapter 2.

extremes. Here, by way of illustration only,[7] are some of the commonest ways in which the meaning of A and B are related in one book of the Bible, the Psalter:

Mere Comma

There are many verses in which A and B have no real semantic parallelism at all, sentences in which the medial pause is a mere comma separating units of roughly equal length:

חזקו ויאמץ לבבכם / כל המיחלים לה' //
Be strong and let your hearts be firm / all you who trust in the Lord //
Psalm 31:25

בינו נא זאת שכחי אלוה / פן אטרף ואין מציל //
Understand this, forgetters of God / lest I ravage and none escape //
Psalm 50:22

ה' אלהים צבאות / עד מתי עשנת בתפלת עמך //
Lord God of Hosts / how long will you be deaf to your people's prayer? //
Psalm 80:5

Among specific subtypes of such "mere comma" lines, let us note:

Citation

ואני אמרתי בחפזי / נגרזתי מנגד עיניך //
I said in my dismay / "I have been driven from your sight" //
Psalm 31:23

וידברו באלהים אמרו / היוכל אל לערך שלחן במדבר //
And they spoke against God [and] said / "Can God spread a table in the desert?" //
Psalm 78:19

למה יאמרו הגוים / איה אלהיהם //
Why should the nations say / "Where is their God?" //
Psalm 79:10

Sequence of Actions

גפן ממצרים תסיע / תגרש גוים ותטעה //
You brought up a vine from Egypt / you banished nations and planted it //
Psalm 80:9

המה ראו כן תמהו / נבהלו נחפזו //
When they saw, they were astonished / they panicked and took flight //
Psalm 48:6

7. What follows is certainly not intended as a catalogue of different types of parallelism, on which practice see following.

הודיעני ה' קצי / ומדת ימי מה היא / אדעה מה חדל אני //
Show me, Lord, my end / and what is the measure of my days / [then] I will know how fleeting I am //
Psalm 39:5

Various subordinations

יהי חסדך ה' עלינו / כאשר יחלנו לך //
Let your love, Lord, be upon us / since we hope in you //
Psalm 33:22

אם תחנה עלי מחנה / לא ירא לבי //
If a camp encamp about me / my heart shall not fear //
Psalm 27:3

Moreover, the forms and degrees of semantic parallelism vary. One finds, for example:

Commonly paired elements establish parallelism[8]

יומם יצוה ה' חסדו / ובלילה שירה עמי //
By day the Lord sends forth his love / and *by night* his song is with me //
Psalm 42:9

אלהים שמע תפלתי / האזינה לאמרי פי //
Oh God *hear* my prayer / *hearken* to the words of my mouth //
Psalm 54:4

יברכך ה' מציון / וראה בטוב ירושלם / כל ימי חייך //
May the Lord of *Zion* bless you / and [i.e. so that you] enjoy[9] *Jerusalem's* goodliness / your whole life //
Psalm 128:5

Repeated element(s)[10]

בך בטחו אבתינו / בטחו ותפלטמו //
In you our forefathers trusted / they trusted that you would save them //
Psalm 22:5

כי חנם טמנו לי שחת רשתם / חנם חפרו לנפשי //
Secretly they hide their death-trap for me / secretly they lie in wait for me //
Psalm 35:7

8. On "fixed pairs" see chapter 1, section 7.

9. Probably *raʾôh* (infinitive) is to be read for MT imperative *rēʾēh*. For *yqtl* followed by the same probable infinitive with just this expression, cf. Eccles. 2:1 אנסך בשמחה וראה בטוב; also Eccles. 9:11 שכתי וראה. Note that (contra Dahood) ראה ב– is not the idiom here, but ראה (ב)טוב ("enjoy"). Cf. Pss. 4:7, 34:9, 13; Job 7:7, Eccles. 2:1, 3:13, also the variant ראה כי טוב ("be very pleased") as in Gen. 1:4, 10, etc. See my "Adverbial Use of *Ki Tob*," *JBL* 99 (1980): 433–36.

10. On repetitive parallelism in Hebrew and Ugaritic, see section 7.

ראוך מים אלהים / ראוך מים יחילו / אף ירגזו תהמות //
When the waters saw you, God / when the waters saw you they shook / yea, the depths were agitated // Psalm 77:17

עד אנה ה' תשכחני נצח / עד אנה תסתיר את פניך ממני //
עד אנה אשית עצות בנפשי / יגון בלבבי יומם / עד אנה ירום איבי עלי //
How long, Lord, will you completely forget me? / How long will you hide your face from me? //
How long will I keep sorrow in myself / pain in my heart [all] day? / How long will my enemy triumph over me? // Psalm 13:2–3

Each term of A paralleled in B

ה' שמך לעלם / ה' זכרך לדר ודר //
YHWH is your name eternally / YHWH your appelation forever // Psalm 135:13

All of B in apposition to part of A[11]

יכרת ה' כל שפתי חלקות / לשון מדברת גדלות //
Let the Lord çut off all lips of falsehood / a tongue speaking untruths // Psalm 12:4

תסתירני מסוד מרעים / מרגשת פעלי און //
You shield me from the council of the wicked / from the company of evil-doers // Psalm 64:3

AB / B'C //[12]

יקרא אל השמים מעל / ואל הארץ לדין עמו //
He calls to the Heavens above / and to the earth to judge his people // Psalm 50:4

ויהפך לדם יאריהם / ונזליהם בל ישתיון //
He turned their Nile[s] to blood / and their waters, lest they drink // Psalm 78:44

"Blessed" + Attribution[13]

ברוך ה' / כי שמע קול תחנוני //
Blessed is the Lord / may he hear the sound of my plea // Psalm 28:6

11. On this pattern see M. Dahood, "Ugaritic-Hebrew Syntax and Style" *UF* 1 (1969): 27–28.

12. It is common practice to represent terms of a single line with the letters A, B, C, etc. and terms that parallel them within the same line with the notation A', B', etc.

13. This was to become the Rabbinic ברכה; see W. S. Towner, " 'Blessed be Y . . .' The Modulation of a Biblical Formula," *CBQ* 30 (1968): 386–99.

ברוך אלהים / אשר לא הסיר תפלתי / וחסדו מאתי //
Blessed is God / that he did not turn aside my prayer / nor his love from me // Psalm 66:20

A is statement, B question

כי אין במות זכרך / בשאול מי יודה לך //
In death none can call on you / in the netherworld who will praise you? // Psalm 6:6

אלהים בקדש דרכך / מי אל גדול כאלהים //
God, your dominion is in Heaven / what power is as great as God? // Psalm 77:14

3

This is, of course, only a sampling—but a somewhat polemical one, designed to bring home a central theme: the ways of parallelism are numerous and varied, and the intensity of the semantic parallelism established between clauses might be said to range from "zero perceivable correspondence" to "near-zero perceivable differentiation" (i.e., just short of word-for-word repetition). Now how one reads and interprets a line depends to a great extent on one's expectations, that is, on the notion of parallelism one brings to each verse. It is here that the term "parallelism" has proven somewhat misleading. For example, in approaching Psalm 145:10

יודוך ה' כל מעשיך / וחסידיך יברכוכה //
All your works praise you, Lord / and your faithful ones bless you //

it is easy to see how B parallels A in form and in meaning. But what of the slight differences? "Faithful ones" (those characterized by חסד, "bestowed love") is a more specific notion than "all your works," angels, men, and beasts.[14] Similarly "praise" (acknowledge, thank), though a frequent apposite of "bless" in the Bible, is a somewhat different, more general form of "powerful speaking" than its pair.[15]

14. מעשיך really means "offspring" or "creatures" here. Cf. Pss. 8:7, 103:22, 104:24; Prov. 31:31 (!); Job 14:15, 34:19. חסידיך may denote a special group or sect. See J. Coppens, "Les psaumes des hasidim" in *Mélanges André Robert* (Paris, 1956), pp. 214–24, an evolutionary view of the term's use; also *PsIW* 1:8, 103, etc.

15. On this general point see J. Muilenberg, "Hebrew Rhetoric: Repetition and Style," *SVT* 1 (Leiden, 1953): 97–111.

Furthermore, B's syntactic variation, "subject—verb," is opposed to the "verb—subject" of the A half. These are hardly overwhelming differences, and in view of the obvious parallelism of meaning, it is only natural to consider them "elegant variations" on a single idea. They are, it seems, a natural consequence of having to say *the same thing* in different words. Thus it is that discussions of parallelism generally stress similarities, especially semantic. In one critic's (not atypical) formulation, the ancient Hebrew "expresses his thought twice in a different manner. . . . He repeats and repeats."[16] But this is to miss the point of a great many parallelistic lines, indeed a majority. About this particular verse one might ask: what *is* that same idea that is being repeated? Is it: "Everyone praises / blesses you"? Then why should the second half have introduced so specific a term as חסידיך, "your faithful ones," (and not, e.g., "the whole earth," "all the world," or the like)? Furthermore, as even our brief survey of parallelism suggests, there are quite a few lines in which B is clearly a continuation of A, or a going-beyond A in force or specificity. And this, it is suggested, corresponds to the expectations the ancient Hebrew listener, or reader, brought to every text: his ear was attuned to hearing "A is so, and *what's more*, B is so." That is, B was connected to A, had something in common with it, but was not expected to be (nor regarded as) mere restatement.

The medial pause all too often has been understood to represent a kind of "equals" sign. It is not; it is a pause, a comma, and the unity of the two parts should not be lost for their division. Indeed, its true character might be more graphically symbolized by a double arrow—

All your works praise you Lord ⟵ and your faithful ones bless you

for it is the dual nature of B both to come *after* A and thus add to it, often particularizing, defining, or expanding the meaning,[17] and yet also to harken back to A and in an obvious way connect to it. One might say that B has both *retrospective* (looking back to A) and *prospective* (looking beyond it) qualities.

Now by its very afterwardness, B will have an *emphatic* character: even when it uses the most conventional synonyms or formulae, its very reassertion is a kind of strengthening and reinforcing. But often this feature (found in all apposition) is exploited: the meaning of B is indeed more extreme than A, a definite "going one better." Thus, when Job begins his complaint (3:3)

16. J. Pederson, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (London, 1926), p. 123.
17. See on this Muilenberg, "Hebrew Rhetoric," 98.

יאבד יום אולד בו / והלילה אמר הרה גבר //
Perish the day I was born in / and the night it was said, "Let a boy be conceived" //

he does not mean the second half to be merely an independent version of the first, but something more emphatic: "My whole life is a waste! Blot out the day of my birth, *in fact*, go back to the very night I was conceived and destroy it." Of course the parallelism of A and B is clear. But saying they "mean the same thing" is hardly exact.

The much explicated Isaiah 1:3 is another example:

ידע שור קנהו / וחמור אבוס בעליו //
ישראל לא ידע / עמי לא התבונן //

If biblical parallelism were merely a repetition, the meaning of this verse would be: an ox knows its owner, and an ass its masters' trough; Israel does not know, my people does not understand. Any reader would, of course, be aware that some sort of unflattering comparison is being made. But if, in place of mere restatement, one allows B some independent existence, this series of clauses presents itself as a kind of progression. How is the first clause different from the second? The same verb, "know, obey,"[18] governs both halves. The animal of the first was hardly considered the most praiseworthy of beasts: nevertheless "ox" is in several significant respects considered superior to its frequent pair, "ass."[19] More important, parallel to the "owner" of the first is "masters' trough" in the second. The cumulative effect of these differences is the establishment of a climactic descent: "An ox knows its owner, and *even* an ass"—who may not be very obedient or attentive—at least knows where to stand to be fed, i.e., knows "his masters' trough; but Israel does not know,"—or obey, even this much; in fact—"my people does not understand at all."[20]

18. "Obeys" or "is attendant to" is what is meant in the first verse-half. For this meaning cf. 1 Sam. 2:12, Hos. 5:4, Prov. 1:29, 2:5; Job 18:21, 21:13. In Near Eastern treaty language, "know" was regularly used in the sense of "acknowledge as sovereign." See H. B. Huffmon, "The Treaty Background of Hebrew *Yadaʿ*," *BASOR* 181 (Feb. 1966): 31–37.

19. In ritual purity, and in matters dependent on it, such as redemption. While שור and חמור are an oft-repeated, merismatic pair in the Bible, they are no more interchangeable in parallelism than in real-life agriculture. Here, however, the text is probably speaking of the simple matter of obedience; the ass's inferiority in this respect is well-known.

20. That this meaning is emphatic (hence, "at all") is stated in the *hitpaʿel* itself. Elsewhere, when *ydʿ–byn* is not meant as a climactic descent, one finds the normal *hifʿil* form, thus Isa. 43:10, 44:18. Whether the infix-*t* has durative force (as Gen.

Sometimes, especially in proverbs and sayings, finding the precise connection between two apparently unrelated parallel utterances is the whole point:

טוב שם משמן טוב / ויום המות מיום הולדו //
Better a name than good oil / and the day of death than the day of birth //
Eccles. 7:1

The first half of Ecclesiastes' verse is difficult to argue with: who would deny that a man's reputation is more important than any material possession? And sound adds its approval to sense, for the verse-half is a near-perfect chiasmus, especially if one recalls the doubled *š* hides an elided *n*: *tôb šēm min šemen tôb*. The second half, however, seems eminently arguable: birth is always a happy occasion, and death always occasion for mourning—so in what sense could the latter be considered "better"?

In precisely the same sense. For the trouble with precious oil (as Ecclesiastes mentions later, 10:1) is that it is extremely fragile and spoils easily. What is of obvious value one day is completely worthless the next. The value of a name is quite the opposite: intangible, it is thus protected from the physical decay of the world. Now the newborn child is like the precious oil in that he is entirely physical[21]—no qualities, no character, in fact, *no name*, at least not for a while. As he grows he gains these less tangible attributes; then, as he ages, his physical existence begins to decay. On the day of his death, all that will remain is the intangible, the *šēm*; that day will be "better" in that on it the process of building the name (which only began at birth) will be complete.

The proverb exists in the form "A is so and B is so." But its "and" is not a simple connective. The two halves are a single conceit—"Since (the unarguable) A is so, therefore (the initially very arguable) B is so," "Not only A, but even B," "Just as A, so B also," etc. There was no need to state their relationship; it is implied in the form itself.[22]

Now it may be that we have some clue as to how this subtle

6:9), or imitative, or some other nuance is not as important as the emphasis it implies.

21. R. Gordis also suggests the two are associated because oil is useful on babies. *Koheleth: the Man and His World* (New York, 1968), p. 267.

22. One might single out the *waw* ("and") as implying comparison, the so-called *waw adaequationis*, but then that is the whole point: A . . . / weB . . . // is the form. There are , however, parallelisms of obviously comparative intent in which the *waw* is absent, e.g., Prov. 11:22. Moreover, comparison is far too narrow a concept: see below, n. 32.

relationship of B to A was seen in biblical times, especially where it is most common, in proverbs. For one characteristic most often associated with Hebrew proverbs is the quality of "sharpness." Thus Proverbs 26:9

חוח עלה ביד שכור / ומשל בפי כסילים //
A thorn comes by chance into the hand of a drunkard / and a proverb (*māšāl*) into the mouth of fools //

The sense of this verse is: you may hear fools citing words of wisdom, but they have gotten them without understanding their real meaning, by chance, like a burr that sticks into the hand of a groping drunkard. The proverbist's image is, however, significant: he associates *māšāl* (a proverb, or perhaps more generally, a parallelistic line)[23] with something sharp. A similar image appears in Ecclesiastes 12:11:

דברי חכמים כדרבנות / וכמשמרות נטועים בעלי אספות //
The words of the wise are like goads / and like nails firmly planted are those used in assemblies //[24]

דברי חכמים (words of the wise) is a (late) pair of *māšāl* (cf. Proverbs 1:6). Here again, then, these brief, proverblike utterances are sharp. The recurrent phrase *lēmāšāl wēlišnînâ* (Deut. 28:37, 1 Kings 9:7, Jer. 24:9, 2 Chron. 7:20) is an idiom meaning "as a byword or proverb" (especially as a warning); the second noun is from the root *šnn*, which means to be sharp or pointed. Now one might conclude from this that *māšāl* was "sharp" in that it spurred to action or pricked the conscience of the listener. But if this meaning is at all present, it is apparently an adaptation of an attribute of *māšāl* already

23. See chapter 2, n. 15.

24. Again, let us read B against A. The sharpness of דרבנות ("goads," from **drb* "be sharp," cf. Arabic *ḍariba*) exists in potential; it needs an object, something to be goaded. משמרות נטועים, "stuck-in nails," are already having their sharpness put to advantage; this is the nuance B adds. The somewhat obscure phrase בעלי אספות thus represents "words of the wise" that have found their mark, either because they have been incorporated in established collections (אספות), or because academy teachers (בעלי אספות) with many students are certain of having their words understood and preserved properly. On the latter point see J. Goldin on העמידו תלמידים הרבה in "The End of Ecclesiastes," in A. Altmann, *Biblical Motifs* (Cambridge, 1966), p. 135 (it is a pity he did not connect his remarks with this verse!) and in general Gordis, *Koheleth*, pp. 353–54 and 411. The superiority of teacher-to-student transmission over learning from the written word alone—על פי סופרים ולא על פי ספרים—remained a central Jewish tenet: see Profiat Duran, מעשה אפר (Vienna, 1865) pp. 20–21. On the existence of wisdom schools: J. P. J. Olivier, "Schools and Wisdom Literature" *JNSL* 4 (1975): 49.

known. For *ḥîddâ*, which seems to come from another root meaning "sharp,"[25] is also paired with *māšāl*. Whatever a *ḥîddâ* is (it is often translated as "riddle") its sharpness has nothing to do with spurring to action: as Samson's *ḥîddâ* (Judg. 14:14) and Sheba's (1 Kings 10:1) show, it was a test of wits or verbal showmanship of some sort.

