ONE

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 sentence-form that consists of two brief clauses:

אשֶר יָרֵא ה’ וּכְמֶהוֹיִם חַי
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).1 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 ספואים פそれに phúc [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:

// אחד תיהו / ואל תיהו אתיר // ונעך אש טחא וי / נעש פי חרב // ירל רשקית ויה / רער רשקית י� // יברוס רברס קז / זזראד כי סכלי ארון //

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 //

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.

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. It is not known how they were referred to in biblical times; the earliest

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—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). 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:

// אחלל את / אמו ואתל להניר //
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:

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

// ברו את / שמלת נפגם / משמית // 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...
extremes. Here, by way of illustration only, 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:

Be strong and let your hearts be firm / all you who trust in the Lord //

Psalm 31:25

Understand this, forgetters of God / lest I ravage and none escape //

Psalm 50:22

Lord God of Hosts / how long will you be angry at your people’s prayer? //

Psalm 80:5

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

**Citation**

I said in my dismay / “I have been driven from your sight” //

Psalm 31:23

And they spoke against God [and] said / “Can God spread a table in the desert?” //

Psalm 78:19

Why should the nations say / “Where is their God?” //

Psalm 79:10

**Sequence of Actions**

You brought up a vine from Egypt / you banished nations and planted it //

Psalm 80:9

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.

Psalm 39:5

Let your love, Lord, be upon us / since we hope in you //

Psalm 33:22

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**

By day the Lord sends forth his love / and by night his song is with me //

Psalm 42:9

Oh God hear my prayer / hearken to the words of my mouth //

Psalm 54:4

May the Lord of Zion bless you / and [i.e. so that you] enjoy Jerusalem’s goodness / your whole life //

Psalm 128:5

**Repeated element(s)**

In you our forefathers trusted / they trusted that you would save them //

Psalm 22:5

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 ṭe‘ah (infinite) is to be read for MT imperative ṭe‘eh. For qatal followed by the same probable infinitive with just this expression, cf. Eccles. 2:1 ṣaḥ but, also Eccles. 9:11 ṣaḥ also, Bab. Tannaot. 10:6 (contra Dahan) is not the idiom here, but ṣaḥ (בשח) (be very pleased). Cf. Pss. 4:7, 34:9, 13; Job 7:7, Eccles. 2:1, 3:13, also the variant ṣaḥ (בשח) (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.
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When the waters saw you, God / when the waters saw you they shook / yea, the depths were agitated // Psalm 77:17

// 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

// בִּשְׁמִי יָהְוָה / יָהְוָה יָדְרָד וְדֵר / YHWH is your name eternally / YHWH your appellation forever // Psalm 135:13

All of B in apposition to part of A1

// יֵרְדוּ הַשְּׁפָתִים הַשָּׂדֶק / לְשׁוֹן מַכָּר הָנָּהָר נְגִּיוֹת / Let the Lord cut off all lips of falsehood / a tongue speaking untruths // Psalm 124:2
// תְּמֵרוֹת מִסְרָאֵי מְרִית / מִרְצָהֵי פְּלוֹ אוֹאַ / You shield me from the council of the wicked / from the company of evildoers // Psalm 64:3

A B // B C //12

// תָּקָא אֶל הַשְּׁפָתִים מָלֶל / אֶל הַחֲבָרִים לָדָיָה עָמָד / He calls to the Heavens above / and to the earth to judge his people // Psalm 50:4
// יִרְשָׁב לֵדָי אֲדֻרִים / נִצְבָּה בָּבֶל שְׁתִיָּהִים / He turned their Nile[s] to blood / and their waters, lest they drink // Psalm 78:44

“Blessed” + Attribution13

// בֹּרָךְ תָּנָא שְׁמִי פָּלָא / Blessed is the Lord / may he hear the sound of my plea // Psalm 28:6

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 רבי לְבָכָה; see W. S. Towner, “‘Blessed be Y...’ The Modulation of a Biblical Formula,” CBQ 30 (1968): 386-99.

