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Can Parallelism in Biblical Hebrew Poetry be "Unparalleled"?

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Abstract: This study of "parallelism" in biblical Hebrew poetry has been stimulated by the recent monograph on biblical poetry by Grosser (2023). After an initial overview of the book, I summarize some of the main challenges that I encountered when trying to process the essential aspects of Grosser's novel Gestalt-based approach. Next, from my literary-structural perspective I consider a larger selection of poetic passages as examples to illustrate the salient differences in our analytical procedures and results. This comparative survey will hopefully stimulate others to take up further cognitive and stylistic explorations of this important topic which, though very well-known and documented by past and present expositions, is not without its lingering ambiguities and points of controversy, which at times significantly affect technical terminology as well as Bible interpretation and translation.
Keywords: parallelism, Gestalt theory, Hebrew poetry, literary-structural analysis, translation theory and practice.

1 *Unparalleled Poetry*: An Overview

In Part I of her informative 2023 book *Unparalleled Poetry: A Cognitive Approach to the Free-Rhythm Verse of the Hebrew Bible*, Emmylou J. Grosser presents "a preliminary description of biblical verse" as being constituted by the "line [as] the basic structural and rhythmic unit of verse" (vii, xv).[1] These elemental lineal

[1] Unless indicated otherwise, all page numbers refer to Grosser 2023. In an earlier comparative study (Wendland 2007, 2017a [see ch. 5]), I considered the subject of parallelism with reference to the monograph of Lunn (2006), which focused on word order. The most recent full-length study of parallelism in Biblical Hebrew poetry is that of

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units of variable lengths are composed from all the formal aspects of language, discerned aurally, emerge in small groupings in patterned relation to each other, and manifest a poetic free rhythm (21). Part II deals with "Gestalt principles" that make possible "the emergence of poetic structure" (viii, 69–222). These involve various interrelated "laws" that facilitate "perceptual organization" in the mental discernment and processing of the various "line-groupings" of an oral biblical Hebrew (BH) poetic text. The most fundamental notion is that of "simplicity" and its aspects of "proximity" and "similarity."[2] Other important principles are those of "symmetry" (balance, imbalance, leveling, sharpening), "continuation", and "closure".[3] Part III of the book takes up some "remaining issues", namely (un)integrated lines, rhythm, line-length constraints, the relationship between biblical prose and poetry, poetic structure and function,[4] "parallelism" in prose texts, and prophetic "elevated style" (viii–ix). A diverse

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Tsumura (2023; see also Zogbo and Wendland 2020, ch. 2). I wish to acknowledge with gratitude the helpful corrections and suggestions of my reviewers and the *Journal of Translation* editors. Any remaining errors and infelicities are my own.

[2] "The fundamental Gestalt law is simplicity: the mind tends to impose order and organization on stimuli, reducing stimuli to the 'simplest' forms possible" (Grosser 2023:78). "The Gestalt principle of proximity states that stimuli near each other tend to be grouped together" (82). "The principle of similarity states that stimuli that are similar to each other tend to be grouped together" (86). These cohesive principles operate "at the levels of both the line and the line grouping (as well as higher levels of poetic structure)" (87).

[3] "Symmetry is a specific kind of similarity: a similarity not just of components but also of their position or arrangement within a whole" (Grosser 2023:108; cf. 2021:179–181). "Symmetry creates the expectation of balance" in line pairs (or partial lines/phrases) (141–142). "Good continuation is the tendency for patterns to perpetuate themselves in the mental process of the perceiver. In verbal art, continuation is not simply repetition; it implies a change within a continuous process. Closure in perception refers to the grouping together of stimuli that form a closed figure ... [and] the expectation of nothing more" (172).