Instead, the sharpness of *ḥîddâ* and *māšāl* is more likely the quality already described, the delight in creating a B half which both connects with, and yet cleverly expands, the meaning of A. "Sharpness" represented the potential subtleties hidden inside juxtaposed clauses. This is in any case what we shall mean by the term on the following pages; it is the highest advantage taken of parallelism, one might say the genius of the form.

4

That genius was not well understood by the modern expositors of parallelism, however.

Robert Lowth is the man generally credited with the discovery of biblical parallelism. His study *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum* . . . (1753, revised somewhat 1763) coined the phrase *parallelismus membrorum* ("the parallelism of the clauses")[26] and established the general lines of the modern critical approach to parallelism in the Bible. A most perceptive and sensitive writer on biblical style, Lowth nevertheless misstepped in insisting—and this is in many ways the most historically significant part of his exposition—on classifying different sorts of parallelism into broad "types." He distinguished three: synonymous, antithetical, and synthetic parallelism. This classification, far from illuminating, simply obscured the potential subtleties of the form: everything now fell into one of three boxes.

It was soon recognized[27] that the third, at least, was defective, a sort of catchall; but the first two terms are still alive today. Now the trouble with "synonymous" as a classification is that it leads to the view that B is essentially a restatement of A (though to judge by his examples, Lowth himself may not have had so narrow an idea in

25. On the affinity of verbal roots with $R_2 = R_3$ (i.e. *ḥdd*) and those with R_2 = y or w (*ḥiddah*, [denominative?] *ḥwd*), J. Kurilowicz, *Studies in Semitic Grammar and Metrics* (Warsaw, 1972) pp. 10–12.

26. See above, note 4.

27. See George Buchanan Gray, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (London, 1915), pp. 49–52.

mind.[28] Parallelism, then, became "saying the same thing twice"; classified as "synonymous parallelism," our verse from Isaiah becomes only "An ox knows its owner, and an ass its masters' food trough,"[29] without any sense of the whole. What the synonymous reading, a drastic sort of leveling, lacked was a recognition of the fact of B's *afterwardness*. It conceived of the two as happening simultaneously, and consequently failed to see that B *must inevitably be understood as A's completion*;[30] A, and what's more, B; not only A, but B; not A, not even B; not A, and certainly not B; just as A, so B; and so forth.

Lowth's "antithetical" parallelism was a distinction without a difference. It was another way for B to pick up and complete A. Just as "synonymous" is inappropriate, so is "antithetical." Indeed, it was in order to preserve the synonymity of "synonymous" that antithetical parallelism was devised; it drained off a whole class of parallelism in which B's differentness from A was all too obvious.

Now the relationship of A to B in Lowth's antithetical examples, e.g.,

נאמנים פצעי אוהב / ונעתרות נשיקות שונא //
Proverbs 27:6

is not merely "antithetical." Saying this only repeats the synonymous reading's error, for here too A and B would then become independent (opposite) versions of "the same idea," rather than a single statement. But single statement they are. A translator might render the relationship A:B here as:

Just as a friend's barbs are sincere / so are an enemy's kisses false //[31]

28. T. H. Robinson, "Hebrew Poetic Form: the English Tradition" *SVT* 1 (1953): 130.

29. See, for example, the discussion of this very verse as "synonymous" in R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1969), p. 965; also the translation in L. I. Newman and W. Popper, *Studies in Parallelism* (Berkeley, Calif., 1918).

30. Here mention should be made of the major work on the subject of completion, B. H. Smith's *Poetic Closure* (Chicago, 1968). Note especially "Puns, Parallelism and Antithesis," pp. 166–71.

31. The precise meaning of נעתרות is somewhat in dispute, suggestions as widely divergent as "profuse" and "ferocious" having been put forward. Obviously the word is intended to contrast with נאמנים, as the parallel morphology indicates. But perhaps the latter ought to be taken not (as it often is) as "long-lasting," but in the equally acceptable sense of "'faithful," "reliable," yielding, approximately, the first half of

or even more explicitly, in the spirit of "You know A, now understand B" (already seen in Eccles. 7:1)

> You know how a friend's reproaches ring true / understand how an enemy's praise should be taken for falsehood //

Of course, none of this spelling out of the relationship A:B is necessary in Hebrew: it is implied in the form.[32] But in the light of it, "antithetical" is shown to be a misleading concept.

In none of Lowth's examples of antithetical parallelism did B differ from A by being a negative complement, but this rather common sort of parallelism has, since Lowth, been associated with the antithetical category, and compounded the problem. Hebrew is fond of using negatives to reinforce: עם נבל ולא חכם "foolish and not-wise people," Deut. 32:6; חשתי ולא התמהמהתי "I hurried and did not linger," Psalm 119:60. As in these, so in longer phrases

פודה ה' נפש עבדיו / ולא יאשמו כל החסים בו //
The Lord redeems the life of his servants / and those who trust in him will not be condemned // Psalm 34:23

the negation does not create contrast, but agreement. Here is nothing antithetical whatever.[33]

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our translation: "Just as criticisms received from a friend (lit. "the woundings of a friend") are reliable. . . ." As for the second half, the common mistranslation of נעתרות as "abundant" is based on Ezek. 35:13, where the same root עתר parallels the root גדל. But תגדילו עלי בפיכם clearly means something like "blaspheme" in the context. It probably represents גדל = "twist" (Akk. *gidlu* "cord," Arab. *gadala* "twist a cord," Aram. גדל "twist," Heb. גדילים [Deut. 22:12] "twisted threads," and cf. Psalm 12:4 [חלקות // גדלות] and esp. *Psalms I* p. 73 for other examples and references). Our root עתר therefore probably means twisted or false—the perfect opposite of נאמן.

32. C. A. Briggs's new category, "emblematic parallelism," was intended to cover verses in which obvious comparison, "Just as A, so B," exists (he cites Psalm 42:2, "As a deer thirsts after springs of water, so do I thirst after you"), but he probably would not recognize its existence in such verses as this one. And indeed, focusing on comparison is only to express in translation a specific possibility of the form's general principle. As our second translation shows, comparison (or rather, equation) is only a category of the more generalized phenomenon, "A, and what's more, B." Indeed, we might also have said: "Better a friend's reproaches, in that they are sincere, than an enemy's praise, which is always falsehood"—cf. the previous verse (Prov. 27:5), "Better is open criticism than hidden love."

33. See also K. Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition* (New York, 1969) p. 94, on Prov. 10:1. M. Held correctly describes the "synonymous" role of such negations; see his "The Action-Result (Factitive-Passive) Sequence of Identical Verbs," in *JBL* 84 (1965): 282, n. 71.

Why Lowth should have imposed this classification system onto biblical parallelism is a question that will be explored in a later chapter. But for now let it suffice to note that despite obvious flaws his system has proven extraordinarily tenacious. Overall, it has had a disastrous effect on subsequent criticism. Because of it, synonymity was often imposed where it did not exist, sharpness was lost, and the real nature of biblical parallelism was henceforth condemned to a perpetual "falling between two stools." As the insightful Hebraist Karl Budde noted at the turn of the century (but how little his words have been heeded!):

> By distinguishing three kinds of parallelism, synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic, as well as by the very name "parallelism," he [Lowth] contributed at the same time to encourage too narrow a conception of the phenomenon. Nor is it any advantage to complete the scheme. . . . The variety of possible relations between the *stichoi* [verse-halves] is endless.[34]

5

As was noted briefly in section 3, B often demonstrates an obvious and conscious decision *not to parallel*. Thus, while it is easy to point out that the verse

אברכה את ה' בכל עת / תמיד תהלתו בפי //
Let me bless the Lord at all times / continuously [let] his praise [be] in my mouth // Psalm 34:2

has certain points of correspondence ("all times" matches "continuously," "bless" and "praise" are related), the less obvious differentiation should also be underlined. For the second clause could have read: "Let me praise God continuously." The fact that it does not, but that the word-order is inverted, the objective genitive "his praise" replaces the verb-object sequence, and the element "in my mouth" is introduced (conveying the same first-person element as the verbal prefix in A), all evidence the very obvious intention of the Psalmist to say something that, in form at least, is rather different from the first half of the verse.

34. J. Hastings (ed.), *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York, 1902) 4:4. For the most recent (and impressive) attempt to "complete the scheme," see S. Geller, *Parallelism in Early Biblical Poetry* (Harvard Semitic Monographs 20; Missoula, Mont., 1979) pp. 30–52.

Now there is nothing astonishing in this observation *per se*—for so long as some semantic parallelism is established between A and B, there is no harm in variety, indeed, it apparently saves the verse from the potential monotony of more obvious forms of restatement. Yet such may not be the best understanding of this phenomenon, *differentiation*, for it is important to view it from the standpoint of the sentence as a whole. To the extent that B identifies itself as A's "mere parallel," it asserts A = B; while to the extent that it differentiates itself from A in meaning and morphology, it asserts A + B to be a *single statement*. B becomes A's complement or completion. Differentiation, in a word, *integrates* the sentence, asserts its unity. It may avoid repetition or monotonous restatement, but to say only this is to miss part of the point.

A number of phenomena may be grouped under the general heading of differentiation. The first involves morphological differentiation of verbs. As was seen in section 3, sometimes B's verb is clearly subsequent to A's in time, thus:

גפן ממצרים תסיע / תגרש גוים ותטעה //
You brought up a vine from Egypt / you banished nations and planted it //
Psalm 80:9

There are many such verses in which a sequence of activities is implied:[35] indeed, one finds in the Psalter the same use of the so-called *waw*-consecutive form found in the narrative books:

ויגער בים סוף ויחרב / ויוליכם בתהמות כמדבר //
ויושיעם מיד שונא / ויגאלם מיד אויב //
ויכסו מים צריהם / אחד מהם לא נותר //
And he breathed[36] on the Reed Sea and it dried / and he marched them through the waves as through desert //
He saved them from the enemy's hand / and redeemed them from the foe's hand //
And the waters covered up their enemies / not one of them was left //
Psalm 106:9-11

From this use of parallelism it is but a short hop to another, in which the apparent coordination of two actions (A happened . . . / and [then] B . . . //) really stands for a subordination:

35. See also below, chapter 2, section 1.

36. Elsehwere נער means "speak words of reproach," but here it is preferable to concretize the act of speaking.

צרה ויגון אמצא / ובשם ה' אקרא //
When sorrow and pain I find / on the name of the Lord I call //
Psalm 116:3-4

It is sometimes difficult to know how much subordination, and what sort, is implied, for Hebrew is notoriously reticent in this regard:

אלהי בך בטחתי / אל אבושה / אל יעלצו אויבי לי //
I trust in you, my God / let me never be disappointed / nor my enemies exult over me //
Psalm 25:2

The above translation duplicates that reticence, but what was intended (and understood) might better be rendered: "God in whom I trust, let me not . . .," "Because I trust . . . I will not . . .," or even "God, I have trusted you that I will not be disappointed. . . ."

Particularly noteworthy in this last verse is the alternation between the suffix (*qtl*) and prefix (*yqtl*) forms (viz. the Hebrew "perfect" and "imperfect," as they have imperfectly been called). Such alternation in Hebrew is difficult to justify consistently on grammatical grounds, but in cases such as this one it does seem to indicate a particular intermeshing of actions—i.e., asserts their interrelatedness, in the same way as subordinating phrases assert interrelations in English.[37] The two contrasting forms strike the ear as complementary. These nuances have in the past sometimes been mistranslated as a past-present or past-future distinction, or (when this was patently prohibited by the meaning) simply overlooked.[38] But interrelation and complementarity are often the whole point. Thus Psalm 92:5

כי שמחתני ה' בפעלך / במעשי ידיך ארנן //

must really be understood not as a temporal or aspectual contrast, but as the sort of intermeshing represented in English by a subordination,

Since you gladden me with your deeds / in your creations I exult //

The point is that here once again part of B works in the opposite direction of the paralleling: for all the obvious semantic parallelism (שמחה and רננה are both used for "songs of gladness,"[39] similarly "deeds" parallels the meaning of "creations" [or "actions"]), B's

37. See A. Blommerde, *Northwest Semitic Grammar and Job* (Rome, 1969) pp. 34–35; also Joüon, par. 112k-m; 113f-h, o (pp. 300–06).

38. M. Buttenweiser understood at an early date the precative *qtl* in his "The Importance of Tenses for the Interpretation of the Psalms" (*HUC Jubilee*, 1925, p. 109), but failed to focus on the phenomenon of alternating forms.

39. *Psalms III*, pp. 219, 271.

completion of A, rather than reiteration of it, is asserted in the contrasting verb forms. Such contrasts are extremely common:

טרף נתן ליראיו / יזכר לעולם בריתו //
Giving[40] food to his worshippers / he keeps his covenant forever //
Psalm 111:5

The effect is sometimes difficult to render. Consider, for example, the opening of Moses' Song (Deut. 32:1)

האזינו השמים ואדברה / ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי //
Listen, Heavens, and let me speak / and hear, O Earth, my words //

We are probably faithful to the meaning in translating the B-verb as an imperative, as if the text said שמעי. But the form תשמע is an assertion of B's *lack* of parallelism, intermeshing the three verbs almost as if they were sequential.[41] Here then is another form of differentiation, emphasizing B's going beyond A.

It is striking what a regular feature of parallelism verb alternation is.[42] Interestingly, a number of scholars have shown the use of aspectual alternations[43] of the same root in parallel halves, e.g.

נשאו נהרות ה' / נשאו נהרות קולם / ישאו נהרות דכים //
The floods lift up, O Lord / the floods lift up their voice / the floods lift up their roar //
Psalm 93:3

ותאכל את תהום רבה / ואכלה את החלק //
And it devoured the great depths / it devoured the ploughland //
Amos 7:4

אהבי ורעי מנגד נגעי יעמדו / וקרובי מרחק עמדו //
My friends and companions stand aloof from my affliction / those closest to me stand far off //
Psalm 38:12

To understand these alternations as supplying "variety" seems

40. Not a repointing to *nōtēn* but an attempt to convey intermeshing.

41. It ought to be compared to such A ● B phrases as רפאני וארפא which certainly does not mean "Heal me and I will be healed" (implied sequence) but "Heal me, let me be healed," or, more faithful to the spirit, "Heal me and make me healthy." On this cf. M. Held, "The Action-Result . . .," 272–82.

42. See *Psalms III*, p. 363, and Blommerde, *NW Semitic Grammar*, pp. 34–35 for references. Dahood's "Grammar of the Psalter" (ibid., 420–24) lists more than 100 verbal alternations in the Psalms. See also *UT*, p. 123–24.

43. For other alternations, such as thematic (*qal-nifʿal, qal-piʿel*) see *Psalms III*: 414; M. Held, "The Action-Result . . ."; M. D. Cassuto in *Tarbiz* 14 (1943): 9–10; M. Held, "QTL-YQTL" in *Studies in Honor of A. A. Neuman* (Leiden, 1962), pp. 281–90.

contradicted by the very repetition of the verbal root; instead, something closer to completion or complementarity seems to be their role, the integration of A and B into a single whole. So similarly, when the verbs are quite distinct and not even conventional pairs:

הסירותי מסבל שכמו / כפיו מדוד תעברנה //
I removed his shoulder from toil / his hands were freed from the basket //
Psalm 81:7

כי אבי ואמי עזבוני / וה' יאספני //
Even if my father and mother abandoned me / still the Lord would care for me //
Psalm 27:10

one nevertheless finds the same *qtl-yqtl* alternation. A translator must proceed with caution, given the actual subordinating function of such alternation described above. But clearly there are some alternations to which subordination cannot be ascribed. Instead (and, one might say elsewhere, *in addition to* subordination), it is differentiation that is intended, contrasting B's verb to A's and (therefore) emphasizing the unity of A + B.

Differentiation is also behind the frequent use of chiastic[44] word order in parallelistic lines, e.g.

על שחל ופתן תדרך / תרמס כפיר ותנין //
On lion and snake you tread / you crush lion-cub and serpent //
Psalm 91:13

Of course chiasmus is a well-known trope of Greek and Latin literature, and has been all too readily assimilated to such biblical uses as the above since the days of the Church Fathers (see chapter 4). But chiasmus in Hebrew, while it undeniably provides the same aesthetic pleasure as in European languages, ought rightly not to be separated from the context of parallelism itself. That is, where it appears in Greek or Latin more or less "out of the blue," in Hebrew it is truly a concomitant of the binary structure of parallelistic sentences, and it therefore represents a decision *not to parallel* the word order of A. Now again, several writers[45] have noted the use of

44. On this see M. Dahood, "Ugaritic-Hebrew Syntax and Style," *UF* 1 (1969): 24; J. W. Welch, "Chiasmus in Ugaritic," *UF* 6 (1974): 421–36; Dahood, "Chiasmus in Job," in H. N. Bream, ed. *A Light unto My Path*, (Philadelphia, 1974), pp. 119–30; "Chiastic Word Patterns in Hebrew" *CBQ* 38 (1976):303–11. An extensive bibliography is to be found in Welch, "Chiasmus," ns. 1–10.

45. Dahood, "Chiastic Word Patterns," p. 303; A. R. Čeresko, "The A:B:B:A

chiasmus in successive clauses containing identical words or roots, as in these verses from Ezekiel:

חנה לאש נתן לאכלה / את שני קצותיו אכלה האש //
If it is given to the fire to consume / its two ends the fire will consume // Ezek. 15:4

ונתתי לכם לב חדש / ורוח חדשה אתן בקרבכם //
I will give you a new heart / and a new spirit will I put in your midst // Ezek. 36:26

The functional similarity of chiasmus to *qtl-yqtl* alternation (and in fact, in the latter example, its combination with it) is clear. Indeed, chiasmus is but one form of varied word order in parallelism; it ought not be separated from less symmetrical forms of differentiated word order,[46] such as

כי השקיף ממרום קדשו / ה' משמים אל ארץ הביט //
For he peers from the heights of Heaven / the Lord from sky to earth looks down // Psalm 102:20

הנתן שלג כצמר / כפור כאפר יפזר //
He gives snow like wool / frost like ashes he spreads // Psalm 147:16

In all such cases it is B's complementing of A that the chiasmus effects, and consequently the unity of the two-clause combination.[47]

Another form of differentiation is between singular and plural forms. Sometimes this differentiation is explicitly the point:

טוב מעט לצדיק / מהמון רשעים רבים //
Better is the little of one righteous man / than the plenty of many evil men // Psalm 37:16

Word Pattern . . ." *UF* 7 (1975): 84–90; L. Boadt, "The ABBA Chiasm . . . in Ezekiel" *VT* 25 (1975): 44.