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

// יִוְדָו / וְלָם מָשָׂא / יָדָרָד פְּרֵר / 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 אָדָרִים, “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. really means “offspring” or “creatures” here. Cf. Pss. 8:7, 103:22, 104:24; Prov. 31:31 (!); Job 14:15, 34:19. אָדָרִים 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 Ps IV 1:8, 103, etc.
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.” 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 השם יימריך, “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, 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)

17. See on this Muilenberg, “Hebrew Rhetoric,” 98.
19. In ritual purity, and in matters dependent on it, such as redemption. While הנד and purse are an oft-repeated, meristic 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 hitpa‘el itself. Elsewhere, when yd—biny is not meant as a climactic descent, one finds the normal hifil form, thus Isa. 43:10, 44:18. Whether the infixed 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:

// מוסק שם כוס מים / ויהי ההמה פס חלול /  
// Eccles. 7:1
Better a name than good oil / and the day of death than the day of birth

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 שׁ (shem) šem min šemem 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—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 Šem; 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—“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 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

// תות אור לשון חכם למסלול /  
// A thorn comes by chance into the hand of a drunkard / and a proverb (מָשָׁל) 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 thorn that sticks into the hand of a grooping drunkard.
The proverbist’s image is, however, significant: he associates מָשָׁל (a proverb, or perhaps more generally, a parallelistic line)3 with something sharp. A similar image appears in Ecclesiastes 12:11:

// זְכִרְּתָם יָדַר בְּרֹכֶכֶת / פִּסָּהוּ יִצְוַק בְּעָלָם אֲשֶׁר אָשָׁר /  

The words of the wise are like goads / and like nails firmly planted are those used in assemblies

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23. See chapter 2, n. 15.
24. Again, let us read B against A. The sharpness of רָכַב (“goads,” from *र* drb “be sharp,” cf. Arabic dariba) exists in potential; it needs an object, something to be goaded. שָׁמֵר (“stick-in nails,” are already having their sharpness put to advantage; this is the nuance B adds. The somewhat obscure phrase פֹּלָק אֲשֶׁר אָשָׁר thus represents “words of the wise” that have found their mark, either because they have been incorporated in established collections (אסתר), or because academy teachers (אסתר) with many students are certain of having their words understood and preserved properly. On the latter point see J. Goldin on 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—ישׁ לוֹמִי אֵלֶּה יִשָּׁרָה יִשָּׁרָה שֶׁתַּלְשֵׁם—remained a central Jewish tenet: see Profiat Duran, אֶלֶת פֶּתְרָה (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 ḫidā, which seems to come from another root meaning "sharp,"25 is also paired with māṣal. Whatever a ḫidā is (it is often translated as "riddle") its sharpness has nothing to do with spurring to action: as Samson’s ḫidā (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 ḫidā and māṣal 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 recognized27 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 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 afterwordness. 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.,

//םותכceed אוחב / הדרחה חשקות שותה

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

25. On the affinity of verbal roots with ṛ = ṛ (i.e. ḥdd) and those with ṛ = ṟ (ḥidā, [denominative?] ḥw), J. Kurilowicz, Studies in Semitic Grammar and Metrics (Warsaw, 1972) pp. 10–12.

26. See above, note 4.


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).


31. The precise meaning of מַשָּׁל is somewhat in dispute, suggestions as widely divergent as "profuse" and "ferocious" having been put forward. Obviously this word is intended to contrast with מַשָּׁל, 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. 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: "I hurried and did not linger," Psalm 119:60. As in these, so in longer phrases

// פארה י' תבש צורו וַאֲלֵי אֶשָּׁא סֹפְרֵי חֵסֶם וב
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.

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 as "abundant" is based on Ezek. 35:13, where the same root רָעָ֑ני רַעְּשֹׁן paralelles the root רָע, רָע. But תָּאִי meaning something like "blaspheme" in the context. It probably represents "raft" (Akk. gidlu "cord," Arab. gadala "twist a cord," Aram. מָלָא "twist," Heb. מָלָא [Deut. 22:12] "twisted threads," and cf. Psalm 12:4 [יִשְׁרֵך] and esp. Psalms I p. 73 for other examples and references). Our root רָע therefore probably means twisted or false—the perfect opposite of קַשֶּׁת.