[4] Grosser asserts that "[p]arallelism—whether conceptualized as equivalence, repetition, or recurrence [this list should include the contrastive principle of difference as well]—is inadequate for addressing these key Gestalt distinctions of structure" in BH poetry (276). From a literary-structural perspective (Wendland 2017a, ch. 1–2), I would reverse this position by stating that her various Gestalt principles helpfully serve to enable the analyst to discern and interpret the diverse instances of functional equivalence in lined parallelism (not simply bi- and tri-cola) on all levels of poetic structure within a given text, including the manifold instances of "disjunctive parallelism" in the Scriptures, in prose as well as poetry (Wendland 2017b; cf. Wendland 2008).

array of biblical examples, usually shorter texts, are included to illustrate and support the points being made.

In a concerted effort then to "disentangle biblical poetry from parallelism", Grosser "affirms the centrality of the line in biblical poetry" (14, 7; see also Grosser 2021) and argues "that the phenomenon of the free-rhythm poetic line is best accounted for by viewing poetic lines in part-whole relationships of lines and line-groupings ... in two- or three-line but sometimes larger groupings (with larger context also key to patterning)" (17; also 278–279). More specifically:

> The nebulous expectation for "parallelism" in biblical poetry, along with its corollary of regular "rhythm," must be abandoned ... [and] replaced with different expectations ... lines that fit to each other in a great variety of ways (of different Gestalt principles and different aspects of language) that are heard in the emergence of contextual wholes of line-groupings and poems. ... As modern readers of biblical poetry, we must remember that biblical poetry does not consist of lines on a page. We cannot view lineation of a biblical poem as a preliminary step so that we or others can subsequently interpret and analyze it. Rather, we must actively mentally organize the emerging line and line-groupings of the poem *while* we experience and interpret them. Analysis must be subject to hearing how poems unfold aurally (300, original italics).

To reiterate for clarity, Grosser's "unparalleled", Gestalt-based proposal "for understanding poetic structure in the free-rhythm biblical versification system [is that] *lines fit to each other* in organized part-whole relationships of lines and line-groupings, *emerging aurally as they unfold in time*" (294, added italics). Thus, "structure *emerges along with* meaning and poetic effects, or, alternatively, meaning and effects *emerge along with* poetic structures" (297, original italics; see also 63–64, 217–218).

2 Challenges

The challenge facing analysts who apply this flexible methodology would appear to be twofold: (1) how to readily draw valid structural conclusions when utilizing such a temporally "emerging" auditory analytical method without at least some prior idea of the organization of the "complete" composition as a whole (161, 167, 215), e.g., with regard to Psalm 100 (226–229); and then (2) how precisely to represent the results of such an aurally-oriented, cognitive analysis and to display these in print. Indeed, one of Grosser's concluding "unresolved questions" is this: "how best to format biblical Hebrew poetry, in Hebrew and in

translation" (300).[5] It would be difficult to produce and visually display any type of structural demarcation or typographical formatting without having completed in advance a thorough, multi-level discourse analysis of the biblical source text at hand, based on the various "contextual clues" and stylistic markers embedded by the original author (editor) or orator during its initial composition. This vital, top-down procedure is occasionally acknowledged: "The organization of the whole—at any of these levels of poetic structure—informs what patterns emerge as structurally relevant" (218).

At times, however, Grosser seems to regard the whole enterprise of detailed discourse demarcation into strophes, stanzas, and larger poetic units to be unhelpful.[6] For example, she reckons that "[s]tandard approaches to poetic lineation of biblical poetry—regular rhythms and parallelism—cannot provide the lineation of Ps 23. Analyses of its overall structure have resulted in copious observations of connections within its six verses, but no common organizational framework has emerged based on them, and scarcely even a common message" (293). This would appear to beg the question: Are we to assume that a singular "common organizational framework" should be discernable in every psalm or poetic pericope? Is there no possibility of mutually compatible discourse structures, e.g., linear as well as concentric, within a well-composed literary text?