46. So Welch, "Chiasmus," p. 422. Here mention ought to be made of a related phenomenon, the word pattern ABCB, in which a second term appears twice in consecutive clauses. Thus: "Be fruitful and multiply / swarm on the earth and multiply in it //" (Gen. 9:7), with ורבו repeated; "Who fashions light and creates darkness / makes peace and creates discord //" (Isa. 45:7), with ובורא repeated; "Listen and hear my voice / harken and hear my speech //" (Isa. 28:23), with ושמעו repeated. See *PEPI*, p. 44; B. Porten and U. Rappaport, "Poetic Structure in Gen. 9:7," *VT* 21 (1971): 363–69. But this is but one pattern in which actual repetitions occur. See below, section 6; also cf. Job 13:7, 38:17, and many others. Note also Čeresko, "A:B:B:A Pattern," 86; Dahood in *UF* 1:15.

47. See on this F. I. Andersen, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (The Hague, 1974), pp. 119–23.

Other times the intention is less certain:

לב נבון יבקש דעת / ופני כסילים ירעה אולת //
The heart of a sage seeks out knowledge / while the mouth of fools fosters stupidity // Prov. 15:14

Moses ibn Tibbon, a medieval Jewish commentator and translator, observed about this verse: "The text says 'the heart of a *sage*' and not 'sages,' and says 'the mouth of fools' and not 'a fool' in order to indicate the scarcity of the former and the abundance of the latter. There are many such verses [that contrast the singular and plural] in Proverbs, and they all have the same point [which was stated explicitly in Eccles. 7:29], '[Only] one man among a thousand have I found.' "[48] But sometimes no intention can be attributed to the text other than the desire to differentiate by making B *not parallel* in every detail:[49]

וכל קרני רשעים אגדע / תרוממנה קרנות צדיק //
All the horns of the wicked I will cut / but the horns of the righteous will be exalted // Psalm 75:11

(where not only does one find the same singular-plural differentiation, but also the alternation: קרני–קרנות).

מהרו שכחו מעשיו / לא חכו לעצתו //
They hurried to forget his deeds / and did not attend to his counsel // Psalm 106:13

To these may be added several other peculiar forms of differentiation, including:

1. apposition of a word with a possessive suffix in A with an article in B, and vice versa:[50]

שקר הסוס לתשועה / וברב חילו לא ימלט //
The horse is no salvation ("is false for saving") / and by the might of *his* force one will not escape // Psalm 33:17

48. M. ibn Tibbon, פירוש לשיר השירים (Lyck, 1874), pp. 5–6.

49. Sometimes an abstract noun will parallel a concrete, e.g., Psalm 25:19 ("my enemies . . . / violent hatred . . . //"). Dahood describes this (*UF* 1:32; *Psalms III*, pp. 411–12) but his examples are sometimes questionable; see also W. van der Weiden, "Abstractum pro concretum . . ." *Verbum Domini* 44 (1966): 43–52.

50. On this see chapter 2, section 6, on "telegraph style"; also *Psalms III*, p. 429, C. H. W. Brekelmans in *Ex Oriente Lux* 17 (1963): 202–06. Note also Albright on the alternation חיתו ארץ and חית הארץ in Gen. 1:24–25 in "The Refrain 'And God Saw . . . ' " *Mélanges A. Robert*, p. 24.

ידרך ענוים במשפט / וילמד ענוים דרכו //
He directs the humble into justice / and teaches the humble *his* way //
Psalm 25:9

2. changes from one grammatical person to another:[51]

ישקני מנשיקות פיהו / כי טובים דדיך מיין //
Let him give me of his kisses to drink / better is your love than wine! //
Song of Songs 1:2

3. omission of pronominal suffix in one verse-half when present in the other:

ואתה שנאת מוסר / ותשלך דברי אחריך //
But you despise (my) teaching / and cast my words behind you //
Psalm 50:17

בן חכם ישמח אב / ובן כסיל תוגת אמו //
A wise son makes a father glad / but a foolish son is his mother's sorrow //
Prov. 10:1

4. prepositional alternation[52]

לא תשבע עין לראות / ולא תמלא אזן משמע //
The eye is not satisfied with [ל] seeing / nor the ear filled up with [מ] hearing //
Eccles. 1:8

5. omission of prepositions, conjunctions, interrogative particles, negations and other particles from one clause:

כי לא לנצח ישכח אביון / תקות ענוים תאבד לעד //
The poor will not be forgotten forever / [nor] the hope of the needy be eternally dashed //
Psalm 9:19

6. the differentiating "all":[53]

כי ישר דבר ה' / וכל מעשהו באמונה //
For upstanding is the Lord's word / and all that he does [is done] in faithfulness //
Psalm 33:4

51. See R. Gordis, *Song of Songs and Lamentations* (New York, 1974) p. 73. This is a regular feature of postbiblical ברכות, and see above, n. 13. Dahood remarks on the alternation "Your servant . . . me . . ." as well as "my self [נפשי] . . . I . . ." See *Psalms III*, p. 374.

52. Dahood in *UF* 1:30. Note also the opposite case, use of the same preposition with obviously different meaning: //כי חוק לישראל הוא / משפט לאלהי יעקב// "Israel's [ל] law it is, a statute from [ל] the God of Jacob" (Psalm 81:4).

53. See below, section 9.

Now as noted, some differentiation is implicit in the very idea of parallelism: "the same thing in different words" means shunning actual repetition, and presumably this might also include avoiding a monotonous consistency in verbal themes, or other morphological features. Yet the examples adduced are difficult to explain on the grounds of "elegant variation" (as this feature of style is known in English prose). As was noted above: if avoidance of repetition were the point, why does one find *qtl-yqtl* differentiation of the *same verbal root*, or actual repetition of the same words in the very verses which illustrate some other differentiating feature? If "elegant variation" were the point, would it not operate first and foremost on the level of *lexis*? Instead, what differentiation seems to be about is the "afterwardness" of B. B follows A, and its containing differentiated verbal themes or other morphological and syntactic differentiations seems designed to draw attention to this circumstance, "A is so, and what's more, B." The foregoing examples are decisive in the domain of morphology and syntax in the same way that sharpness, afterwardness, overt subordination, and the like are decisive in semantics.

6

Parallelism as a general phenomenon can be found in a variety of literatures, prose and poetry; it has been analyzed as a form of "coupling," which one critic sees as the principle behind nearly all poetic structure.[54] It is not surprising, then, that parallelism as an organizing principle exists in literatures unrelated to Hebrew, for example, Chinese and Japanese.[55] The *runon kerto* of Finnish has often been compared to biblical parallelism,[56] as has the use of

54. S. R. Levin, "The Conventions of Poetry" in S. Chatman, *Literary Style* (1971), and Levin, *Linguistic Structures in Poetry* (*Janua Linguarum* no. 23, 's-Gravenhaage, 1962), pp. 30–41. Parallelism is also discussed by Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," in T. Sebeok, *Style in Language* (Cambridge, 1960), p. 369; R. Austerlitz, "Parallelismus," in *Poetics* (Warsaw, 1961): 439–43; Jakobson in *Language* 42 (1966): 399–429. Note, however, that "parallelism" in these and similar treatments is used in the most general sense; thus M. Riffaterre, "Describing Poetic Structures" in J. Ehrmann, *Structuralism* (New York, 1970), p. 189, "The recurrence of equivalent forms, *parallelism*, is the basic relationship underlying poetry." The parallelism involved in the biblical phenomenon "parallelism" is, as we shall see, rather more specific.

55. See Newman and Popper, *Parallelism*, pp. 68–74, 75–76; also T. M. Tschang, *Le parallèlisme dans le vers du Chen King* (Paris, 1937).

56. See W. Steinitz, *Der parallelismus in der finnisch* . . . (Helsinki, 1934); also

parallelism in Old Turkish poetry,[57] Mongolian,[58] Rumanian,[59] and Sanskrit.[60] But because biblical parallelism is more than paralleling, the value of such comparisons is somewhat circumscribed. Far more interesting to the biblical scholar are cognate comparisons, evidences of parallelism or something like parallelism in texts produced in other Semitic languages, or in non-Semitic civilizations with which ancient Israel might have had direct or indirect contact.[61]

Until the end of the eighteenth century, all that was known about ancient Israel and its neighbors came from the Bible and a few other scattered accounts; but beginning at that time, archaeology began to reveal something more of the region's history. The first decipherment was of Old Persian (by G. F. Grotefend in 1802), a discovery that led to the further decipherment of Elamite and Akkadian. In 1877, E. de Sarzac unearthed the first remains of Sumerian civilization, and this and subsequent finds provided further information about the origins of Near Eastern literatures.

Since the nineteenth century, then, it has been observed that a form of parallelism existed in hymns, proverbs, and epics from different

G. B. Gray's discussion of the *Kalevala* in *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (reprinted New York, 1972), p. 38, and Newman and Popper, *Parallelism*, pp. 61–68. In that they focus on the mere fact of paralleling, such comparisons are superficial. Furthermore, the analogy is complicated by the presence of a definite alliterative pattern in Finnish, as well as a kind of meter. See P. Kiparsky, "Metrics and Morphonemics in the Kalevala" in D. C. Freeman, *Linguistics and Literary Style* (New York, 1970), pp. 165–81. Note also Austerlitz on the use of parallelism in Ob-Ugric (a Finno-Ugric language) in "Ob-Ugric Metrics" *Folklore Fellows Communications* 174 (Helsinki, 1958).

57. See V. M. Žirmunski, "Ritmiko-sintaksičeskij parallelizm . . . drevnoturkskogo" in *Voprosy jazykoznanija* 13 (1964), p. 4.

58. N. Poppe, "Der Parallelismus in der epischen Dichtung der Mongolen" *Ural-Altaische Jahrbücher* 30 (1958): 195–228.

59. L. Ionescu, "Parallelismul in lirica populara" *Revista de etnografie si folclor* 2, pp. 48–68.

60. J. Gonda, *Stylistic Repetition in the Vedas* (Amsterdam, 1959). R. C. Culley, *Oral Formulaic Language in the Biblical Psalms* (Toronto, 1967) pp. 128–29, and P. B. Yoder, "A-B Pairs and Oral Composition" *VT* 21 (1971): 482 cite the parallelism of the Todas of South India, discussed by M. B. Emeneau, "The Songs of the Todas," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Soc.* 77 (1937): 543–60, and "Oral Poets of South India," *Journal of American Folklore* 71 (1958): 312–24.

61. We shall not treat here the question of the origin of parallelism in the Ancient Near East, other than to note its presence in the very oldest texts available. In addition to its universal rhetorical appeal (see above notes), parallelism in the Near East may be connected with merismus and inclusion, on which see A. Massart, "L'emploi en égyptien de deux termes opposés" in *Mélanges A. Robert*, pp. 38–46, as well as A. M. Honeyman, "Merismus in Biblical Literature" *JBL* 71 (1952).

parts of the Near East; in fact, it was argued, parallel clauses in some texts were even delineated in the writing, by means of spacing and/or a vertical "verse-divider" mark (in Akkadian) and the so-called "verse-points" in Egyptian.[62] Perhaps stimulated by the gains in archaeology, writers about parallelism turned their attention to resemblances between Hebrew and the oldest strands of Arabic literature. Following the work of I. Goldziher,[63] Gray and Newman adduced the resemblance of *saj*ᶜ ("unmetered poetry," sometimes rhymed, it was early on regarded as the prototype of later poetic forms)[64] to biblical parallelism. D. H. Mueller had already shown the existence of bits of parallelism in the Qurʾan.[65]

But it is the use of parallelism in Ugaritic texts which, because of Ugarit's temporal (fourteenth century B.C.)[66] and geographic (on the north Syrian coastline not far from Latakia) proximity to the Bible's homeland, has invited the closest comparisons with biblical usage. Common vocabulary and motifs, and even what may be a case of full-scale literary borrowing,[67] all argue the close relationship of Ugaritic

62. The verse points were a New Kingdom invention, but the principle of division into parallel clauses, each half forming a unit of grammar, rhetoric, and thought, is certainly older. See J. L. Foster, "Thought Couplets in Khety's 'Hymn to the Inundation,'" *JNES* 34 (Jan. 1975): 14–15. These names—"verse-points," "verse-dividers"—are misleading in that they prejudge the function: punctuation, rather than a division into "verses" (on the unspoken analogy of modern practice with poetry), seems to be the point. In the same way the Masoretic *ṭe'amim* are somewhat mistakenly called "notes" (see chapter 3). Ugaritic only rarely contains such marks: see W. J. Horowitz, "A Study of Ugaritic Scribal Practices," *UF* 5 (1973): 165–73.

63. *Abhaendlungen zur arabische Philologie* (Leiden, 1896); he already had made comparisons with Hebrew "poems" such as the Balaam oracles (p. 42).

64. See R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (London, 1930), p. 74. Sa'adya Gaon (or, more likely, one of his students) describes *saj*ᶜ, *ḫuṭba*, and *rajaz* as precursors of poetry, and it is possible that he regarded some parallelistic portions of the Bible in the same light; see below, chapter 3, and N. Allony (ed.), ספר האגרון (Jerusalem, 1968), pp. 79–81. Note also that the first chapter of Moses ibn Ezra's treatise on poetry (*Kitāb al-muḥāḍara wal-muḍākara*) is devoted to *ḫuṭba* and its relation to verse. A. F. L. Beeston's "Parallelism in Arabic Prose," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 5 (1974): 134–46, notes: "*Saj*ᶜ in its original connotation was rhymed but not dominantly parallelistic. For the pre-Abassid period, therefore, *saj*ᶜ and the *khuṭba* style have to be regarded as distinct phenomena" (p. 143).

65. Newman and Popper, *Parallelism*, p. 102.

66. As is often quite correctly pointed out, while the dating of the Ugaritic tablets is rather certain, the texts thereon recorded are most likely older and perhaps represent a tradition (oral?) stretching back many centuries.

67. See T. H. Gaster, "Psalm 29," *JQR* 37 (1946): 54–67; F. M. Cross, "Notes on a Canaanite Psalm in the OT," *BASOR* 117 (1950): 19–21; also D. N. Freedman

and Hebrew writings,[68] and Ugaritic texts have, for nearly half a century, provided valuable insights into all aspects of biblical studies. At the same time, Ugaritology has come into its own as a discipline, as each year new texts and artifacts have filled in the picture of this complex ancient society.

Three aspects of Ugaritic style are particularly striking to the student of biblical parallelism, and each merits mention here. They are: the frequency of three-clause sentences; the very common appearance of repeated words or phrases in consecutive clauses; and the existence of a stock vocabulary of pairs of words—proper names and their epithets, standard synonyms or antonyms, commonly paired ideas—which are found again and again in consecutive clauses. For while none of these features is absent in Hebrew style, their appearance in, as it were, exaggerated form in Ugaritic has cast a new light on biblical style and current critical approaches to it.

The latter two features have been discussed at length, but before examining some of the current theories it will be worthwhile to make one brief observation about the three-clause sentence in Ugaritic. The basic binariness of the Hebrew parallelistic sentence contributed mightily to the idea of parallelism: the apparent symmetry of so many lines, in which term answered to term, seemed to bespeak some system of symmetry or symmetrizing. Now while three-clause sentences illustrate some of the features of parallelism, the basic idea of B "answering" A, "corresponding" to it, is confuted by the presence of the newcomer, C. What is it doing there? The putative rhythm of statement-restatement, statement-restatement, is broken by the ternary line. In Hebrew such breaks could be viewed as emphatic, intermittent spots of underlining which pleasantly broke the monotony or formed an emphatic closure—much as ternary rhymes are interspersed among the prevailing couplets in the verse of Dryden and Pope. With Ugaritic, however, this notion must be reexamined. For here, binary and ternary sentences freely alternate without apparent order or purpose—so much so that, still today, dividing the words of Ugaritic texts into clauses and the clauses into sentences remains a most speculative endeavor. In Ugaritic, at least, there is nothing fundamental about the parallelistic "couplet." Indeed, in contemplating even a short passage from the Ugaritic myths, with the

and C. Franke Hyland, "Psalm 29: A Structural Analysis," *HTR* 66 (1973): 237–56. B. Margulis argues against the prevailing view: "The Canaanite Origin of Psalm 29 Reconsidered," in *Biblica* 51 (1970): 332–46.

68. On this subject in general consult the articles in *RSP*.

characteristic interspersing of two- and three-clause sentences and smattering of repetitions and stock pairs:

ydn [dn]il ysb palth / bṣql yph bpalt / bṣ[q]l yph byġlm //
bṣql y[ḥb]q wynšq / aḥl an bṣ[ql] //
ynpᶜ bpalt bṣql / ypᶜ byġl ur //
tispk yd aqht ġzr / tštk bqrbm asm //
ydnh ysb aklth / yph šblt bak[l]t / šblt yp[h] bḥmdrt //

Dan'el investigates, goes around the parched land / he sees a plant in the parched land / he sees a plant in the scrub //

He embraces the plant and kisses [it] / "Ah me, for the plant //
May the plant flourish in the parched land / may the herb flourish in the scrub //
May the hand of the hero Aqhat gather you / may it put you in the granary" //

Dan'el investigates, goes around the consumed land / sees a grain-ear in the consumed land / a grain-ear he sees in the blasted land //

CTA 19 II 61-70

a student of biblical parallelism is inevitably moved to question the idea of symmetry and balancing clauses. Do not these lines suggest a somewhat different function for repetition and restatement, an emphatic, elevating function quite independent of symmetry, parallelism, or even poetic structure?