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."


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, synonymy 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, anti-, 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.

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

// אַרְבָּהָת אַחַת בָּלֹהָ תָּמָר תָּלְהַת בֵּי
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.

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:

// נגש מסתריס חתיית / וגרש גוז וחפשת
Psalm 80:9

You brought up a vine from Egypt / you banished nations and planted it

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:

// וגעג הבס תורב / ורוכב תבשומ תמצובר
// וᄎחבו מיר שווה / יأكلו מיר אוכב
// ומקס מיר גרהו / אתו מפי לא נחר
And he breathed 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:

// ורגד ימא אמא / ובשא ה האבאה
Psalm 116:3-4

When sorrow and pain I find / on the name of the Lord I call //

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

// אליה בכם חתיית / אל כאבשו / אלה י לרכוש / אליו תכרו אוכב
Psalm 25:2

I trust in you, my God / let me never be disappointed / nor my enemies exult over me //

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 (qīl) and prefix (yqīl) 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

// כים שמהויגהו ימי רב / תםישם ירח אבר
Psalm 92:5

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 (הנה פאר and הדר פאר are both used for “songs of gladness,”39 similarly “deeds” parallels the meaning of “creations” [or “actions”]), B’s

35. See also below, chapter 2, section 1.
36. Elsewhere תמי means “speak words of reproach,” but here it is preferable to concretize the act of speaking.
37. See A. Blommerde, Northwest Semitic Grammar and Job (Rome, 1969) pp. 34-35; also Joûon, par. 112k-m; 113h-o (pp. 300-06).
38. M. Buttenweiser understood at an early date the preceptive qīl 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.
The Parallelistic Line

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

\[
\text{ספוק נת לארח / וירא לשלט ברוח} //
\]

Psalm 111:5

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

\[
\text{אואני השמש וא,’’ב / השמש א,’’ב א,’’ב פ /}
\]

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 השמש א,’’ב. But the form is an assertion of B’s lack of parallelism, intermeshing the three verbs almost as if they were sequential. 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. Interestingly, a number of scholars have shown the use of aspectual alternations of the same root in parallel halves, e.g.

\[
\text{בראש דורות ה/בראש דורות מ/בראש דורות בס} //
\]

The floods lift up, O Lord / the floods lift up their voice / the floods lift up their roar //

Psalm 93:3

And it devoured the great depths / it devoured the ploughland //

Amos 7:4

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

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:

\[
\text{சגו,’’ו ממלכת שעמה /IMITIVE C-D /}
\]

Even if my father and mother abandoned me / still the Lord would care for me //

Psalm 27:10

one nevertheless finds the same qal-yiqtol 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 word order in parallelistic lines, e.g.

\[
\text{ל,’’ל שול,’’ת תרד,’’ / תרד,’’ת ב,’’ת ח,’’ת} //
\]

On lion and snake you tread / you crush lion-cub and serpent //

Psalm 91:13

Of course chiastic 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 chiastic 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 have noted the use of

40. Not a repointing to nōțēn but an attempt to convey intermeshing.
41. It ought to be compared to such A + B phrases as א,’’ב א,’’ב א,’’ב 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.
The Parallelistic Line

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

// הנח לשלנ נקע להשקץ את שמ뎈י איש צדовый איש צדוי
If it is given to the fire to consume / its two ends the fire will consume //
Ezek. 15:4

// ונתתי לשלנ חמש / ורוח תחפץ את צדונים
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, such as

// כל השוקים ממ崡 קרש / זה תמם אל ארץ מקוה
For he peers from the heights of Heaven / the Lord from sky to earth
looks down //
Psalm 102:20

// חתנים ש힘 הטמר / כפור כספר יזר
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:

// השופט עזרא / האל ששרש חרות רמב
Better is the little of one righteous man / than the plenty of many evil
men //
Psalm 37:16

Other times the intention is less certain:

// לה נוהי בקשת תרעה / ופל בצלילו ירש אתולה
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

// כל קרני ראש יאכדו / וה>({ למה קרנה יאכדו
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: קָרָנָה – קרנה).

