

PARALLELISM

The unique structure of Hebrew Poetry is Parallelism. In western literature poetry is characterized by meter and rhyme. In Hebrew poetry meter and rhyme are for the most part absent; instead, Hebrew Poetry's distinguishing feature is Parallelism which is the balancing of thought against thought and word against word.

1. **Synonymous parallelism:** The thought of the second line repeats what has been said in the first. Because both lines mean the same, interpret them thus:

examples: Psalm 19:1

The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Psalm 49:1

Hear this, all you peoples!
Give ear, all inhabitants of the world.

2. **Antithetic parallelism:** Second line contrasts or says the opposite of the first. Often connected by the word "but".

examples: Psalm 90:6

In the morning it flourishes and is renewed,
in the evening it fades and withers.

Prov. 15:1

A soft answer turns away wrath
but a harsh word stirs up anger.

3. **Synthetic parallelism:** The second line adds to the first, leading to a logical conclusion. It completes the thought. (Usually you can ask the question.) "why"

examples: Psalm 2:2

The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the Lord and his anointed,

Psalm 55:6

And I say, "O that I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest;

4. Climactic parallelism: Merges synonymous and synthetic; thus there is repetition and development of a concept. Stair-like.

examples: Psalm 29:1-2

Ascribe to the Lord,
O heavenly beings,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name;
worship the Lord in holy splendor.

Psalm 55:12, 13

It is not enemies who taunts me-
I could bear that;
it is not adversaries who deal
insolently with me-
I could hide from them.
But it is you, my equal
my companion, my familiar friend.