Grosser analyzes the "short yet complex poem" of Psalm 23 as a continuous sequence of lines, line-pairs, and line-groupings that apparently manifests no internal (strophic) structure (294–299). Thus "the psalm as a whole resists

[5] "'Lineation' of biblical poems ... is primarily about hearing and mentally organizing a string of words as a poetic line and organizing lines in relation to each other, not properly formatting them" (19). The question is, how can one be expected to do the former, all mentally, without at least some recourse to the latter, i.e., also applying some mode of physical text formatting.

[6] The "stanza" is "[a] unit of poetic lines organized by a specific principle or set of principles. The possibilities include alliteration, syntax, lineation, meter, arc of thought, although most familiarly in English, the end rhyme fashions a stanza. Stanzas are sequential: they are identified as such by the intervals and by the other units of lines (often isomorphic with the first stanza) before and after them. They are periodic, guiding the reader alternately through a sojourn in their organized lines, then through the suspensions of stanzaic intervals. Traditionally, they are partitioned from each other by techniques of closure, e.g., a tag in another lang., couplet or strong rhyme, refrain or envoi, proverb or aphorism, dialogue, lengthened or shortened line, or tail rhyme" (Greene et al. 2012 electronic edition [no page number available]). Grosser identifies only the "stanza" unit in BH poetry, which she defines as "a group of lines in a biblical poem that has a degree of segregation from the whole poem and/or its own integration and serves as a structural unit in the larger organization of the poem" (2023:37).

segmentation" (298), and despite the fact that "this psalm has twofold imagery—YHWH as Shepherd and YHWH as Host—it does not have a twofold structure" (297). Apparently, perceptive readers/hearers must mentally "experience" the changing and unpredictable "poetic shapes" of the text as having a "unifying and clear *unchanging message*" (299, original italics). Thus, the perceptible shifts in syntax, topic/tone, and communicative function at verses 4 and 6, marked respectively by the initial pragmatic particles גַּם and אַךְ respectively, count for little if anything in this holistic approach.[7]

In short then, one could argue that Grosser's proposed integral "line-groupings" (or "line pairs"; 111, 119, 142) themselves exhibit the poetic (figural) device of "parallelism" (as a more convenient metaphoric term of reference) in the general sense of being coordinated, whole-part sets of relatively short, demarcatable lines. These lines manifest linguistic cohesion and coherence with respect to sound and/or sense and/or syntax while functioning as discrete composite units within a literary text, oral or written. Basically, *parallelism* is a result of the intentional act of composing a text in the prevailing form of orally delineated, lined *conjuncts* (two to five cola).[8] As Grosser observes, "[s]ingle or

[7] Similarly, the clear A-B-A'-B' alternating strophic structure of Psalm 100 is not pointed out, i.e., Appeal (vv. 1–2, 4), Reason (vv. 3, 5) (Grosser 2023:226–229), despite the recognition that "it is the whole line grouping that provides the framework by which parts can be organized as lines in relation to each other" (226). In many of the larger text analyses of this book, the principle of "integrity" seems to apply to the whole more than the internal parts of a poetic composition (229); the result is that we sometimes lose clear sight of the broader structural contours of the forest since too much focus is being devoted to the individual trees (sequences of line-groupings, which are analyzed in minute detail). For example, the relatively rare analysis of a larger text, 2 Samuel 1:19–27 (161–164) overlooks the major medial break in the text at v. 23a (forming a juncture with 22cd) as well as the poem's structural focus upon Jonathan in the emotive climax of vv. 25a–27b, i.e., A (general, 25a)—B (specific Jonathan, 25b–26c)—A' (general, 27ab).