// מדרת הסנה[V] מתשה /לא את חיה משנשיר
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 חוסר לשתות / וברך חכמי לא ימלך
The horse is no salvation (‘is false for saving’) / and by the might of his
force one will not escape //
Psalm 33:17

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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 זרִיב повтор; “Who fashions light and creates
darkness / makes peace and creates discord” (Isa. 45:7), with זרִיב повтор;
“Listen and hear my voice / harken and hear my speech” (Isa. 28:23), שָׁמַר
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

47. See on this F. I. Andersen, The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew (The Hague,


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

50. On this see chapter 2, section 6, on “telegraph style”; also Psalms III, p. 429,
C. W. Brekelmans in Ex Oriente Lux 17 (1963): 202–06. Note also Albright on
the alternation בֶּן יְהוָה and בֶּן הָאָדָם in Gen. 1:24–25 in “The Refrain ‘And God
The Parallelistic Line

He directs the humble into justice / and teaches the humble his way //
Psalm 25:9

2. changes from one grammatical person to another:  
// שמחון משנוקת הפרה / בל ההמבוה רדיך פ婺
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:
// אוחות שמעת המפר /レストラン רבי אהרן
But you despise (my) teaching / and cast my words behind you //
Psalm 50:17
// קם תשם את / ונכון חנה את אם
A wise son makes a father glad / but a foolish son is his mother's sorrow //
Prov. 10:1

4. prepositional alternation  
// אל השמעת תוע לודא / ולא חלמה או משמע
The eye is not satisfied with [ך] seeing / nor the ear filled up with [ט] hearing //
Eccles. 1:8

5. omission of prepositions, conjunctions, interrogative particles, negations and other particles from one clause:
// כי לא לועת שמה אבזוי / חוקת נוימה והאבר ילד
The poor will not be forgotten forever / [nor] the hope of the needy be eternally dashed //
Psalm 9:19

6. the differentiating “all”;
// כי יזר לזר / multic hah משמת במאוה
For upstanding is the Lord’s word / and all that he does [is done] in faithfulness //
Psalm 33:4

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 qal-qatal 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.

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.  


56. See W. Steinitz, FF Communications No. 115 (Helsinki, 1934). See also
parallelism in Old Turkish poetry,\textsuperscript{57} Mongolian,\textsuperscript{58} Rumanian,\textsuperscript{59} and Sanskrit.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 Sarzec 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 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.\textsuperscript{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,\textsuperscript{63} Gray and Newman adduced the resemblance of saj\textsuperscript{k} (“unmetered poetry,” sometimes rhymed, it was early on regarded as the prototype of later poetic forms)\textsuperscript{64} to biblical parallelism. D. H. Mueller had already shown the existence of bits of parallelism in the Qur’\textsuperscript{an}.\textsuperscript{65}

But it is the use of parallelism in Ugaritic texts which, because of Ugarit’s temporal (fourteenth century B.C.)\textsuperscript{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,\textsuperscript{67} all argue the close relationship of Ugaritic

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\textsuperscript{57} G. B. Gray’s discussion of the Kalevala in \textit{The Forms of Hebrew Poetry} (reprinted New York, 1972), p. 38, and Newman and Popper, \textit{Parallelism}, pp. 61–68. In that they focus on the mere fact of parallelism, 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, \textit{Linguistics and Literary Style} (New York, 1970), pp. 165–81. Note also Auerstilz on the use of parallelism in Ob-Ugric (a Finno-Ugric language) in “Ob-Ugric Metrics” \textit{Folklore Fellows Communications} 174 (Helsinki, 1958).

\textsuperscript{58} See V. M. Žirmunsky, “Ritimko-sintaksičeskij parallelizm... drevnoturkskogo” in \textit{Voprosy jazykознания} 13 (1964), p. 4.


\textsuperscript{60} I. Ionescu, “Parallelismul in lirica populara” \textit{Rezvita de etno grafie si folclor} 2, pp. 48–68.