7

The first of the two main features of Ugaritic parallelism to attract wide attention was its use in successive clauses of two synonyms or otherwise closely associated words or concepts. It was seen briefly in our sampling of biblical parallelism above (section 2), thus:

יומם יצוה ה' חסדו / ובלילה שירה עמי //
By day the Lord sends forth his love / and by night his song is with me //[69]

Psalm 42:9

Day and night are, obviously, a logical pair. By placing them at the beginning of consecutive short clauses, a correspondence is created, and the clauses as a whole—which are otherwise rather dissimilar—acquire a feeling of balance that is aesthetically pleasing.

69. On *ṣwh* see *Psalms III*, p. 259. His explanation of שירה as "vision" is hardly to be preferred to "song," and cf. Psalm 119:54.

It is striking how much the parallelism of Ugarit resorts to precisely this tactic:

ks yiḫd [il] [b]yd / krpn bm [ymn] //
He takes a cup in his hand / a flagon in his (right) hand //
CTA 15 II 16–18

tšt išt bbhtm / nb[l]at bhk[l]m //
Fire is set in the house / flame in the palace //
CTA 4 VI 22–23

where *ks-krpn* (cup-flagon), *yd-ymn* (hand-hand; the second, as in Hebrew, does not necessarily specify "right hand" but is an elegant synonym), *išt-nblat* (fire-flame) and *bht-hkl* (house [= also temple, palace]-palace) are all frequently paired. Thus it is not uncommon, as above, to find two pairs in a single line.

Not only is the phenomenon of pairing common to Ugarit and the Bible, but often the very same words are used in both. Thus:

אך אלהים ימחץ ראש איביו / קדקד שער מתהלך באשמיו //
But God will beat his enemies' head / the [hairy?] pate of him who goes counter to him //
Psalm 68:22

yṯbr ḫrn rišk / ᶜṯtrt šm bᶜl qdqdk //
May Ḫrn break your head / ᶜṯtrt šm bᶜl your pate //
CTA 16 VI 54–57

כמעט אויביהם אכניע / ועל צריהם אשיב ידי //
At once I would humble their enemies / and on their foes turn my destruction //
Psalm 81:15

Mnm ib ypᶜ lbᶜl / ṣrt lrkb ᶜrpt? //
What enemy rises against Bᶜl / foe against the Cloud-rider? //
CTA 3 IV 48

The recurrence of such pairs of words was striking to Ugaritic scholars, and it was not long before there was established a vocabulary of "fixed pairs" common to Hebrew and Ugaritic: "earth-dust," "enemy-foe," "cup-goblet," etc.[70] By now hundreds have been

70. For earliest treatment see Virolleaud in *Syria* 14 (1933); H. L. Ginsberg and B. Mazar in *JPOS* 14 (1934): 248–49, thereafter *JPOS* 15 and *Orientalia* 5 (1936). U. Cassuto was one of the earlier researchers into pairs (see *The Goddess Anath* [Jerusalem, 1971], pp. 25–31), also M. Held in *Leshonenu* 18–19 (1952–54): 144–60. For lists of pairs see Dahood in *RSP* 1 (1972): 71–382 and 2 (1973): 1–39; also Dahood *Psalms III*, pp. 445–56, and *PEPI*, p. 101. An important article was E. Z. Melamed, "Hendiadys in the Bible," *Tarbiz* 16 (1945), later "Break-up of Stereotypical Phrases," in Ch. Rabin, *Studies in the Bible* (Jerusalem, 1961), pp. 115–53. Note also G. E. Watson, "Fixed Pairs in Ugaritic and Isaiah," *VT* 22 (1972): 460–67, and Y. Avishur, "Stylistic Features Common to Phoenician Inscriptions and the Bible," in *UF* 7 (1975): 13–47, and 8 (1976): 1–22. C. F. Whitley, "Some Aspects of Hebrew Poetic Diction," *UF* 7 (1975): 493–502 is an important corrective to the "Break-up" idea.

catalogued, and these have proven immensely useful, not only in clarifying lexical obscurities but as a guide in problems of textual emendation.[71]

As far as the workings of parallelism are concerned, the function of such fixed pairs is obvious. They strongly establish the feeling of correspondence between A and B. Indeed, the more stereotypical the pairing, the greater the bond;[72] with the most frequently used pairs, the appearance of the first in itself creates the anticipation of its fellow, and when the latter comes it creates a harmonious feeling of completion and satisfaction.[73] In another way the pairs themselves may bring out the "what's more" relationship of B to A, for, as has been pointed out, the second word of the pair sequence is most often the rarer and more literary term; when both terms are common, the second is sometimes a going-beyond the first in its meaning.[74]

A number of critics have described the pairs as "clichés" and "stereotypical formulae."[75] Such judgments should not, however, lead readers to impose modern-day notions of originality on ancient

71. See J. Talmon, "Synonymous Readings in the Textual Tradition of the Old Testament" in Ch. Rabin, *Studies in the Bible*, pp. 335–83.

72. This point has been clouded somewhat by the spreading practice of scholars to refer to any parallelism of two words that is duplicated elsewhere in the Bible or Ugaritic as such a "fixed pair." Obviously some sort of distinction, albeit not foolproof, should be made between an apposition that occurs frequently and one that appears only two or three times. (Dahood proposed substituting "parallel" pair for "fixed" pair to avoid implying their *order* was fixed, but this will not help our problem.) Furthermore, some things that are called "fixed pairs" seem more like logically connected concepts than full-scale "literary clichés." Here again, *repeated* use should be the key. As Yoder notes ("A-B Pairs," 473), it is not the semantic closeness of the terms that should be regarded in discussions of pairs, but the frequency of the pairing.

73. See on this point Smith, *Poetic Closure*, p. 137.

74. See R. G. Boling, "Synonymous Parallelism in the Psalms," *JSS* 5 (1960): 221–55. On numerical parallelism, an obvious kind of going-beyond, see section 8. The order of the pairs is not always fixed in Hebrew (P. C. Craigie, "A Note on Fixed Pairs . . .," *JTS* 22 [1971]: 140–43), nor in Ugaritic (Dahood, *RSP* 1, p. 77). Note also that Hebrew sometimes pairs the same *ideas* as Ugaritic but uses different terms (e.g. ḫrṣ = זהב). Both practices indicate that the pairing, not the fixity, was what was central about fixed pairs.

75. *PEPI*, pp. 9–10.

texts. As an examination of even medieval poetics will reveal,[76] premodern songs and poems did not aim at setting out new comparisons and images, but reworking traditional themes and standard language into new formulations: originality consisted of the new variations within a conventionalized framework. But more than this, it is an error to see the pairs themselves as the essence of the line. On the contrary, the pairs often function to bring into equation the *other* words of the line—words that are rarely connected, or in any case words whose apposition is the whole point. It was noted in our earlier example,

יומם יצוה ה' חסדו / ובלילה שירה עמי //
By day the Lord sends forth his love / and at night his song is with me //
Psalm 42:9

that the two clauses have little parallelism beyond the pair-words, and this is sometimes just the point: the pair-word in B provides the retrospective element that establishes a feeling of continuity and completion, while the rest of the verse-half is prospective, carrying the meaning forward:

והוכן בחסד כסא / וישב עליו באמת //
In love a throne is prepared / so that one may sit *faithfully* upon it . . . //
Isa. 16:5

In such verses this "rest of the line" is essential and the pair-words may be seen as a mere tip-of-the-hat to parallelism.[77] Thus, a standard trope of beginning in the Bible is the summoning of the audience's attention, and it is here that one frequently finds the pair "listen . . . / hear . . . //":

האזינו השמים ואדברה / ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי //
Listen O Heavens while I speak / and hear, Earth, my words //
Deut. 32:1

76. See D. Pagis, שירת החול ותורת השיר (Jerusalem, 1970), pp. 110–15. About biblical style and fixed formulae, consult Culley, *Oral Formulaic Language*.

77. Hence Melamed is quite wrong in suggesting that this last verse means, "A throne has been prepared in faith and truth in David's tent, and a judge will sit on it" ("Hendiadys" 180). This is an example of the "distribution" misreading, which will be discussed in section 8. Similarly he is puzzled by Mic. 7:20, תתן אמת ליעקב / חסד לאברהם . . . // which he wishes to translate "Give faith and truth to Jacob (= Israel = Abraham)," and goes on to assure the reader that the absence of Isaac is not to be wondered at! But the point is that B goes *beyond* A—indeed, the whole verse (not cited by Melamed) makes this clear: "May you give faithfulness to Jacob, even love to Abraham, as you swore to our ancestors in days of old"—Jacob a long time ago, and Abraham at the very beginning of our history.

שמעו שמים והאזיני ארץ / כי ה' דבר //
Hear O Heavens, listen Earth / for the Lord is speaking // Isa. 1:2

שמעו דבר ה' קציני סדם / האזינו תורת אלהינו עם עמרה //
Hear the word of the Lord, rulers of Sodom / listen to the teachings of our God, people of Gomorrah // Isa. 1:10

שמעו מלכים האזינו רזנים / אנכי לה' אנכי אשירה //
Hear O kings, listen princes / I of the Lord, oh I shall sing //
Judg. 5:3

שמעה תפלתי ה' / ושועתי האזינה //
Hear my prayer, O Lord / and listen to my cry // Psalm 39:13

שמעו זאת כל העמים / האזינו כל ישבי חלד //
Hear this, all peoples / and listen all dwellers on Earth //
Psalm 49:2

שמעו זאת הכהנים / והקשיבו בית ישראל / ובית המלך האזינו //
Hear this, O priests / and hearken, house of Israel / hear, O you of the royal palace // Hos. 5:1

שמעו חכמים מלי / וידעים האזינו לי //
Hear my words, wise men / and you knowing ones, listen to me //
Job 34:2

Now in all of these, to focus on the fixed pair is to consider precisely the part of least interest to the listeners.[78] It is, as stated, a trope of beginning and utterly predictable. The use of pairs does not mean the *clauses* are equivalent, and what is interesting in these lines are the subtle variations—including, of course, *who* is being summoned and in what order: Heaven and Earth, kings and noblemen, nations and people. These are what tell the story.[79] This point is important, for in the enthusiasm following the discovery of the pairs, the differences between A and B have sometimes been overlooked. Let one example stand for many: the war boast of Lamech (Gen. 4:23–24). One student of the pair phenomenon[80] has sought to explain the passage as "synonymous" parallelism; this leads him to suppose that the line

כי איש הרגתי לפצעי / וילד לחברתי //

78. See *PEPI*, p. 27; Cassuto, *Goddess Anath*, p. 38. Gunkel is also weak on this point; see *The Psalms: A Form Critical Introduction* (Philadelphia, 1967), p. 11.

79. Moreover, the fact that "hear" and "listen" sometimes occur in the *same* clause indicates that they are not merely the tool of parallelism, nor were they specially created to meet its "demands." See below.

80. *PEPI*, pp. 25–34.

which he translates "For I have slain a man for my wound, even a boy for my hurt," refers to a single incident, and that "man" and "boy" are, in fact, a "pair," i.e., references to one and the same person. He finds this man-boy pair a "deliberate rejection of the traditional 'man—son of Man [*sic*]' parallelism" which must, therefore, be explained as a striking attempt to underscore the youth of the "upstart would-be hero." The writer is so caught up in the synonymity of word pairs that he sees them even where they do not exist.

Of course there is no need for any of this, and even he finds troubling the question "Why should Lamech boast of having slain a boy, a child?" Actually, the passage should read:

עדה וצלה שמען קולי / נשי למך האזנה אמרתי //
כי איש הרגתי לפצעי / וילד לחבורתי //
כי שבעתים יקם קין / ולמך שבעים ושבעה //

ʿAda and Ṣilla hear my voice / women of Lamech listen to my words //
I would kill a man for [i.e., to avenge] my wound / in fact a boy for a bruise //
If [as is said][81] Cain is avenged seven-fold / then Lamech seventy-seven! //

The *qtl* forms of the second line are conditionals, not past (cf. Gen. 42:38, Judg. 9:9 and ff.) as they are usually mistranslated; initial *kî* may be an indicator for this conditional sense.[82] "Man" and "boy," far from being synonyms, instead work to create a "sharp" crescendo of unequal retribution: I would kill a man for only wounding me, in fact, an innocent boy (there is no reason to suppose the child is the inflictor of the wound—if Lamech is such a fierce warrior the image is on the contrary somewhat trivializing and difficult to imagine) to avenge a bruise; Cain's retribution is already grossly, proverbially unfair—but mine will be far worse![83]

81. Gen. 4:15.

82. Cf. our earlier example (p. 19) of Psalm 27:10, כי אבי ואמי עזבוני "Even if my father and mother abandoned me . . ."

83. A particularly apposite comparison is with Jacob's (proverbial) characterization of Simeon and Levi (Gen. 49:6):

כי באפם הרגו איש / וברצונם עקרו שור //

The whole passage might be rendered: "Simeon and Levi are brothers, weapons of violence are their rightful possession[?]; into their company let me not come, nor let me stay in their fellowship; for in their anger they *would* kill a man, and in a good humor, hough an ox." Here we have the same *qtl* form to indicate the conditional, and the same initial *ki* to underscore this meaning. The sharp punchline is much the same in its effect as in the Lamech boast: "The people of these tribes are so violent

Where do the pairs come from? Initially this subject suffered from some wishful thinking on the part of writers who wished to see in the "pair" phenomenon the "regular stock in trade of the Canaanite poets,"[84] specially created to serve the poetic device of parallelism. This judgment is only partially correct. It is true that the recurrence of certain pairs—"house-palace," "earth-dust"—suggests something of a literary stereotype, and their frequency is consistent with what was noted above concerning premodern fondness for oft-repeated, solemnizing formulae. But one ought not to conclude more than the evidence warrants. Hebrew and Ugaritic, like most languages, had their stock of conventionally associated terms, of synonyms and near-synonyms, and of antonyms and near-antonyms. Some of these were regularly paired to make a single merismatic phrase:[85] "day and night" meant "all the time," "silver and gold" meant "everything of value," "ox and ass" meant "beasts of burden," etc. Other pairs, while not merismatic in a strict sense, are nevertheless frequently used in a single phrase—"love and faithfulness," "teaching and law," etc. Indeed, some such words, like תושב ("resident"), never occur singly in the Bible.[86] The use of such pairs as stock phrases in the form X + Y argues against the notion that they were created for the purposes of parallelism—indeed, the opposite seems far more likely, that the stereotypical formula X + Y was subsequently broken down into parallel halves "X . . . / Y . . . //" This is further evidenced by the breakdown of names and patronymics (another X + Y) into parallel "Name . . . / Patronymic . . . //"[87] Again, the fact that some of the "pairs" consist of nothing more than conventionally interchangeable concepts, synonyms and near-synonyms, is witnessed by textual variants within the Masoretic Text (or between the MT and other texts or versions) which consist precisely of the substitution of one such "word-pair" for another. Thus, there is nothing "poetic" or

that when angered they will not flinch at murder; and even when they are feeling kindly, what do they do? Go out and cripple an ox!" Dahood's suggestion "circumcision blades" (!) for מברתיהם (*CBQ* 23 [1961]: 54) is based on the common faulty assumption that this verse refers to the Shechem incident in Gen. 34. Actually, it is a tribal saying without historical reference—the *qtl* verbs are not "past" at all. (If not, to what historical incident does the "ox" refer?!)

84. H. L. Ginsberg, "Rebellion and Death of Baʿalu," in *Orientalia* 5 (1936): 171–72.

85. A. M. Honeyman, "Merismus in Biblical Literature," *JBL* 71 (1952): 11–18.

86. Melamed, "Hendiadys," 175.

87. See on this *PEPI*, pp. 50–52; in general, Melamed, "Break-up of . . ." in Ch. Rabin, *Studies in the Bible*, pp. 115–53. There are many instances of such name-patronymic pairings, e.g., Num. 23:18, 1 Sam. 10:11, 20:1.

literary in the pairs per se, any more than there is in "far and near," "law and order," "bag and baggage," etc. in English. What is "poetic" is the breaking up of such proverbial pairs, or, more generally, of any conventionally associated concepts into adjacent clauses to establish the interclausal connection and the feeling of closure.

Finally, it should be noted that there is no evidence to show that these pairs functioned as "oral formulae" comparable to those described by Milman Parry and Albert Lord in the poetry of ancient Greece or modern south-Slavic epics.[88] As remarked earlier: the function of the pairs is no different from the use of similar syntactic structures, alliteration, etc.—all establish the sense of correspondence between A and B. The fact that certain pairs recur may indicate that they had achieved a certain formulaic popularity, or perhaps simply that they expressed a concept adaptable to a wide variety of lines. But in no way does their presence in a line suggest the line was the extemporaneous production of "poet-performers" who composed "on their feet."[89] Indeed, what we know of the genre of biblical proverbs and various Psalm-types hardly supports such "oral theory." It would stretch the limits of credibility to argue that, for example, the alphabetical acrostics of the Psalter or Lamentations were composed by poets "on their feet," yet here we have the same pairs:

מלכותך מלכות כל עלמים / וממשלתך בכל דור ודר //
Your kingdom is a kingdom of *all eternities* / and your dominion is in *every age* // Psalm 145:13[90]

וישמח עליך אויב / הרים קרן צריך //
The *enemy* rejoices over you / your *foe* is triumphant // Lam. 2:17

And so an "oral theorist" would have to dismiss these as learned adaptations of an originally oral device, presumably because they had acquired a certain formulaic ring, a literary resonance. But the same motive could be attributed to *all* their uses. *Formulaic language is not necessarily spontaneously composed language.* No doubt some of the Bible's parallelistic passages were composed spontaneously in front of their intended audience, and perhaps even some of the lines exhibiting stereotypical pairs are among them. But parallelism is a far less exacting requirement than the meter of Greek epics—indeed, as will be seen, it is not a comparable "requirement" at all. There is no

88. See A. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, 1960), and *PEPI*, pp. 10–14. Also Yoder, "A-B Pairs," 470–89; Dahood in *RSP* 1, p. 75.
89. *PEPI*, p. 10.
90. On this pair see *PEPI*, pp. 36–37.

reason, logical or empirical, to associate the frequent use of such pairs with spontaneous composition, still less to search out their origins in the conditions of oral poetry.