[8] This would correspond to the normal range of two to five "words" per poetic line/colon and two to five "verses" per strophe—with the norm being two or three; compare "O'Connor's Constraints" regarding the constituents in poetic lines, as restated by Turner 2023:20. In summary, my method of poetic lineation is as follows: The Masoretic Text (MT) is delineated into posited poetic lines or "cola" (i.e., utterance units, typically two to five lexical items) marked mainly by the accents *silluq* and *athnakh*, but also by *zaqeph* (e.g., נָחַלְתָּךְ in Micah 7:14b), less so by *rebiya* (בְּשִׁבְטֶךָ in 14a) and *tiphkhah* (יַעַר in 14c). Some analysts divide poetic verses into "lines" with a break only at the *athnakh*; however, often these are too long to achieve rhythmic balance when comprised of two to three cola. In any case, two to three such lines usually form a complete verse as

unintegrated lines in biblical poetry are rare; lines [i.e., cola] occur in line-groupings of typically two or three lines but sometimes more ... [and] each line emerges in relation to the other lines in its line grouping, not in relation to an abstract (external) line template" (56). But are such lines, line-pairs, and line-groupings not referring essentially to the same phenomenon as "parallelism"? Grosser would say "No", contending that

> "parallelism" does not adequately account for the relationships between biblical poetic lines, because the idea of "side-by-side" correspondences does not fundamentally fit with the part-whole nature of free-rhythm poetic lines that must emerge in relation to one another. ... [M]any aspects of biblical poetry that have been described as "parallelism" are better accounted for through perceptual symmetry. Parallelism, in contrast to symmetry, tends to conflate the related but distinct notions of balance and correspondence, and it focuses on textual patterns rather than asking how or if those patterns might be perceived. For these reasons, parallelism, unlike symmetry, is not well suited to accounting for which correspondences are likely to emerge as salient to line structure, or how poetic effects can emerge along with lines. Parallelism and symmetry may overlap in lineation, but they are fundamentally different approaches to poetic lines. A

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demarcated in the MT (with the occasional monocolon being inserted for special structural or rhetorical purposes). I would agree with the poetic principle of Hobbins (n.d.): "The dynamics of parallelism in ancient Hebrew verse may be described as follows: Prosodic, semantic, syntactic, morphological, and sonic parallelisms recurrent across versets, lines, and strophes are the chief hallmark of ancient Hebrew verse. Prosodic parallelisms alone are obligatory. The fundamental prosodic obligation is the following: a verset of two to three stress units is [generally] followed by another verset of two to three stress units, until a poem's conclusion. The obligatory parallelisms occur within the framework of the general rule."

I generally agreed with Grosser's Gestalt-based lineation (cf. xiv–xv); our infrequent differences in this respect drew my attention to make a closer examination of the Hebrew text (see section 4 below). For instance, with respect to the "long lines" of Lamentations, e.g., the final verse of 2:22, are we dealing with three lines or six (254)?

תִּקְרָאׇ כְיוֹם מוֹעֵד
מְגוּרַי מִסָּבִיב
וְלֹא הָיָה בְּיוֹם אַף־יְהוָה
פָּלִיט וְשָׂרִיד
אֲשֶׁר־טִפַּחְתִּי וְרִבִּיתִי
אֹיְבִי כִלָּם׃ פ

> "parallelistic" approach to biblical poetry cannot be simply replaced by "symmetry," but must be replaced broadly by a part-whole approach, in order to account for how lines emerge in integrated line-groupings in aural free-rhythm biblical poetry (2021:202).

From my alternative perspective, the quantitatively more, internally linked stylistic "correspondences" (artistic and rhetorical features) that these clustered utterance units exhibit, the more "parallel" and "poetic" (versus "prosaic") they will tend to be regarded by a literary analyst—or a listening audience familiar with the local lyric tradition (Wendland 1993, see ch. 3).

With respect to a key aspect of parallelism, Grosser adds that "repetition allows the listener to hear successive utterances in the midst of the repetitive discourse. But hearing utterances end is not the same as being able to consistently organize line-groupings as internally patterned wholes that have integrity" (289). Her conclusion is that "'parallelism' refers to far too many different phenomena to adequately describe either [poetic] style or structure" (292).