\textsuperscript{62} 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 \textit{Mélanges A. Robert}, pp. 38–46, as well as A. M. Honeyman, “Merismus in Biblical Literature” \textit{JBL} 71 (1952).


\textsuperscript{64} Abhandlungen zur arabischen Philologie (Leiden, 1896); he already had made comparisons with Hebrew “poems” such as the Balaam oracles (p. 42).

\textsuperscript{65} See R. A. Nicholson, \textit{A Literary History of the Arabs} (London, 1930), p. 74. Sa’adya Gaon (or, more likely, one of his students) describes saj, juha, and rajaz as precursors of the poetry in the same light; see below, chapter 3, and N. Allony (ed.), \textit{Ḥešeḵ Ḥiṣn} (Jerusalem, 1968), pp. 79–81. Note also that the first chapter of Moses ibn Ezra’s treatise on poetry (Kitāb al-muhāḍara wal-mudākara) is devoted to ḫuṭba and its relation to verse. A. F. L. Beeston’s “Parallelism in Arabic Prose,” \textit{Journal of Arabic Literature} 5 (1974): 134–46, notes: “Saj in its original connotation was rhymed but not dominantly parallelistic. For the pre-Abassid period, therefore, saj and the ḫuṭba style have to be regarded as distinct phenomena” (p. 143).

\textsuperscript{66} Newman and Popper, \textit{Parallelism}, p. 102.

\textsuperscript{67} 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.

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{yn} & \text{[dn]} \text{yl \ ysh palt} / \text{bsq} \text{i yph bpalt} / \text{bs[q]} \text{l yph byglm} // \\
\text{bsq} & \text{ly[hl]} \text{q wynsq} / \text{abl an bs[q]} // \\
\text{yn} & \text{p bpalt bsq} // \text{yp} \text{e bygl ur} // \\
\text{tispk} & \text{yd qht gizr} / \text{tskt bqrbm asm} // \\
\text{ynhr} & \text{ysb akth} / \text{yp \ sbt bk[lt]} / \text{sbt yp[h]} \text{ bhmrt} //
\end{align*}
\]

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 //

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:

// ים זים חָיָה, זָרָה כְּלָלֶה שָׁרָה עִלָּה //
Psalm 42:9

By day the Lord sends forth his love / and by night his song is with me //

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.

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

69. On גָּוַה see Psalms III, p. 259. His explanation of גָּוַה as “vision” is hardly to be preferred to “song,” and cf. Psalm 119:54.
The Parallelistic Line

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

ks yindh [i] [b]yd / krpn bm [ymn] //
He takes a cup in his hand / a flagon in his (right) hand //

CTA 15 II 16–18

tḥ šṭ bbhtm / nb[l]at bḥk[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), ist-nblat (fire–flame) and bḥt-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:

//
AR ALIH AN RASH AL RUH / CARA SHUR MASHAL BASHAPI
But God will beat his enemies’ head / the [hairy?] pate of him who goes counter to him //

Psalm 68:22

ytbr ḫrn ṭrisk / ttrṭ šm bṭ qḍqdk //
May Ḫrn break your head / ttrṭ šm bṭ your pate //

CTA 16 VI 54–57

//
HAMAL HASHASHAM ANNA VALA HASTER ASHER RYU
At once I would humble their enemies / and on their foes turn my destruction //

Psalm 81:15

Mnnm b ṣp ḫb / šrt ḥrb cṛpt //
What enemy rises against B’l / foe against the Cloud-rider? //

CTA 3 IV 48

The recurrence of such pairs of words was striking to Ugaritic scholars, and 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 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

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73. 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.

74. See on this point Smith, Poetic Closure, p. 137.

75. 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. ḫṣ = ḫḥ). 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, 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,

> 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:

> 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. 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...":

> Listen O Heavens while I speak / and hear, Earth, my words // Deut. 32:1


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" 130). This is an example of the "distribution" misreading, which will be discussed in section 8. Similarly he is puzzled by Mic. 7:20, 21; 10:11 // תָּחַת דְּמוּא הָאָרֶץ // ... אל אחריו // and 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 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.