The other very prevalent form of parallelism found at Ugarit involves taking a word or phrase from A and repeating it in B. An example of this practice was already seen in Psalm 94:3:

עד מתי רשעים ה' / עד מתי רשעים יעלזו //
How long shall the wicked, Lord / how long shall the wicked rejoice? //

and this particular verse represents a relatively common configuration of the Ras Shamra texts,[91] in which a vocative ("Lord") interrupts the thought before completion: in B (or B + C) it is repeated and finished:

lk labk yṣb / lk l[a]bk wrgm / ṯny lk[rt adnk] //
Go to your father, Yṣb / go to your father and speak / repeat to Krt your lord // *CTA* 16 VI 27–29

But this is only one use to which repetition is put in parallelism. Also common are repetitions with two complete thoughts, e.g.,

ימינך ה' נאדרי בכח / ימינך ה' תרעץ אויב //
Your hand, Lord, is glorious in power / your hand, Lord, crushes enemies // Exod. 15:6

or repetitions without any intervening word:

לפני ה' כי בא / כי בא לשפט הארץ //
Before the Lord who now approaches / now approaches to rule the land // Psalm 96:13

yqḥ il mštʿltm / mštʿltm lriš agn //
El takes two kindlings / two kindlings from the top of the fire // *CTA* 23:35–36

Repetition is sometimes combined with pair-words in Hebrew:

אנה הלך דודך / היפה בנשים //
אנה פנה דודך / ונבקשנו עמך //
Where has your love gone / most beautiful of women? //
Where has your love turned? / [Tell us] that we may look for him with you // Song of Songs 6:1

91. Lowth discussed this and other repetitive patterns in *SP*, pp. 158–59. It had been described earlier by the medieval commentator Rashi, as well as his grandson, Rashbam. See chapter 5, section 1.

Sometimes the repetition takes place within a single clause:[92]

לא לנו ה' לא לנו / כי לשמך תן כבוד //
Not to us, O Lord, not to us / but to your name give glory //
Psalm 115:1

and sometimes the repetition stretches beyond the individual line:

רבת צררוני מנעורי / יאמר נא ישראל //
רבת צררוני מנעורי / גם לא יכלו לי //
"Much have they oppressed me from my youth" / —come now, Israel, say //
"Much have they oppressed me from my youth / yet they have not overcome me" // Psalm 129:1–2

and all these patterns have been duplicated in the Ugaritic texts. Now these, and other repetitions,[93] may be mere variations on a single principle, though the peculiar prominence of the interruptive vocative suggests this may indeed have been a particular *type*, a sort of formula[94] (but note the use of interruptive vocatives without repetition, as in Psalms 50:22, 127:2). However, it is probably unwise to see this formula as the archetype from which the others "developed," as one writer has proposed.[95] Indeed, the whole notion of an "original" form of repetitive parallelism is highly questionable.

The resemblance of certain repetitive structures in the Bible with Ugaritic repetitions is so close as to indicate beyond reasonable doubt an organic connection. Now because repetition had been found, inter alia, in texts of reputed antiquity in the Bible, and because the Ugaritic texts were ascertainably old, an attractive hypothesis

92. See Y. Avishur, "Addenda to the Expanded Colon," *UF* 4 (1972): 4, where he divides the verse so as to put the repetition in different verse-halves, and cf. his treatment of Psalm 57:2. He thus sacrifices relative equality of line-length to the parallelistic use of repetition. I believe he is wrong (as obviously the Masoretes also would). As we have seen, there is no need for obvious paralleling in every line, and furthermore many Ugaritic lines illustrate repetitions within the same verse-half or third; cf. in Hebrew Judg. 5:3. Moreover, repetition is found to operate in more than adjacent clauses (see example of Psalm 129 below). This topic will be discussed more fully in section 10.

93. See above, page 5; also Muilenberg, "Hebrew Rhetoric," 107; S. E. Loewenstamm, "The Expanded Colon in Ugaritic and Biblical Verse," *JSS* 14 (1969): 179, Y. Avishur, "Addenda," 1–10. S. E. Loewenstamm, "The Expanded Colon Reconsidered," *UF* 7 (1975): 261.

94. See E. L. Greenstein, "Two Variations of Grammatical Parallelism," *JANES* 6 (1974): 87–104.

95. Loewenstamm, "Expanded Colon in Ugaritic," 195.

presented itself: traces of this "repetitive parallelism" in Hebrew are confirmation of a text's antiquity and may, in fact, become the basis for dating different parts of the Bible.[96] This practice, "stylistic sequence dating," was set forth by W. F. Albright and some of his students;[97] according to his theory, repetitive parallelism gradually gave way to paranomasia (as in the blessings of Jacob, Gen. 49). This shift in Hebrew aesthetics was carried out over some period of time, so that where one finds repetition in untrammeled abundance, as in the Song of Deborah, one may suppose the text represents the oldest stylistic layer, derived from the ancient, "pan-Canaanite" style:

Judg. 5:6	בימי שמגר בן ענת / בימי יעל . . . //
Judg. 5:7	עד שקמתי דבורה / שקמתי אם . . . //
Judg. 5:12	עורי עורי דבורה / עורי עורי דברי שיר //
Judg. 5:20	מן שמים נלחמו הכוכבים / ממסלותם נלחמו . . . //
Judg. 5:21	נחל קישון גרפם / נחל קדומים נחל קישון //
Judg. 5:23	אורו מרוז אמר מלאך ה'/ארו ארור ישביה //
	כי לא באו לעזרת ה' / לעזרת ה' בגבורים //
Judg. 5:24	תברך מנשים יעל / אשת חבר הקיני / מנשים באהל תברך //
Judg. 5:27	בין רגליה כרע נפל שכב / בין רגליה כרע נפל //
	באשר כרע / שם נפל שדוד //
Judg. 5:30	שלל צבעים לסיסרא / שלל צבעים רקמה /
	צבע רקמתים לצוארי שלל //

This theory is not entirely convincing,[98] however, for the reason that other instances of "repetitive parallelism" have been discerned in a wide variety of texts, including those of reputedly late periods. The latter, including the "Songs of Ascents" (Pss. 115–29) and other parts of the Psalter, have been described as "archaizing" by proponents of the Albright thesis;[99] later instances of the repetitive style are supposedly characterized by "a formal and stilted repetitiveness"[100] not present in the old style. But this position is

96. W. F. Albright had re-recognized repetitive parallelism (following Lowth, who described it as a species of synonymous parallelism, and C. A. Briggs, who called it "step-like" parallelism) and proposed a hypothesis about its early date ("The Earliest Forms of Hebrew Poetry," *JPOS* 2 [1922]: 69–82) in the decade before Virolleaud, Ginsberg, et al. began to describe the uses of parallelism and repetition in Ugaritic. Their articles thus seemed to come as a confirmation of the Albright thesis.

97. See *YGC*, chapter 1.

98. See John Gray, *Legacy*, pp. 303–05.

99. See, e.g., *Psalms III*, pp. 194–95.

100. F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, *Studies in Ancient Y. Poetry* (Ph.D. diss., Baltimore, 1950), pp. 23–24.

difficult to maintain. In addition to texts in the Psalms and the Prophets, one may adduce examples from the very latest elements of the canon:

הבל הבלים אמר קהלת / הבל הבלים הכל הבל //
Vanity of vanities, says Qohelet / vanity of vanities, all is vanity //
Eccles. 1:2

It is particularly prominent in the Song of Songs,[101] e.g.,

1:15 הנך יפה רעיתי / הנך יפה עיניך יונים //
4:8 אתי מלבנון כלה / אתי מלבנון תבואי /
4:9 לבבתני אחתי כלה / לבבתני באחד מעיניך /

If this repetitive style indeed is to be explained where it is most abundant, factors other than age ought to be considered—including geography. For the fact is Ugarit bears two quite distinct relations to biblical Israel: it is older, and it is farther north. In some discussions, the former is assumed to be the only relevant consideration: what one finds in Ugaritic is older than Hebrew, hence it is the ancestor of what exists in Hebrew.[102] But its differentness may be explained in the other way as well: it was written in another territory, in a language akin to, but distinct from, Hebrew.[103] Indeed, geography accounts for marked differences in vocabulary and usage even within Hebrew, i.e., between the Hebrew of Northern and Southern provenance; so that if a fourteenth-century "far-Northern" text matches in some feature a later biblical one, it may not be proof of the latter's age, but only its northern provenance.[104] Conversely, the durability of certain Ugaritic

101. Albright, in a later article ("Archaic Survivals in the Text of Canticles," *Hebrew and Semitic Studies* [*Driver Festschrift*] [Oxford, 1963]) argued that this book, while containing irrefutable Iranian loan-words that suggest a late date (fourth to fifth century B.C.), contains "material" (i.e., whole verses) "from the last centuries of the second millennium, and perhaps even older, [which] persisted into the fifth-fourth centuries B.C., when it was presumably collected by an unknown amateur." While not impossible, there is something disturbingly circular about this hypothesis: (1) repetitive parallelism is an indication of a text's antiquity because it is found in our most ancient texts; (2) it is found in the undeniably late Song of Songs; (3) therefore, the Song of Songs contains "archaic material."

102. See D. A. Robertson, *Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry* (SBL Dissertation Series, Missoula, Montana, 1972).

103. Ch. Rabin, "The Origins of the Subdivisions of Semitic," in *Hebrew and Semitic Studies* [*Driver Festschrift*] (Oxford, 1963), p. 110; also *UT* 5.13, p. 30.

104. Thus Robertson (n. 102) concludes on the basis of his criteria that Job is one of the oldest texts in the Bible (p. 54); Dahood, on the basis of comparison of its fixed pairs with Ugaritic, argues its Northern provenance (*RSP* 1, p. 81).

elements[105] argues that if a biblical text *differs* in some fundamental pattern from Ugaritic, it may not be a case of the one evolving away from the other, but of both having a common ancestor from which they had diverged along geographic lines long before.

Finally, care should be taken to distinguish what seem to be patterns or formulae (like, as noted, the interruptive vocative) from mere repetitions.[106] For while all sorts of repetitions can be found in Ugaritic and the Bible, the mere fact of repetition should not be equated with poetic convention. Repetitions have been invented and reinvented a thousand times in the songs and poems of every people, prized not for their usefulness in the specific requirements of parallelistic style, but for the sense of return and completion on which every poetry thrives.[107]

About the nature of biblical parallelism the Ugaritic evidence underscores the dual nature of B, which, it has been seen, typically contains retrospective and prospective elements. For in much repetitive parallelism this is quite obviously the whole point: when B begins again like A and either finishes what was left incomplete or provides a new completion, it is, quite undeniably, both harking back and moving forward. Furthermore, the Ugaritic use of both conventional word-pairs and repetition of phrases, either the two together or separately, in binary or in ternary units, and now and then interrupted by a single clause lacking any semantic parallelism with its neighbors:

a[ṯt tq]ḫ ykrt / aṯt tqḥ btk / ġlmt tšᶜrb ḥẓrk //
tld šbᶜ bnm lk / wṯmn ṯṯmnm lk //
tld yṣb ġlm / ynq ḥlb a[ṯ]rt / mṣṣ ṯd btlt //
The wife you take, O Krt / the wife you take to your house / the woman you bring to your courts //
May she bear you seven sons / yea eightfold may she bear you //
May she bear a boy yṣb / who will suck the milk of Aṯrt / nursing on the breast of the virgin (ᶜAnat) //

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underscores the fact that paralleling is not a dependable, structural constant, but a fairly dependable, variously manifested, feature of style. In this sense, as one writer noted in his study of Ugaritic style,[108] one of the lessons of Ugarit is that far too much has been

105. See on this point *Psalms III*, p. xxiv–v; Dahood cites B. A. Levine, "Ancient Survivals in Mishnaic Hebrew" (Brandeis University dissertation, 1964).

106. Loewenstamm's categories are in this respect worthwhile, though his developmental use of them seems, as noted, risky.

107. See Levin, *Linguistic Structures*.

108. G. D. Young, "Ugaritic Prosody," in *JNES* 9 (1950): 133.

made of parallelism in the Bible. It is less consistent, less structural, than Lowth and his followers have implied.[109]

8

One possible tactic in reading biblical parallelism is that which Theodore of Mopsuestia (fourth to fifth centuries) called "distribution."[110] In this reading, parallelism is "seen through" and the elements of A and B are recombined to make a single complex utterance. That Lowth also was aware of this possibility is apparent in his reading of, for example, Song of Songs 1:5

שחורה אני ונאוה בנות ירושלם / כאהלי קדר כיריעות שלמה //
I am black and comely, women of Jerusalem / like the tents of Qedar, like the tent-dwellings of Solomon //

which Lowth understood to mean, "I am black as the tents of Qedar but beautiful as the tent-dwellings of Solomon."[111] The same sort of "redistribution" is often performed by modern comentators, though not in any systematic way. Thus, D. N. Freedman says of Psalm 135:5,

כי אני ידעתי כי גדול ה' / ואדנינו מכל אלהים //
For I know that YHWH is great / our lord is [greater] than all the gods //

> We observe that the poet has successfully rearranged the words of a simple declarative statement to produce a poetic couplet. Written as prose the sentence would be: "For I know that our Lord YHWH is greater than all the gods."[112]

S. Mowinckel, writing about Psalm 90:16

יראה אל עבריך פעליך / והדרך על בניהם //
Let your work be shown to your servants / and your glory to their sons //

makes this observation:

> According to the rules of the "thought rhyme" [= parallelism] in Hebrew poetry, there is no question here of two different things, as if "thy servants" . . . may see his "work," but "their sons" see his glory; the two parts express the same thought: let thy servants and their sons see thy work and thy glory, i.e., thy glorious work of salvation; let the present, as well as the coming generation, experience thy grace and thy salvation.[113]

Similarly, in Psalm 72:1

אלהים משפטיך למלך תן / וצדקתך לבן מלך //
God give your statutes to a king / and your righteousness to the son of a king //

he sees a single request, for statutes and righteousness.

These all represent a somewhat more subtle misunderstanding of parallelism. Unlike the "synonymous" reading, they grant that B *is* somewhat different from A, e.g., the variation "work"/"glory"// is a significant one and not merely a casting about for similar concepts. But by recombining the two into a single statement, they lose the whole "what's more" of B. Obviously, this matters not a little to our Psalmist: "Let your active-force[114] be made manifest to your servants, yes, and your majesty even to their children!" Similarly: "For I know YHWH is great, in fact, our Lord is greater than all gods!" (The example from the Song of Songs is somewhat more subtle, because it involves the unification in B of apparently disparate concepts in A, a truly "sharp" accomplishment: I am black and I am beautiful, yes, black as the proverbially black tents of Qedar and beautiful as the proverbially beautiful tent-dwellings of Salma. Lowth correctly identified the comparative intention of this verse, but what he missed was the whole genius of its being stated in this precise form.)

Behind this reading lies the assumption that the biblical writer started off with a single sentence and then, via distribution, made it into two parallel halves. Redistributing them into a single assertion intends to find out what was "really" meant. This is a crude idea at best, for the parallelistic form itself communicates part of the meaning, the "what's more," and without it the new version falls flat. But more than that, redistribution sometimes forces the commentator to equate or combine elements that are uncombinable, or at least better left uncombined. Thus, W. F. Albright has remarked on instances of "self-contradictory description" in Ugaritic and Hebrew parallelism, in which the second half-verse "seems to correct" the first:

109. See chapter 2.
110. *Diaeresis* ("dividing in two"); see chapter 4, section 6.
111. *SP*, p. 161. Cf. Origen, Midrash R., Rashi ad loc.
112. D. N. Freedman, "Prolegomenon," in G. B. Gray, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (New York, 1972), p. xxx.
113. S. Mowinckel, *PsIW* 2, p. 102.
114. A bit more faithful to פעליך than "works."

For instance, the first half line says that a god "drank wine from a cup of gold," the next half-line that he "drank it from a flagon of silver." A variation on this theme is that a god is given "a cup in one hand, two flagons in both hands." Obviously, he could not have held both simultaneously. Evidently these poets, following ancient stylistic tradition, were unconsciously trying to create a vague, changing outline in order to make the picture shimmer, so to speak, in the mind of the listener. Whether this stylistic device made the resulting text sound more sacred, or simply more poetic, we cannot say because we cannot fully penetrate this mentality.[115]

By way of disagreeing with this last judgment, it is appropriate to adduce here another feature common to the Bible and Ugaritic parallelism, the numerical saying:[116]

שלשה המה נפלאו ממני / וארבע לא ידעתים //
דרך הנשר בשמים / דרך נחש עלי צור //
דרך אניה בלב ים / ודרך גבר בעלמה //

There are three things too wondrous for me / and four I do not know //
The way of the eagle in the sky / the way of a snake on a rock /
the way of a ship at sea / and the way of a man with a woman //
Prov. 30:18–19

תחת שלוש רגזה ארץ / ותחת ארבע לא תוכל שאת //
תחת עבד כי ימלוך / ונבל כי ישבע לחם //
תחת שנואה כי תבעל / ושפחה כי תירש גברתה //

For three things the earth groans / and for four it cannot endure: //
For a slave who rules / for a fool who's had his fill //
For the hated wife when she is sought / and for a handmaid who is heir to her mistress //
Prov. 30:21–23

These two phenomena, "self-contradictory discription" and the numerical saying, are in principle one and the same: the modern misunderstanding of them derives from the idea that A and B "mean the same thing," for we have lost the biblical habit of reading B as A's completion. Their relationship here is really "A, and what's more, B," "A, and as a matter of fact, B." "There are three things I do not understand, indeed four things," and in this particular proverb the fourth is definitely in an emphatic position. The same is true of "one

115. W. F. Albright, *History, Archeology, and Christian Humanism* (London, 1965) p. 95. Cf. *PEPI*, p. 21; F. M. Cross, "Prose and Poetry in the Mythic and Epic Texts from Ugarit," *HTR* 67 (1974): 7–8.