One might counter this critique with the same contention concerning her own set of Gestalt-based principles which are focused on the microstructure on BH poetic analysis (ch. 4–6). In my opinion, there need not be an opposition or exclusion here of one methodology in relation to the other. Rather, both approaches can complement and mutually instruct each other in the process of any given text analysis. Regarding the structuring force of repetition, I would agree with Weber's structural principles (critiqued by Grosser, 276) that

> The more often elements are repeated or the bigger the extent of repetition, the more importance should be attached to their relevance for meaning. ... The number of different levels of speech and structure involved in the recurrence has a direct bearing on the relevance of the repetition in terms of meaning (Weber 2012:177).

Similarly to Grosser, Dobbs-Allsop (2015:45) highlights the poetic line (colon) in his description of BH poetry, trying to avoid the term "parallelism" as follows: "A clausal or sentential whole (frame) is articulated and then reiterated once or twice over, producing (optimally) a halting or pulsing series of progressions—one step forward, iteration, and then another step forward, reiteration, and sometimes twice over (in the case of triplets), and so on." It is interesting that both Holmstedt (2019:630) and Grosser (2021) are averse to the notion of parallelism, but although appearing in the same journal just three

issues apart, they only superficially reference their respective articles on the subject.[9]

For his part, Holmstedt believes that his

> study indicates that a binary choice between apposition and non-apposition better explains the data and so offers us a model to investigate further in the hopes of finally displacing the troubled 'parallelism' model of BH poetic syntax. ... [W]hat defines the poetic convention is the structure of the line (à la O'Connor 1980 [1993]) and its heavy use of clausal apposition for relating those lines. ... [A]n appositional-centered approach grounds the semantics of poetry in the general study of the language, as well as any of the non-appositional relationships used to link poetic lines. This approach therefore avoids the pitfalls of parallelism, with its syntactic deficiencies and subjective semantics (2019:641).

Like Grosser (2021, with regard to Judges 5), so also Holmstedt does not seem to be very interested in the larger strophic structure of complete biblical poems (Psalms 1, 23; 2019:635–640).

It would be helpful now to examine a few more, potentially debatable poetic passages to see how Grosser's method of analysis is applied in practice.

3 Examples

One's methodology will, of course, also affect the results that one arrives at. The following is a selection of several additional discourse analyses where my literary-structural perspective, including the principle of parallelism (Wendland 2017a:184–187), differs from that of Grosser.[10] It is not a case of who is correct, or wrong, but which interpretation of a given passage seems to reflect and express the poetic style of the received text more readily and adequately, allowing, of course, also for additional alternative readings.

Psalm 103

With regard to the overall structure of Psalm 103, for example, Grosser discerns only three larger units (i.e., above the "line-groupings"): vv. 1–5, 6–18, and 19–22 (192–194, 197–200). However, the middle section has many semantic and

[9] I thank the *Journal of Translation* editor for calling my attention to these two pertinent studies.

[10] Space allows only for a partial examination of the Hebrew texts under consideration, and just a selection of some of the main issues. For an adequate comparison, the pages referenced should be studied.

structural indicators that would demarcate it into smaller poetic units, e.g., vv. 6–10, 11–13, 14–16, 17–18. She does observe that "in Ps 103, up to v. 17, every pair of lines is balanced"[11] and that "[l]ine 17a is set up as a clear contrast to v. 15a" (193), which would suggest a strophic break at this point. In conclusion, she feels that "the final line [v. 22c] is the completion of our journey with the psalmist. There is no place else to go; we need not expect anything more" (2023:200). Textually and from a Gestalt perspective, this may be true. On the other hand, does not the emphatic reiteration of praise at the beginning and ending of this psalm suggest that all worshippers, instead of ceasing, should carry on with their exuberant blessings, continuing to shout, wherever and whenever possible, בָּרֲכוּ יְהוָה (cf. Ps 104:1a)?

Exodus 34:6b–7

With reference to Exodus 34:6b–7, Grosser proposes that "[t]his is indeed an artful stretch of text, but it is not [lineated] verse poetry" (280). In contrast, I construe this to be a clearly poetic passage and would display it as shown below. Why has it been poetically marked by "parallelism" in the original through rhythmic balance, conceptual reiteration, and key-term confluence within a lineal frame? One might suggest that, as in many other texts, especially of direct discourse, this is due to its great theological and intertextual value in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Shenkel 2024 regarding Dan. 9:24–27).