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. 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.

79. *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 synonymy 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:

//

// הבון והנהו התוים / יהל הנות ייהו
// לשבטניםinciple
// הבון והנהו התוים

‘Ada and Silla 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 kl 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 inflector 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, “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):

//

// תם הירש יבש / יבש יבש

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 kl 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 רשע (“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 מחירם (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 Ba‘alu,” in Orientalia 5 (1936): 71–72. 85. A. M. Honeymann, “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 formulæ” 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 simply indicate that they had achieved 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:

// ממלכת מלכים כולם תבל / ומשהלא תבל ור evils //
Your kingdom is a kingdom of all eternities / and your dominion is in every age //
Psalm 145:1390

// ישמחאל יступил יריב יריב / והותך אליריב //
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 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:

// דוד פתי רשבים / דוד פתי רשבים יטללו //
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 yšb / lk I[a]bk wrgm / nry lk rt adnk //
Go to your father, Yšb / go to your father and speak / repeat to Krt your lord //
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But this is only one use to which repetition is put in parallelism. Also common are repetitions with two complete thoughts, e.g.:

// ימי מי יאכי בית / וימי מי יאכי יאכיב //
Your hand, Lord, is glorious in power / your hand, Lord, crushes enemies //
Exod. 15:6

or repetitions without any intervening word:

// לפני[z]ה ימי יכ לוכסי עוזי //
Before the Lord who now approaches / now approaches to rule the land //
Psalm 96:13

yq̄ il mš’tlm / mš’tlm irìs 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:

// אנון של זהר / והפה אשר /
Where has your love gone / most beautiful of women? //
// אנון של זהר / והפה אשר /
Where has your love turned? / [Tell us] that we may look for him with you //
Song of Songs 6:1

89. PEPI, p. 10.
90. On this pair see PEPI, pp. 36–37.
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.
The Parallelistic Line

Sometimes the repetition takes place within a single clause.⁹²

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:

//  
raith יִרְאוּ אֲנָשָׁתָם יַעֲכֹב / אַהֲרֹן נַעֲשָׂא  
//  
raith יִרְאוּ אֲנָשָׁתָם יַעֲכֹב  

"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,⁹⁹ 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 formula⁹⁴ (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 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,"⁹⁷ was set forth by W. F. Albright and some of his students;⁹⁸ according to his theory, repetitive parallelism gradually gave way to paronomasia (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  // ...כתובים [. 662] etc. יָבִא עִלָּו  
Judg. 5:7  // ...כתובים [. 663] etc. יָבִא עִלָּו  
Judg. 5:12  // ...כתובים [. 666] etc. יָבִא עִלָּו  
Judg. 5:20  // ...כתובים [. 664] etc. יָבִא עִלָּו  
Judg. 5:21  // ...כתובים [. 665] etc. יָבִא עִלָּו  
Judg. 5:23  // ...כתובים [. 664] etc. יָבִא עִלָּו  
Judg. 5:24  // ...כתובים [. 666] etc. יָבִא עִלָּו  
Judg. 5:27  // ...כתובים [. 665] etc. יָבִא עִלָּו  
Judg. 5:30  // ...כתובים [. 666] etc. יָבִא עִלָּו

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

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-halfs, 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.


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.

The Parallelistic Line
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:

Vanity of vanities, says Qohelet / vanity of vanities, all is vanity //
Eccles. 1:2

It is particularly prominent in the Song of Songs, e.g.,
1:15 // אפר גרשшир / הפר גרשшир עיניך
4:8 // אחי מלכותי כל / אחי מלכותי טוביא
4:9 // демבי אתי ולא / демבי אתי מציון

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. But its distinctiveness may be explained in the other way as well: it was written in another territory, in a language akin to, but distinct from, Hebrew. 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. Conversely, the durability of certain Ugaritic elements 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. 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.