116. See W. M. W. Roth, "The Numerical Sequence X/X+1," in *SVT* 12 (1962): 300–11.

cup . . . two flagons"—no impossibility, just a vivid instance of the "I'll go you one better" mentality of parallelism. This is even true of "a cup of gold . . . a flagon of silver." For here B is a flowery "yea" version that goes beyond what A stated (it is important to recall that "flagon" is the somewhat rarer, literary term in Ugaritic).[117] None of these expressions is "primitive" or "protological."[118] What makes them seem so is the notion that A and B are simultaneous, hence able to be redistributed into a single statement. To be sure, a cup cannot simultaneously be gold and silver, any more than the number of things can be simultaneously three and four. But that is just the point: B always comes after A, not simultaneously.

What, then, do such lines mean? Was the cup made of *both* gold and silver? Did he actually pick up one cup, or two?! There is a basic ambiguity in any "what's more": for this copula can represent a true addition ("A is so, and what's more, B," that is, both A and B are so); or an equation ("A is so, yes, B is so," that is, A *or* B is so, it does not matter which), or a "going one better" ("A is so, nay, B is so," that is, in fact B is so). Now such ambiguity will not survive redistribution, which always demands a choice. Thus, Albright's example,

ידה ליתד תשלחנה / וימינה להלמות עמלים //

She reached her hand to a tent-peg / and her [right] hand to a worker's mallet //
Judg. 5:26

might imply one implement, and it might imply two.[119] Retelling the story in another form (see Judg. 4:21) requires deciding which, but, in the form above, neither possibility is to be ruled out a priori.[120]

Usually the context clarifies which "what's more" is to be preferred, when clarification is necessary. Thus, in Prov. 30:18 "Three things . . . four things" we do not understand B as an addition to A (making a total of seven) but a stronger version of A; this reading is reinforced by the parallelism "are too wondrous for me / . . . I do

117. See Boling, "Synonymous Parallelism," 221.

118. Albright, *History, Archeology* p. 95.

119. The hapax הלמות, usually taken as "hammer" on the basis of *hlm*, might conceivably be some other pounding or flattening instrument; יתד means not only "tent-peg" but "stick" or possibly even "shovel" (Deut. 23:14). Equation is thus not to be lightly ruled out.

120. If it were clear that the apposition ימין-יד was always equative, then one might well insist that only one implement was seized; and indeed, this may have been clear at the time. However, some have argued that יד means "left hand" in certain cases (see C. Stuhlmueller in *CBQ* 29 [1967]: 196, n. 25), and if this is so, addition may have been intended.

not know //" and, of course, by the subsequent fourfold list. At the same time, the numerical parallelism of 1 Sam. 18:7—

הכה שאול באלפו / ודוד ברבבתיו //
Saul has killed his thousands / and David his ten-thousands //

is ambiguous. If the "what's more" is left completely unstressed, equating "thousands" and "ten-thousands," then little harm would be done by the redistribution "Saul and David have killed by the thousands and ten-thousands." But such a redistribution is far from obvious—perhaps the women who sang this chant in David's honor intended to praise him *even beyond Saul* in military prowess, that is, intended the "what's more" of the numerical parallelism in its full force. In any case, this is how the jealous old king understands it: "And Saul became very angry, and the thing was evil in his eyes, and he said: 'They have given to David "ten-thousands," but to me they gave only "thousands." ' "[121]

We are probably right to read as "additional" the Ugaritic parallelism

lqḥ imr dbḥ bydh / lla klatnm //
He took a lamb [as] sacrifice in his hand / a kid in two hands //
CTA 14 III 159–161

i.e., to understand that both a kid and a lamb were sacrificed, on the basis of "one hand / both hands." But what of the following:

[b]hty bnt dt ksp / hkly dtm ḫrṣ //
My house I build of silver / my mansion of gold //
CTA 4 VI 36–38

Certainly house/mansion is one and the same building: but is the apposition silver/gold to be understood as meaning "silver and gold," "silver, nay gold," or "precious metal" (silver or gold, it does not matter which)? No doubt a denizen of Ugarit would roar with laughter over such a question, for the significant content is clear enough, the ambiguity is only a formal one. The point, he would say, is not

121. Gevirtz (*PEPI*, pp. 15–24) is wrong—absurdly so—to deny the historicity of Saul's "what's more" understanding of this refrain. This is the whole point of the story! (Instead, he attributes this reading to a later "prose" author who was "seeking to explain the rift that occurred between" Saul and David.) On the contrary, this exemplum of Saul's jealousy has all the ring of authenticity. Incidentally, the author of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus), surely no slouch in the ways of parallelism, endorses the "what's more" reading of this verse in 47:6, "Therefore the women sang about him and praised him with 'ten thousand.' "

whether *and* means "plus," "nay," or "or," but that B *goes beyond* A, completes it, as much in "mansion" as in "gold."

The impulse to "redistribute" brings parallelism's ambiguity to the fore—sometimes irresolvably—and at the same time obscures the essence of the form. Indeed, the same impulse lies behind the analysis of two non-synonymous pair-words X . . . / Y . . . as "really" being nothing more than the breakup of the pat phrase X + Y.[122] Reconstructing their deconstruction—another form of "redistribution"—is a risky affair at best, for it denies B any possibility of contrast, and in any case always distorts part of the meaning.[123] Thus, while it is wrong, as Mowinckel asserts, to read Psalm 90:16 "Let your work be seen by your servants and your glory on their children" as implying a distinction (let one group be shown one thing and let another group be shown another), his distribution-reading is equally deceiving. "Let thy servants and their sons see thy glorious work of salvation" is simply not what it says, and it is a denial of the form. "What's more," in whatever sense or strength, is always part of the meaning.

9

An extremely common semantic relationship already seen is the setting of the entire B-clause in apposition to part of the A:

יכרת ה' כל שפתי חלקות / לשון מדברת גדלות //
The Lord destroys all lips of falsehood / a tongue speaking untruth //
Psalm 12:4

Here "lips of falsehood" (= speakers of falsehood) is paralleled by the entire B-half. The same sort of apposition occurs frequently:

זכרו נפלאתיו אשר עשה / מפתיו ומשפטי פיו //
Recall the wonders he worked / his signs and the laws of his mouth //
Psalm 105:5

In such verses, and indeed in any verse in which a single word or phrase does double duty (i.e., is stated in one half and merely implied

122. See Melamed, "Break-up," and especially n. 77 above. Note also C. F. Whitley, "Some Aspects of Hebrew Poetic Diction," p. 493.

123. A similar error is the "redistribution" of elements of repetitive parallelism, where eliminating repetitions simply means breaking the whole force and suspension of the line. Thus Loewenstamm reconstructs Psalm 77:17, ראוך מים א' ראוך מים יחילו, אף ירגזו, as "The waters trembled when they saw you." Similar is his (borrowed) summary of Judg. 5:12—"Deborah's awakening is nothing else than an awakening to song" ("Expanded Colon in Ugaritic," 186.)

in the other) a potential imbalance is created: one side will be longer than the other. It is noteworthy, therefore, that in many verses (like the preceding) this potential imbalance is rectified by the addition of a term or terms in B:

לאסר מלכיהם בזקים / ונכבדיהם בכבלי ברזל //
To bind their kings in chains / and their nobles in shakles of iron //
Psalm 149:8

תסתירני מסוד מרעים / מרגשת פעלי און //
Keep me from the company of the wicked / from the gathering of those who do evil //
Psalm 64:3

G. B. Gray called this general phenomenon "compensation," and more recently Cyrus Gordon has written about it under the name "ballasting." Under either name, what is meant is the tendency of the B-clause to compensate for some missing element by adding something new, or by paralleling a small term in A with a larger term in B. Thus our line

ידע שור קנהו / וחמור אבוס בעליו //
An ox knows its owner / and an ass its masters' trough //

has the single verb "knows" do double duty. The phrase "owners' trough" may thus be seen to compensate in length for the space left empty in the B half by the absent verb. Such "compensation" is often found, though it should be pointed out that it is no fast rule. A large number of noncompensations may be found, for example our

יודוך ה' כל מעשיך / וחסידיך יברכוכה //
All your works praise you, Lord / and your faithful ones bless you //

for equivalent line length is a consistent, but not infallible, form of correspondence between A and B. In some sections, "uncompensated" lines seem to be the norm, such as in the so-called "qînâ" meter characteristic of Lamentations and other sections.[124]

But it must be noted that in this whole question of compensation and "ballast variants" there is a rather misleading assumption about intention. Behind these phrases lurks a prejudgment of purpose: the *extra* element in B *compensates* for something that is missing, and what is added is merely ballast. Were the need not there, the compensatory phrase presumably would not have been written. But on the contrary, as has been seen, the phrase "masters' trough" is the

124. First discussed by K. Budde, "Der Hebraeische Klagelied," *ZAW* 2 (1882). See chapter 7.

linch-pin of a climactic descent; were it not there—were the wording instead, "An ox listens to its master, and an ass obeys its owner"—that descent would surely be less forceful. It is reasonable to suppose that in many cases, including this one, the "compensation" came before the need to compensate, that the verb "knows" was made to apply to both clauses precisely so as to allow the phrase "masters' trough" to appear in B and yet maintain the balance in line length.

ידבר עמים תחתינו / ולאמים תחת רגלינו //
He subdues peoples beneath us / and nations beneath our feet //
Psalm 47:4

Is the phrase "beneath our feet" mere ballast, or was a counterpart for "subdues" omitted in B so as to allow this more graphic going-beyond A's "beneath us"? What of:

כי בחנתנו אלהים / צרפתנו כצרף כסף //
You have sifted us, O Lord / you have refined us as a silver-refiner //
Psalm 66:10

or

היינו חרפה לשכנינו / לעג וקלס לסביבותינו //
We have been a [source of] mockery to our neighbors / jeering and embarrassment to those around us //
Psalm 79:4

or

כי אתה תקותי ארני / ה' מבטחי מנעורי //
For you are my hope, my lord / O Lord, my reliance since my youth //
Psalm 71:5

The whole notion of "ballast" or "compensation" asks us to decide about the Psalmist's intention in these lines—it is an impossible question to answer in most cases, and a foolish one to ask.

This is especially true in the use of the word *kol* ("all") in Hebrew parallelism. For it is a fact that one of the most characteristic ways that B is made to go beyond A is through the use of *kol* as a reinforcement.[125] Sometimes, of course, there can be no question of "ballasting":

125. When this word appears singly in a parallelistic pair, it is most often in the B-clause. Thus, a survey of the first book of the Psalter (Pss. 1–41) reveals that the word *kol* is used alone in B forty-three times, as opposed to twenty-one times in A. Of course it is an important and flexible differentiating tool in either verse-half (section 5).

יראי ה' הללוהו / כל זרע יעקב כבדוהו //
Worshippers of the Lord, praise him / all the seed of Jacob, honor him //
Psalm 22:24

But quite often *kol* does appear in such a ballasting situation:

וינחם בענן יומם / וכל הלילה באור אש //
And he led them in a cloud by day / and all the night in a fiery light //
Psalm 78:14

כי ישר דבר ה' / וכל מעשהו באמונה //
For straight is the word of the Lord / and all his doing in faithfulness //
Psalm 33:4

לשמע בקול תודה / ולספר כל נפלאותיך //
To make heard the sound of praise / and to recount all your miracles //
Psalm 26:7

זה עני קרא וה' שמע / ומכל צרותיו הושיעו //
Whenever a poor man cries the Lord hears / and delivers him from all his sorrows //
Psalm 34:7

לדעת בארץ דרכך / בכל גוים ישועתך //
יודוך עמים אלהים / יודוך עמים כלם //
To make known your dominion on earth / amongst all nations your salvation //
Peoples will praise you, God / peoples will praise you every one //
Psalm 67:3

ימלא פי תהלתך / כל היום תפארתך //
My mouth is filled with your praise / all the day with your lauding //
Psalm 71:8

It would be wrong to dismiss these as "ballasting"; to do so is the equivalent of the *metri causa* argument in metered poetry. For whatever purpose, the B-clause's *kol* brings with it a feeling of inclusiveness that puts it beyond A. Indeed, one can see that the B-clause *kol* sometimes became something of a reflex:

משמים הביט ה' / ראה את כל בני האדם //
ממכון שבתו השגיח / אל כל ישבי הארץ //
היצר יחד לבם / המבין אל כל מעשיהם //
From the sky the Lord looked down / he saw all mankind //
From the place of his dwelling he peered out / at all the dwellers on earth //
He made their hearts together / and understands all their deeds //
Psalm 33:13–15

10

We have noted in the preceding pages the workings of parallelism in individual lines taken from the Psalter and other books. While some lines are highly parallelistic, in others the resemblances between A and B are slight. "Semantic parallelism"—which is really an abbreviated reference, for rarely is semantic parallelism found without some accompanying parallelism of grammatical forms, syntax, and line length—characterizes some lines, while in others the parallel elements are limited to these lesser domains of morphology, syntax, and phonetics, resemblances which tend to be less striking. Indeed, there are not a few lines such as we have already seen in which approximately equal length is the sole element on which to pin the principle of parallelism between clauses.

If one wishes to say that it is this *principle of parallelism* that lies behind the structure of all lines, one will be hard pressed to explain why parallelism in some lines is so full and striking, while in others it is so slight, virtually nonexistent.[126] Indeed, the whole notion of syntactic, morphological, phonetic, etc. parallelism is a relatively recent critical creation,[127] which, however valid, seems to have been devised in the necessity of salvaging the principle of parallelism for lines where semantic similarities were obviously lacking. It is one thing to point out such attenuated forms of parallelism as a critic; it is quite another to imagine the Psalmist, having in mind the *principle of parallelism*, coming up with a composition such as Psalm 23:

ה' רעי / לא אחסר //
בנאות דשא ירביצני / על מי מנחות ינהלני //
נפשי ישובב / ינחני במעגלי צדק למען שמו //
גם כי אלך בגיא צלמות / לא אירא רע //

כי אתה עמדי / שבטך ומשענתך המה ינחמני //
תערך לפני שלחן נגד צררי / דשנת בשמן ראשי / כוסי רויה //

126. "Variety" is a possible answer, but it will not account for the fact that some Psalms (as the aforementioned Psalm 94) are so consistently semantically parallelistic and binary, while others are neither most of the time.

127. Lowth seems to have intended parallelism as more than a semantic phenomenon (see chapter 6); however, those who followed him and elevated *parallelismus membrorum* to a structural feature were concerned only with semantic parallelism. Even Mowinckel still speaks of "thought-rhyme" as the governing principle. Important steps away from this analysis are the articles of Holladay, Kosmola, and A. Ehlen, "Poetic Structure of a Hodayah" (Harvard Ph.D. dissertation, 1970).

אך טוב וחסד ירדפוני כל ימי חיי / ושבתי בבית ה' לארך ימים //

1. [Since] the Lord is a shepherd for me / I [will][128] lack nothing //
2. In verdant fields he grazes me / at tranquil streams he waters me //
3. He revives my being / he leads me to generous pasture as befits his name //
4. [So that] even when I enter a valley of deathly dark / I fear no ill //

5. Surely you are with me / your staff and your leaning-stick[129] are what guide me //
6. You provide me generous food in the midst of adversity /[130] in fact you grant me comfort / abundance is my portion //
7. Only well-being and kindness pursue me[131] my life long / and I will stay in the Lord's house for the length of time //

Certainly no one could argue that symmetry has governed the Psalmist's choices; but even parallelism, of which line 2 is a standard example, is strangely muted in most lines. Could a normal listener, unschooled in the doctrine of morphological parallelism, even be aware of a correspondence in the halves of line 3? Line 4? Two verses, 6 and 7, illustrate the *yqtl-qtl* alternation described earlier. One must ask oneself how this, as indeed other forms of differentiation, squares with the principle of parallelism; for here the intent is obviously not the avoidance of too close a resemblance between verse-halves—the two "halves" are different enough as it is! On the contrary, the use of *similar* forms is what the principle of parallelism seems badly in need of here. A dozen changes suggest themselves that would make any of the lines more parallelistic: could not 3 and 5 be rearranged so as to be less 'lopsided"? Instead of "my cup overflows" in 6, could not a phrase corresponding to "in the midst of adversity" have been

128. It is on the ambiguity of present-future that this and subsequent verbs play, for while the "sheep" speaker utters everything in the present, the description of resurrection and eternal life (which, contra Dahood, begins only in the third line) ought to be mentally translated as future. The subject of this psalm is Divine beneficence in earthly and eternal life. Note also that I have indicated a major break at line 5, with the abrupt shift to second person.

129. Given the heavy metaphorizing, we should perhaps read something into this pair—"punishment" and "support" or "words of rebuke and comfort," a standard duality as in, e.g., Deut. 32:1–4. For "guide" with enclitic *mem*, *Psalms I*, p. 147.

130. These are not our idioms, so literal translation is absurd. The first clause should be compared to Psalm 78:19, where "in the desert" corresponds to "despite [in the face of] my enemies"; both represent Divine help as more than just "getting by." Similarly oil was a *figura* of comfort; see Psalm 132:2. Abstinence from oil accompanied fasting not only in talmudic times but in the Elephantine (fifth century B.C.) community; see *ANET* 491.2.