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:

אֲשֶׁר תַּעַל יַרְק / אֲשֶׁר תַּעַל בּוֹק / גִּלְּתָה רֹבֶה בֵּרָק //
יְתָדָה בֹּמָה הַל / וַתֵּמְנָה שֵׁמְנָה הָל //
יְתָדָה יֵשֶׁב / יָנֵק בֵּלֶל אֲשֶׁר / מִסָּה יַד בּזֵל //
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 ysh / who will suck the milk of Atr / nursing on the breast of the virgin (‘Anat) //

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underscores the fact that parallelizing 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, one of the lessons of Ugarit is that far too much has been

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.”


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).


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

107. See Levin, Linguistic Structures.

made of parallelism in the Bible. It is less consistent, less structural, than Lowth and his followers have implied.\textsuperscript{109}

8

One possible tactic in reading biblical parallelism is that which Theodore of Mopsuestia (fourth to fifth centuries) called “distribution.”\textsuperscript{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:

\begin{quote}
שַׁלְמָהָ בְּעָזָה בָּנָה וְרִשָּׁלָם / סַמָּאִי כָּרוּ כְּרָיו מִסְרוֹנַק שֶׁלֶם
I am black and comely, women of Jerusalem / like the tents of Qedar, like the tent-dwellings of Solomon
\end{quote}

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

\begin{quote}
לָא אֹכַל יֵהוָה כְּרָו הָעִיר אֲבָל פָּלְכָּת אֲלָחוֹן
For I know that YHWH is great / our lord is [greater] than all the gods
\end{quote}

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.”\textsuperscript{112}

S. Mowinckel, writing about Psalm 90:16

\begin{quote}
יראה אל סָלָרָע אִסְעָל / בָּרָדִי עַל בֵּיתוֹ
Let your work be shown to your servants / and your glory to their sons
\end{quote}

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.\textsuperscript{113}

Similarly, in Psalm 72:1

\begin{quote}
אַלּוֹהֵמָה מְשַׁפְּטֵי לֶמֶלֶךְ וְ/ צָרַתָּה לְבָנוֹ מֶלֶךְ
God give your statutes to a king / and your righteousness to the son of a king
\end{quote}

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’\textsuperscript{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 uncombiable, 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:

\begin{quote}
113. S. Mowinckel, PsIW 2, p. 102.
114. A bit more faithful to שלום than “works.”
\end{quote}
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.  

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:  

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{产销}
\text{杯皆非拉比.–}
\text{杯皆非拉比.–}
\text{产销}
\text{杯皆非拉比.–}
\text{产销}
\end{align*}
\]

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{产销}
\text{产销}
\text{产销}
\text{产销}
\end{align*}
\]

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 discretion” 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 “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). None of these expressions is “primitive” or “protopal.” 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, say, 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,

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\]

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. 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. 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 ḫim, usually taken as “hammer” on the basis of him, might conceivably be some other pounding or flattening instrument; יִישָׁב 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 יִישָׁב 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 יִישָׁב 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.
The Parallelistic Line

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

The text is ambiguous. If the “what’s more” is left completely unstrung, 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.”’

We are probably right to read as “additional” the Ugaritic parallelism

lqḥ imr ḏbḥ bydh / lla klatm //
He took a lamb [as] sacrifice in his hand / a kid in two hands //

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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:

[h]ty bnt ḏ ksp / ḥkly ḏtm ḥrš //
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 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:

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:

וְהָיָה נַעֲלֹתֵי נַעֲלֵי הָעָנָא / מְסִיסֵי מְסִיסֵי פְּלֵיה //
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

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.’”


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, יָרָאָה בֶּן אֲבוֹי אוֹר יְדִי, 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:

// זמר משכון וסמל / עזריה נמרדו בחוף
To bind their kings in chains / and their nobles in shackles of iron //
Psalm 149:8

// תפורם מנורא פסלי / משטרת פסי 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

// ירבד שש חותם / זמור אוסב כלתי
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

// ירוד יכ חל מפרש / והשורי איךזכרוהו
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 “qinâ” 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

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.