131. That is, "My only pursuers are well-being and kindness."

adduced? In all, the presence of paralleling has such a decidedly haphazard flavor that there is something absurd in thinking of it as the organizing principle of this psalm.

One should like to advance something more basic, like the "binary form," as its organizing principle. Yet the blocks of words involved are of such irregular length that the "binary form" becomes a self-deception: it implies a regularity in clause length that is simply not there. Consider the aforementioned "lopsided" lines, or the contrast in the clause length of the first and last lines (four words vs. twelve!). Moreover, line 6 is clearly ternary: certainly the "binary form" cannot be organizing the principle of lines that are not even binary.

What is the essence of biblical parallelism? From the beginning our whole presentation has been pitched against the notion that it is actual *paralleling* of any sort that is the point. Save for this last discussion of Psalm 23, our argument has not been based on lack of regularity carried over groups of lines (a phenomenon well known to students of parallelism), but on evidence taken from *within* single parallelistic lines. Sharpness, sequences of actions and cause-effect sequences, differentiation, differences in the *other* words in "fixed pair" parallelism, B's going beyond A in repetitive parallelism, the nonsynonymity of numerical and "self-contradictory" parallelism, the "B-clause *kol*"—each is, in its way, an argument against fixing on the similarity of A and B as central. This is not to say that paralleling is not important—of course it is, it is the most striking characteristic of this style. But focusing on it is just somewhat beside the point.

What then is the essence? In asserting the primacy of our form

_____ / _____ //

we are asserting, basically, a sequence: first part—pause—next part—bigger pause (and only secondarily the rough limits on the length of the clause and their approximate equivalence). But even this sequence is a bit of a shorthand for the real point, for what those pauses actually embody is the *subjoined, hence emphatic*, character of B. The briefness of the brief pause is an expression of B's connectedness to A; the length of the long pause is an expression of the relative disjunction between B and the next line. What this means is simply: B, by being connected to A—carrying it further, echoing it, defining it, restating it, contrasting with it, *it does not matter which*—has an emphatic, "seconding" character, and it is this, more than any aesthetic of symmetry or paralleling, which is at the heart of biblical parallelism.

To state the matter somewhat simplistically, biblical lines are parallelistic not because B is meant to be a parallel of A, but because B typically *supports* A, carries it further, backs it up, completes it, goes beyond it. This is a slight, but very important, nuance, for it will explain why paralleling is so inconsistent, so *untended*: it was not in itself the point. And this will explain how this basically emphatic sequence could be further abstracted to the series of pauses _____ / _____ // which, as we have seen, was adapted to such unemphatic configurations as "since A, therefore B," "if A, then B," "A happened, and B happened," and so forth—variations that are often disturbingly unparallelistic, but whose filiation with emphatic "seconding" is clear.

Thus, for example, we have treated the question of ternary lines somewhat casually because the difference between binary and ternary lines *is not crucial*, and this again points up the wrongheadedness of focusing on parallelism. It does not matter whether

יברכך ה' מציון / וראה בטוב ירושלם / כל ימי חייך //
May the Lord of Zion bless you / [so that] you enjoy Jerusalem's goodliness / your whole life // Psalm 128:5

is a two- or three-membered verse, that is, whether we pause after ירושלם or not, and the lack of clear semantic support for this pause, and for others, so indicates. This is to say as well that it does not matter that, if it is read as binary, the line is "lopsided." It has sufficient parallelism to establish B as a "seconding" of A, that is, to establish the sequence _____ / _____ //. So even in a clearly defined tercet,

רוממו ה' אלהינו / והשתחוו להר קדשו / כי קדוש ה' אלהינו //
Exalt the Lord our God / and bow down to his holy mountain / for holy is the Lord our God // Psalm 99:9

the sequence _____ / _____ / _____ //, while longer, is not different in kind. That is why the binary and ternary lines can alternate freely in Hebrew and Ugaritic; neither overall line length, nor symmetry of paralleling, is the point.

It should be noted here what this pause-sequence eliminates and what, as a consequence, we do not find in the Psalter or elsewhere. We do not find:

_____ // _____ //

that is, two complete, utterly independent, yet in some respects parallel utterances, such as the following composites:

טוב להודות לה' // טוב ללכת אל בית אבל //
It is good to praise the Lord. It is good to go to the house of mourning.
Psalm 92:2, Eccles. 7:2

שירו לה' שיר חדש // סורו ממני כל פעלי און //
Sing another song of the Lord. Turn from me, all evildoers.
Pss. 96:1, 6:9

כי בחר ה' בציון // ה' ידע מחשבות אדם //
Yea, the Lord has chosen Zion. The Lord knows a man's thoughts.
Pss. 132:13, 94:11

יומם השמש לא יככה // בלילה שירת ה' עמי //
The sun will not strike you by day. By night the Lord's song is with me.
Psalm 121:6; as per Psalm 42:9

These "lines," though illustrating semantic parallelism, pair words, repetitions, etc. are absurdly inappropriate—for it is not B's mere parallelism to A that is crucial, but it is what this parallelism *means*, B's subjunction.

It should also be noted that if parallelism were the whole point, we should be forced to divide Psalm 123:3:

חננו ה' / חננו כי רב שבענו בוז //
Have mercy, Lord / have mercy for we are greatly shamed //

and not as we do (see above, note 92):

חננו ה' חננו / כי רב שבענו בוז //
Have mercy, Lord, have mercy / for we are greatly shamed //

and we should be dismayed by lines like:

שמעו שמים והאזיני ארץ / כי ה' דבר //
Hear heavens and listen earth / for the Lord speaks // Isa. 1:2

שמעו מלכים האזינו רזנים / אנכי לה' אנכי אשירה /
Hear kings, listen princes / I of the Lord, oh I shall sing / Judg. 5:3

וערבה לה' מנחת יהודה וירושלם / כימי עולם וכשנים קדמניות //
May the offering of Judah and Jerusalem please the Lord / as in the days of old and years gone by // Mal. 3:4

where the means of parallelism are obviously being flaunted, squeezed together into a single verse-half and apposed to a B which has no semantic or syntactic parallelism with it. But on the contrary, it is B's subjunction that is the whole point. For, to recapitulate: the parllelistic style in the Bible consists not of stringing together clauses that bear some semantic, syntactic, or phonetic resemblance, nor yet of "saying the same thing twice," but of the sequence

_____ // in which B is both a continuation of A and yet broken from it by a pause, a typically emphatic, "seconding" style in which parallelism plays an important part but whose essence is not parallelism, but the "seconding sequence."

How is B's subjunction to be accomplished? The dangers are, on the one hand, the lack of a clear break between A and B, causing the two to merge into a single assertion; and on the other hand, the lack of a clear connection between the two, so that A + B become isolated, independent assertions.[132] Their separation (or, rather, separability) is largely a matter of syntax. In establishing their connection, grammatical and semantic elements both have a crucial role. The typical "A, and what's more, B" (to second, support, carry further) is abstracted to our pause sequence, adaptable to different subordinations and other syntactic variations. Some of the phenomena described in the preceding pages may now be understood more fully—functionally—as the means by which B's subjunction is expressed:

1. *Incomplete B completed by reference to A*—i.e., ellipsis in B (most typically, the subject or verb appears in A and is implied in B; a noun appears in A and is referred to pronomially in B; all of B is in apposition to a single term in A; etc.)—all these are forms of dependence that ally B to A. Note especially the "differentiations" definite article–possessive suffix, and no article–possessive suffix (above, pp. 21–22). This elliptical line (what G. B. Gray called "incomplete parallelism without compensation" and which had been identified with laments and dirges) is sometimes carried out consistently in whole compositions, e.g. Psalm 114 (no lament, by the way!).

2. *Incomplete A completed by B*—this is rarer, because of the danger of A and B running together, but see for example Psalms 27:3, 94:3, 115:1 discussed above. In this pattern the "interruptive vocative" is an important option: its interrupting provides the break between A and B, allowing A to be incomplete without any danger of running together. Another frequent recourse is the inversion of normal word order, which tends to isolate the aberrant clause:

בחצרות וקול שופר / הריעו לפני המלך ה' //

With psalmody and trumpet-sounds / make music before the Lord the king // Psalm 98:6

132. It is on this latter "danger" that *māšāl* is often built: the point in Eccles. 7:1, 12:11, Prov. 26:9 seen above is to establish the elusive connection *which we know must exist*, for we understand the principle of the form.

Working with either of these "incomplete" patterns, or with the "A is so, and B is so," are:

3. *actual repetition of a term in B*;

4. *"pair-words,"* associated concepts, semantic, syntactic, morphological parallelism (all asserting B's identity or association with A);

5. *sequentiality, subordination expressed or implied* (*qtl-yqtl*); and

6. *unusual word order, chiasmus, etc.* (marks either A or B—usually B—as the pair, template or correspondent of the other).[133]

Equally important is the other pause in our sequence, the final "//." What makes it final? It is precisely the fact of B's connection with A, and hence its relative disjunction with what follows it, that "//" represents; a kind of closure. By identifying itself as A's conclusion—reasserting it, "going one better," providing an anticipated (and often, grammatically necessary) completion—B has a closural quality that allows it to break discourse into fairly short units, organizing the flow of clauses into twos and threes. Many writers have remarked on the end-stopped quality of the Psalms and other compositions. Perhaps the strongest demonstration of this feature is the curious case of Psalm 68, which W. F. Albright suggested, is actually no "psalm" at all but a list of first lines of different songs that became included in the Psalter quite by accident—a kind of table of contents masquerading as a psalm![134] It matters little whether Albright is right: the fact that such a theory could even be credibly put forward testifies to the great disjunction between the lines of this psalm; and, on the other hand, the fact that this degree of disjunction was singled out only thirty years ago as somewhat egregious should indicate that disjunction itself is no

133. This last item is particularly significant. A recent study has shown that verbal sentences in Lamentations evidence a significant divergence from normal prose syntax (D. R. Hillers, "Observations on Syntax and Meter in Lamentations," in H. N. Bream, et al., *A Light unto My Path* [Philadelphia, 1974], pp. 265–70), and no doubt the same could be demonstrated for the Psalter and other books. But in addition to marking the style as "special," variations in normal word order often serve a precise function: they qualify the medial pause, either strengthening a potentially weak pause by inverting syntax, or, where A would otherwise contain a complete thought and B consist only of a prepositional phrase or some other apparent afterthought, by suspending some essential from A—subject, or verb, or both—thereby binding A to B. Edward Greenstein remarks on this (in his "Some Variations"; see also his "One More Step on the Staircase" *UF* 9 [1977]: 77–86), though his notion of what will and will not "cue" the listener to "suspend processing" (ugh) seems somewhat arbitrary.

134. W. F. Albright, "A Catalogue of Early Hebrew Poems (Psalm 68)," *HUCA* 23 (1950–51): 1.

stranger to the style of the Psalter. (Further instances will be seen below.)

How is such (sometimes ferocious) "end-stopping" achieved? That is, what means are used to mark B (or C) as final? Here again, paralleling is not the point, but one way of reaching the point—the sense of completion provided by parallelism is provided as well by the other observed phenomena: actual repetitions, contrasting verb forms, chiasmus, the B-clause *kol*, overt and implied subordinations (If A / then B //; just as A / so B //; and so forth). All enable B to close with a click—though sometimes more loudly than others.

Of course, we should not go too far. There *is* an obvious delight in symmetry in many lines. Parallelism is not simply a means of realizing the form _____ / _____ // but its archetype, and is prized in and of itself. The fact of B's subjunction will hardly explain the obvious care taken to make B correspond in length to A, a tendency that, if not consistent, is nevertheless manifest in, for example, the ill-named phenomenon of "compensation." Our point is hardly that parallelism does not exist, but that care must be taken to see it in the proper terms, as part of a larger, overall rhetorical structure. For paralleling itself is not the essence of the (now let us say "so-called") parallelistic line, and will not explain the evidence we have adduced.

Here another brief observation is in order. It was asserted that the two basic characteristics of Ugaritic parallelism are repetition and the use of fixed pairs. It is striking how similarly the two are used. Both appear as spots of resemblance, points of connection between clauses. Yet how different the two are theoretically! The one is the very essence of what has been conceived of as parallelism—the "same idea" expressed in different words—and the other the very thing such parallelism seems bent on avoiding, repetition! The fact that the two are used interchangeably in Ugaritic is a striking demonstration that it is not "paralleling," elegant variation, saying the same thing in different terms, or the like that stands behind their use. The purpose of parallelism and repetition is one and the same—to establish the connection between (syntactically) separate entities, to subjoin.

At first blush, this may seem to be a rather minor distinction: whether parallelism is the "essence" of the form, or whether the "essence" of the form has frequent recourse to parallelism, the result is that *most* lines, the vast majority, of the Psalter and other books are characterized by some parallelism between their clauses. Admitting that parallelism was prized and cultivated for itself further weakens

the distinction. But the point is this: not only is the "sequential" explanation better able to account for the asymmetries mentioned earlier (symmetry was not the point, only *enough* symmetry to establish the connection) and to account, as well, for the various "what's more" relationships outlined in the foregoing pages, but it will establish the connection between parallelistic lines and not-very-parallelistic lines, encountered both in books like the Psalter and in the Pentateuch and Prophets, and it will aid in illuminating the structure of the Qumran hymns and other postbiblical prayers and songs. To compare small things with great, it is a bit like the Copernican explanation of the earth's rotation about the sun: it is not the observed phenomena that change but our understanding of what motivates them and, consequently, of their connection with things apparently outside them.

If the various sorts of "what's more" relationships the B-half can illustrate have been presented somewhat insistently in the foregoing pages, it is not because "what's more" expresses the relationship between *every* A and B. "What's more" is in itself an inexact version of the concept of subjunction. But it has been stressed in the belief that this approach ultimately leads to a proper orientation toward *all* lines. In this sense, the foregoing presentation of the characteristics of the parallelistic line has been programmatically anti-Lowthian.

Lowth himself was as biblical commentator and exegete of rare sensitivity and ability; he possessed the courage to follow his thinking beyond the canons of the day, and was also a gifted and persuasive writer. Yet one must wonder how it was that a phenomenon so striking and fundamental as his *parallelismus membrorum* could have been overlooked by so many generations of earlier commentators and critics, clerics, preachers, scribes, and scholars of different religions and backgrounds and periods. And the answer, as will be seen, is that in a very real sense *parallelismus membrorum* was not so much a discovery as an invention. Lowth[135] mistook parallelism for the *whole idea* of this biblical style, then gave the impression of a system operating in what is, really, not systematic at all. As we have seen above, "synonymous" parallelism is rarely synonymous, and there is no real difference between it and "antithetical" parallelism—the whole approach is wrongheaded. All parallelism is really "synthetic": it

135. And more than Lowth himself, his followers. See chapter 6.

consists of A, a pause, and A's continuation B (or B + C). As far as structure is concerned, there is no significant difference between

שירו לה' שיר חדש / כי נפלאות עשה //
Sing another song of the Lord / how he has worked wonders //
Psalm 98:1

and

שירו לה' שיר חדש / שירו לה' כל הארץ //
Sing another song of the Lord / sing of the Lord all the earth //
Psalm 96:1

שירו לה' שיר חדש / תהלתו בקהל חסידים //
Sing another song of the Lord / [sing] his praise in a company of the faithful //
Psalm 149:1

and

שירו לו שיר חדש / היטיבו נגן בתרועה //
Sing another song of the Lord / play a goodly tune //
Psalm 33:3

And, on the other hand, the differences between them are hardly expressible with Lowth's categories. Biblical parallelism is of one sort, "A, and what's more, B," or a hundred sorts; but it is not three.

That Lowth's general approach, and even his tripartite scheme, have survived to exercise such influence is no doubt attributable in part to the vigor of his presentation and the thoroughness of his investigation into other aspects of biblical style. Yet, in a more general way, it reflects an overall attitude toward the biblical text that is far older than Robert Lowth. It is connected to the notion of biblical poetry, to which we now turn.

TWO

POETRY AND PROSE

1

Biblical parallelism—and still more so the "seconding sequence" which is at its heart—appears in a great variety of contexts. While it is concentrated in the so-called "poetic" books, it is to be found almost everywhere. No one would doubt, for example, the parallelism of:

וה' פקד את שרה כאשר אמר / ויעש ה' לשרה כאשר דבר //
And the Lord remembered Sarah as he had said / and the Lord did for Sarah as he had spoken //

or

צחק עשה לי אלהים / כל השמע יצחק לי //
God made me cause of laughter / all who hear will laugh at me //

קומי שאי את הנער / והחזיקי את ידך בו //
Come, pick up the lad / take firm hold of him //

אל תשלח ידך אל הנער / ואל תעש לו מאומה //
Do not harm the boy / do nothing to him at all //

כי ברך אברכך / והרבה ארבה את זרעך //
ככוכבי השמים / וכחול אשר על שפת הים //
I will surely bless you / and surely multiply your seed //
As the stars of the sky / and as the sand upon the shore //

but these occur not in the Psalms, but in the Genesis account of the career of Isaac (vv. 21:1, 6, 18; 22:12, 17, respectively). Many other verses in this same account, containing less obvious semantic parallelism but clearly built on our "pause sequence," could have been adduced. For, in fact, the Pentateuch is full of such lines—not only single verses here and there (especially in direct discourse), but whole sections. Take, for example, the account of the birth of Moses (Exod. 2:1–7):[1]

1. Conceptually, this part of the tale begins not in 2:1 but in the preceding verse (1:22), and in this respect the traditional paragraphing is misleading. For the whole

Moreover, Lowth's stance could not be won without sacrifice. In order to relieve himself of the mental discomfort of something that was only inconsistently consistent—sometimes parallelism was regular in binary line after line, sometimes only an emphatic turn ending most lines, sometimes less than that—he treated it as evidence of a neat but irretrievable system. Like a sheet thrown over a reportedly beautiful statue, parallelism's bulging and bunching now took on a most enticing allure: however irregular and ungainly an artifice it might seem on its own, did not its very irregularities now turn seductive in the suggestion of an infinitely rich and detailed harmony underneath?

In the end, the most significant long-term result of Lowth's presentation has been the equation of "parallelism" with poetry. Even today, critics are busy discovering "poetic fragments" in Genesis and other "prose" books.[192] This is right and it is wrong, for the whole notion of biblical poetry is both right and wrong. But before Lowth, in any case, the discovery of exergasia, or anadiplosis and epizeuxis, or repetitio, expolitio, and so forth, in a passage of Genesis did not therefore suggest its kinship with the Psalter, or a resemblance of both with Homer, Horace, and the Western tradition. Lowth's argument, as we have seen, was aimed largely at the Prophets; he wished to suggest that prophecy is a kind of "Divine poesy." Revolutionary enough: but he could not confine poesy to the books he named precisely because "parallelism" was not an either/or matter; and so "biblical poetry" has spilled over from the poetical Isaiah and the semipoetical Jeremiah to other books with their histories, genealogies, blessings, curses, speeches, and so on. In this way, more than any other, Robert Lowth changed the way we read the Bible.

192. See most recently J. S. Kselman, "The Recovery of Poetic Fragments from the Pentateuchal Priestly Source," *JBL* 97 (1978): 161–73; also chapter 2 above.

SEVEN

A METRICAL AFTERWORD

1

With Robert Lowth, "parallelism" took on its definitive form. The rhetorical approach to this stylistic feature, pursued so successfully by Schoettgen and earlier writers, was now dropped in favor of Lowth's newly discovered structural constant which, in one of its three forms, was infallibly present in biblical "poetry." In this apparent regularity lay its great appeal. Lowth's specific categories were subsequently supplemented and redefined—George Buchanan Gray even proposed doing away with them in favor of the Schoettgen-like distinction between "complete" and "incomplete" parallelism[1]—but Lowth's underlying notion has survived these tamperings, survived even the "linguistic" and "structuralist" approaches of the past decades.[2] Even the texts from Ugarit, whose "paralleling" is so often asymmetrical, and so obviously emphatic, have only been read as confirmation of Lowth's claims.[3] Boling's point, that in a given pair

1. See G. B. Gray, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (reprinted New York, 1972), pp. 112–13.

2. One of the best such studies is A. J. Ehlen, "The Poetic Structure of a Hodayah from Qumran" (Harvard Ph.D. dissertation, 1970), which in turn is dependent on R. Jakobson, "Grammatical Parallelism and its Russian Facet," *Language* 42 (1966): 399–429. Ehlen painstakingly searches out correspondences in the Qumran hymn 1 QH 3:19–36 on all levels, auditory, grammatical, and semantic (his approach here also recalls that of L. Alonso Schökel's analysis of Isaiah in *Estudios de Poetica Hebrea*). Yet the results are strangely old-fashioned: "There are three basic modes of correspondence which can exist between the referents of two words: they may be identical . . . they may be in polar contrast with respect to some characteristic . . . even though they belong to the same order of being; or they may be associated in various ways, e.g., as separate aspects of a larger whole, or as contiguous, one leading to the other, coming next to mind, or the like" (p. 87). Is not this Lowth all over again?

3. Thus C. Gordon, *Ugaritic Handbook* (Rome, 1955), p. 108; John Gray, *Legacy of Canaan* (Leiden, 1965), pp. 292–302; *Psalms I*, p. xxxiii; etc. etc.

the B words were often rarer and more literary than the A words,[4] was not seized upon as evidence of the basically "seconding" nature of this feature; instead, the fixity of the order was taken as an instance of formulaic language, hence evidence of spontaneous, oral composition.

One lone voice in the post-Lowth period might well have been heeded. It belonged to an itinerant nineteenth-century rabbi and preacher, Meir Loeb b. Yehiel Michael (1809–79), generally known by his acronymous surname Malbim. His uncompromising stand on parallelism we shall examine presently, but it is worth noting that Malbim was uncompromising in nearly all things. He was an opponent of the new Reform Judaism, and his disputes with Jewish communal leaders led to his imprisonment by Rumanian authorities and eventual banishment from Rumania. Thence he served as rabbi in Leczyca, Kherson, and Mogilev "and was persecuted by the assimilationists, the *maskilim*, and the Hasidim,"[5] certainly a well-rounded selection of enemies. Somehow amidst all these travels and controversies he managed to write an impressive collection of biblical commentaries, halakhic works, sermons, and poems.

In his biblical exegesis Malbim was a careful yet colorful expositor. He saw himself as a champion of the פשט, the literal or simple meaning of Scripture: "Here you shall find no homily and no science, no mysticism or allegory, just the simple פשט."[6] He felt that deviation from the simple meaning had since the Middle Ages (with whose expositors, incidentally, he shows a profound familiarity), led to numerous abuses which he now indicted for the religious laxities of his own day. The literary approach to the Inspired Word, that is, the reading of it as if it obeyed the canons of human rhetoric, he rejected utterly, and this brought him into conflict even with such medieval expositors as Abraham ibn Ezra. His approach to the Bible is, in this sense, profoundly retrograde, the product of a thoroughly talmudic outlook.

About the nature of biblical style, and parallelism in particular, he discourses at length in his introduction to the Book of Isaiah. He begins by stating the three principles of his commentary's approach:

> 1. In prophetic discourse there is no such thing as "repetition of the same idea in different words" [ibn Ezra's phrase] no repetitions of speech, no rhetorical repetitions, no two sentences with one meaning, no two comparisons of the same meaning, and not even two words that are repeated.
>
> 2. Prophetic discourse and sayings, whether simple or doubled, contain no words which were set there haphazardly without some special purpose; so that all the nouns, verbs and other words out of which each utterance is composed not only must by necessity come in that particular utterance, but also it would have been impossible for the divine orator to substitute even one word for another, for every word in the divine speech is weighed upon the scales of wisdom and knowledge, and all are arranged, appointed, preserved and counted by the measuring standard of almighty wisdom, which alone is capable of speaking in this fashion.
>
> 3. Prophetic discourse has no husk without a kernel, no body without a soul, no garment without a wearer, no utterance void of lofty idea, no expression in which discernment does not dwell, for the words of the living God all have the Deity alive within them, the breath of life is in their nostrils, the awesome, noble, exalted, moving spirit.[7]

If the reader hears in this the ring of Jewish fundamentalism, he will not be mistaken. Malbim's notion of prophecy rejected utterly the approach to biblical style that had been adopted increasingly by Jews and Christians since the Renaissance. Although he was clearly aware of the binary structure and semantic pairing of parallelism (note in 2 above, "whether simple or doubled"), he frequently stated that repetition as such did not exist, that even when the same word appears twice in a single verse, its significance in the second appearance must by definition be different from its first use; moreover, apparent synonyms are never synonymous, and it is wrong to suppose that "the divine orator might have taken the words that appear in the first of a pair of clauses and put them in the second clause corresponding to it."[8]

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." It was precisely Malbim's unyielding ideology that eventually led him to argue the emphatic character of the B-clause, and to recognize wherever possible (and, in truth, sometimes elsewhere) B's "what's more" quality. For, he says, even in the few cases where the text appears to use absolute synonyms, some nuance in form or scope may

4. R. G. Boling, "Synonymous Parallelism in the Psalms," *JSS* 5 (1960): 221–55. This fact had been noticed by previous writers, especially Moshe Held in his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, "Studies in Ugaritic Lexicography and Poetic Style" (Johns Hopkins, Baltimore, 1957). He is cited by Boling, p. 223.

5. Y. Horowitz in *EJ* 11:822.

6. M. L. Malbim, נבאים ובתורים (Vilnius, 1923), 5, p. 2b.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

be salvaged;[9] however, the great bulk of restatements or apparent repetitions are not absolute synonymities, and it would be an error to treat the differences as insignificant. Malbim lists the three main sorts of distinctions he invokes in his commentary (many of them based on readings found in the Targum, in R. David Kimḥi, and Abravanel):

1. In some cases I have shown that each of the restated clauses contains some element which makes it different from the other, such as "I shall be comforted from mine enemies, and avenged of my foes" [Isa. 1:24], "Whom shall I send and who will go forth for us?"[10] [Isa. 6:8], "A shoot shall go forth from Jesse's stock, and a plant shall flower from his roots" [Isa. 11:1]. Similarly with two comparisons that seem to have the same import, I have shown that each referent is somewhat different, as "As a leaf falls from a vine, and a fruit from a fig-tree"[11] [Isa. 34:4], and "Like a garment they will grow worn, a moth shall eat them"[12] [Isa. 50:9].

2. Elsewhere we have shown that the repeated utterances are two matters that have come into existence one after the other or one beside the other, in two distinct times or locations, such as "Like a harvest-booth in a vineyard, and as a shed in a field, like a city under siege"[13] [Isa. 1:8], "Raise up a standard and lift your voice, wave your hand"[14] [Isa. 13:2], "To take bounty and seize spoils"[15] [Isa. 10:6].

3. Or I have shown that the second clause always adds something to the first clause paired with it, such as "Ah, sinning nation," (and more than this) "people heavy with transgression," (and more than this they are a) "family of evil-doers," (and more than this they are) "wicked children" (and more than this that they) "abandoned the Lord," and so forth [Isa. 1:4]. And similarly "if your sins be as crimson," (and more than this) "if they are redder than the dyeing worm [from which crimson dye is made]" [Isa. 1:18].

Eventually Malbim's stance leads where we cannot go, to finding significance in the slightest alternations[16] and (the talmudic corollary shown clearly in our history) so focusing on the distinguishing nuance as to lose sight of the obvious structuredness of the speech. But his approach is the proper beginning. If his espousal of omnisignificance leaves him easy prey to snipers, let it be noted that his distortion is no

9. To illustrate this, Malbim cites some of the verses already seen in Moses ibn Ezra's (and Jonah ibn Janāḥ's) discussion of synonymity and repetition. Thus Isa. 41:4, מי פעל ועשה, "who acted and did," Malbim reads as a distinction between the performing of an action and the bringing of an act to its conclusion; both ibn Ezra and ibn Janāḥ treat these as synonymous (see chapter 5). Similarly, Isa. 43:7 בראתיו יצרתיו אף עשיתיו, "I created, I shaped, yea I made him" Malbim takes as representing (1) creation ex nihilo, (2) formation, and (3) completion (reading the root עשה as in the previous מי פעל ועשה). David Kimhi (Radak) and earlier interpreters argue the same line on this verse in somewhat more specific terms: (1) insemination, (2) formation of the joints and limbs, and (3) creation of the outer skin. About this whole approach Moses ibn Ezra wrote: "This is the commentator's own hair-splitting, for the text's purpose is emphasis (*al-taʾkīd*)." (See *Kitāb al-muḥāḍara,* ed. A. S. Halkin [Jerusalem, 1975], p. 162). Pursuing such "hair-splitting," Malbim further argues the difference between "din" and "tumult" (i.e. המון vs. שאון) in Isa. 5:14 is the difference between the "usual" sound of the city and "unusual" tumult. Similarly, the difference between חלף and עבר in Isa. 8:8 is temporariness vs. permanence. Malbim, נבאים וכתובים, p. 36b.

10. Here it is not the "for us" that is the differentiating element, as one might imagine. For Malbim, the two questions reflect two conditions necessary for sending a messenger: Who is worthy to go? and Who is willing to go? See his comments in ibid., p. 30b.

11. Our translation reflects Malbim's [and Radak's] understanding: "The fruit of the fig-tree is [indicated by the feminine] *nobelet*, not the leaf, which would be masculine." Ibid., pp. 114a and b.

12. That is, worn out from use (conflict) as distinct from being consumed because of neglect; ibid., p. 169b.

13. Malbim explains in greater detail ibid., p. 9b: "The booth in the vineyard has within it only the guard of the vineyard; so similarly Jerusalem has no outsiders, only its inhabitants; the second time-frame comes when he compares it to a shed in a field, that is, a booth built in a gourd-field, whose guardian only stays there at night but during the day it is completely vacant (since the gourds are hard and need not be guarded during the day from birds, but only at night against thieves)—so the Jerusalemites used to secrete themselves in caves during the day and hide for fear of the enemy and were in the city only at night. And in the third period of time he turns to Jerusalem itself and its surroundings, which now was like a city besieged in a siege." (Cf. the Jonathan targum and Radak.)

14. The standard can be seen from afar, "and after they are closer to them they will 'lift up their voice,' for now they can hear, and they will follow it [the voice] closer and when they are still nearer 'they will wave hands' (to them), beckoning by hand for them to approach and enter the city." Malbim again elaborates on Radak; ibid., p. 52a.

15. The root שלל he takes as the undivided booty left in a city after its inhabitants have fallen in war; the root בז refers to the share of goods taken by each despoiler. See his proof-texts *ad* Isa. 8:1.

16. Indeed, Malbim later notes that his task as an exegete would have been easier if he had contented himself with finding for each pair only one nuance to separate them, as other commentators had done; instead, he insisted on distinguishing each and every word! "But I set down this rule inviolable, that no words came by chance into the council of the Lord," and consequently "in two clauses each composed of numerous words, I have been obliged to show that all the words that come in each clause must come only in that clause and not in the clause paralleling it," נבאים וכתובים, p. 4a.

greater than, indeed is the precise converse of, *parallelismus membrorum.* To say that there is no synonymity is just as much an approximation as to say that B *means the same thing* as A. Furthermore, the former is at least a positive and productive stand; it is rooted, as we have seen, in the very essence of parallelism, and is demonstrably the only reasonable reading of numerous "sharp" sayings and verses; and it is a reading that favors the text, allows it room to be precise and to slice sharp as a blade.

But Malbim's commentaries were unknown or ignored by the emerging movement of modern biblical criticism. It was Lowth's approach that prevailed and has continued to prevail, and the notion of poetic structure it supports has since his time generally complemented that other popular area of inquiry, the search for biblical meters. Lowth, as we have seen, thought Hebrew meter irretrievable, but his followers did not agree, and with the principle of parallelism basically unarguable, interest in Hebrew poetics since Lowth has largely centered on systems of scansion.

2

The always-difficult job of summarizing previous writers' researches is rendered still greater when one is not in sympathy with their approach or conclusions; and since, happily, other critics have recently shown great zeal in recounting the history of biblical metrics over the last two centuries, I will refer the curious reader to their compilations.[17] Let us here confine ourselves to the barest outline.

The modern period offers no radically new departures in Hebrew poetry: what it has been able to provide is more detailed development of themes already seen in the pre-Lowth period, and an integration of these with new evidence from archaeology and the study of cognate literatures. Investigations along the lines of classical prosody continued in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by E. J. Greve, C. G. Anton, and others.[18] J. Bellermann's *Versuch über die*

17. See *EPH*, pp. 119–93; *PsIW*, pp. 261–66; *OTI*, pp. 57–64; T. H. Robinson, "Basic Principles of Hebrew Poetic Form," *Festschrift A. Bertholet* (Tübingen, 1950), pp. 438–50; and many others, listed, inter alia, in the bibliography of D. N. Freedman's "Prolegomenon" to G. B. Gray's *Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (New York, 1972).

18. Anton published a *Conjectura de metro Hebraeorum* in 1770, and several other works, including a scansion of the Psalms (1780) after that. Greve, following Lowth's urging about the poetic nature of the Prophetic books, scanned Nahum, Habbakuk, and Isaiah.

Metrik der Hebräer (1813) analyzed syllables in terms of duration and deduced prosodic patterns from the syllabic distribution of *morae* (in Latin prosody, a *mora* was the amount of time required for the pronunciation of the simplest syllable). Meanwhile, the notion of word stress as a possible element in scansion was in the ascendant. Understandably, this line of inquiry was particularly popular among speakers of Germanic languages, and two of its strongest advocates in the nineteenth century were Julius Ley and K. Budde. Ley[19] postulated stress accent as the sole significant element in Hebrew prosody. Lines were determined according to parallelism, and, depending on the total number of stresses, were scanned as "hexameters," "pentameters," "octameters," and so forth. Budde's most important contribution was an analysis of the meter of Lamentations and other dirges,[20] in which he observed the tendency of A verses to be somewhat longer than their corresponding B's. Seeking to isolate the independent (*selbständige*) terms on each side of the "caesura" and assuming each such term received one stress in performance, Budde found that A usually had three stresses (but sometimes four), while B usually had two (though sometimes three). This would make for a truncated, "limping" gait (here the classical analogues are uncomfortably obvious) appropriate to a dirge; the *qinah* (lament) meter was born. (Budde remained admirably skeptical about all other metrical hypotheses that sprang up in the wake of his article.) It has since been pointed out that this 3:2 line, as it has been styled, can be "discovered" in many other Hebrew compositions that are not the least bit dirgelike.[21]

The ideas of Ley and Budde were passed on to Eduard Sievers. Sievers had started as a metricist interested in the special problems surrounding Old English and Germanic prosody; he wrote a classification for syllabic patterns first in *Beowulf*, then for Old Germanic poetry in general.[22] In these systems, which, in modified form, are still in use today, Sievers attributed primary and secondary stresses to important syllables in the line, as well as an unstressed notation to lesser syllables and even some small words—pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, demonstratives, and articles. Through this approach he was able to isolate what he felt to be the five basic

19. See his *Grunzüge des Rhythmus, des Vers- und Strophenbaues in der hebräischen Poesie* (Halle, 1875).

20. "Das hebr. Klageslied," *ZAW* 2 (1882): 1–52.

21. See G. B. Gray, *Forms of Hebrew Poetry*, p. 116; T. H. Robinson, "Hebrew Poetic Form" in *SVT* 1 (1953): 134.

22. E. Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik* (Leipzig, 1893).