// יברם פסט חותנה / ואסם חותת כלתי
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 חננתי אליהם / פרשנוהו פארא כסה
You have sifted us, O Lord / you have refined us as a silver-refiner //
Psalm 66:10

or

// חיון חרטם לשבניננו / מעז עלח לשבבניינו
We have been a [source of] mockery to our neighbors / jeering and embarrassment to those around us //
Psalm 79:4

or

// כי אתת תפוקות ארצן / ומכסה ממום
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).
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. Indeed, the whole notion of syntactic, morphological, phonetic, etc. parallelism is a relatively recent critical creation, 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:

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:

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 membriurum 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, Kmsola, and A. Ehlen, "Poetic Structure of a Hadayah" (Harvard Ph.D. dissertation, 1970).
The Parallelistic Line

1. [Since] the Lord is a shepherd for me / I [will] 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 death / I fear no ill //
5. Surely you are with me / your staff and your leaning-stick are what guide me //
6. You provide me generous food in the midst of adversity / in fact you grant me comfort / abundance is my portion //
7. Only well-being and kindness pursue me / 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 qitl-qitl 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 aduced? In all, the presence of parallelism 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 parallelizing 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 nonsynonymy 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 parallelism 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

\[
\text{[Image]} / \text{[Image]}
\]

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 parallelism, which is at the heart of biblical parallelism.

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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.”
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 unintended: 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

// יברך י' מצות / וראות בזמך ירושלים כל כי יחי / May the Lord of Zion bless you / [so that] you enjoy Jerusalem's goodness / your whole life // Psalm 128:5

is a two- or three-membered verse, that is, whether we pause after וצאצא 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,

// תושם את אלוהינו / והשתתינו לאר שבע / כי קרוש י' 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:

// ישבה השמים והאזנים אין / כי תרומ / Hear heavens and listen earth / for the Lord speaks // Isa. 1:2

/ / / / והמרפ את האנשים יונתן / ואנה י' ארצה / Hear kings, listen princes / I of the Lord, oh I shall sing / Judg. 5:3

// ירבע לה פנתה הערוה והרשו / כי עלו בשתי קרמות / 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 asposed 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 parallelistic 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 // //
The Parallelistic Line

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. 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" (second, support, carry further) is abstracted to our pause sequence, adaptable to different subdivisions 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 pronominally 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:

With psalmody and trumpet-sounds / make music before the Lord the king

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

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 contain a complete thought and B consist only of a postpositional 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.

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, parallelism is not the point, but one way of reaching the point—the sense of completion provided by parallelism is as well as the other observed phenomena: actual repetitions, contrasting verbal 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 a 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's 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

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

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

// שיר לְהוֹד יִשָּׁר חוֹשֶׁן שֵׁם נְדָלָה יִשָּׁה
Sing another song of the Lord / how he has worked wonders //
Psalm 98:1

and

// שִׁיר לְהוֹד יִשָּׁר חוֹשֶׁן שֵׁם נְדָלָה יִשָּׁה
Sing another song of the Lord / sing of the Lord all the earth //
Psalm 96:1

// שִׁיר לְהוֹד יִשָּׁר חוֹשֶׁן תָּהֳלוֹת בְּקַדְשָׁה תְּפִלֵיהּ
Sing another song of the Lord / [sing] his praise in a company of the 
faithful //
Psalm 149:1

and

// שִׁיר לְהוֹד יִשָּׁר חוֹשֶׁן שֵׁם נְדָלָה יִשָּׁה
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:

// זָהָה עַשָּׁה לְכַל אֲלֵהָה / כָּל הַשָּׁמָּעַה יִצְבָּק לַי
God made me cause of laughter / all who hear will laugh at me //

// קוֹפֵי שָׁאִי אֱלֹהִים / בְּרֵאשִׁית אֶת יִרְדָּם
Come, pick up the lad / take firm hold of him //

// אֵל הֶשְׁבָּה יִרְדָּם / אֶת הַתְּנַשֶּׁה יָלֹא מַאוֹמִּת
Do not harm the boy / do nothing to him at all //

// כֶּן בֵּרֲכָה אֲבָרֹךְ / וְהָרְבָה אֲבָרֹךְ אֶת יִרְדָּם
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