[6] And [Moses] proclaimed,	6 וַיִּקְרָא׀
"Yahweh, Yahweh,	יְהוָ֣ה יְהוָ֗ה
God, [who is] compassionate and gracious,	אֵ֤ל רַחוּם֙ וְחַנּ֔וּן
slow to anger,	אֶ֥רֶךְ אַפַּ֖יִם
and abounding with loyal love and faithfulness,	וְרַב־חֶ֥סֶד וֶאֱמֶֽת׃
[7] keeping loyal love to the thousands,	7 נֹצֵ֥ר חֶ֙סֶד֙ לָאֲלָפִ֔ים
forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,	נֹשֵׂ֥א עָוֹ֛ן וָפֶ֖שַׁע וְחַטָּאָ֑ה וְנַקֵּ֣ה׀
and he does not leave utterly unpunished,	לֹ֣א יְנַקֶּ֗ה
punishing [the] guilt of fathers	פֹּקֵ֤ד עֲוֹן־אָבוֹת֙
on sons and on sons of sons	עַל־בָּנִ֣ים וְעַל־בְּנֵי־בָנִ֔ים
on third and fourth [generations]."	עַל־שִׁלֵּשִׁ֖ים וְעַל־רִבֵּעִֽים׃

[11] All this balancing and everything that it includes, I would simply call "parallelism".

Genesis 21:1

A similar instance of dealing with "the practical question of determining whether a particular passage is structured as prose or verse" (280) is Genesis 21:1, being "another example of *so-called* 'parallelism' in narrative" (285, added italics):

וַיהוָה פָּקַד אֶת־שָׂרָה כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמָר וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה לְשָׂרָה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֵּר׃

Grosser concludes that "[t]his is not a symmetrically structured whole in its narrative context, but rather it is narrative repetition" (285).[12] But one can certainly perceive poetic parallelism within the text when it is formatted—and articulated—as follows:

And Yahweh visited Sarah	וַיהוָה פָּקַד אֶת־שָׂרָה
just like he had said;	כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמָר
And Yahweh did for Sarah	וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה לְשָׂרָה
Just as he had spoken.	כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֵּר׃

Why then would this text be composed poetically—could a particular literary discourse function have something to do with it? In this case, like others in the Pentateuch, one could posit a definite pragmatic motivation of the author. Here the passage serves as a structural "aperture"—both an introductory recollection with reference back several chapters to 17:16 as well as an artistically heightened preview-summary of the following narrative proper, which begins in v. 2.

Isaiah 1:2–4

To give a somewhat different example, "the first poetic unit in Isaiah" is asserted to be 1:2–4 (241); "[t]he artistry of integration/unintegration [of this segment] is complex and contextual, and it cannot be reduced to form" (243). However, one could argue that a crucial structural break in the discourse occurs at the onset of v. 4: הֲוֹי גּוֹי חֹטֵא (literally, "Alas, nation sinning"). Whether or not this expression is interpreted as a vocative address (see v. 2; NIV, GNB) or an exclamative utterance (NLT, Evangelical Heritage Version), there is a perceptible shift in emotive intensity and perhaps also literary subgenre at this point, as marked by the initial הוֹי 'woe' (see also v. 24b, where it also signals an initial structural aperture).

[12] She adds: "In this case of so-called 'narrative parallelism,' it is essential for the listener/reader not to hear it as poetic symmetry (with a contextual function appropriate to a symmetrical line-pair of poetry) but instead, to hear it as repetition functioning within the poetics of biblical narrative" (285).

Song of Songs 1:2–4

A similar sort of noticeable disjunction within a passage is located in "the opening of the Song of Songs (1:2–4)", which is viewed as "a stanza that is balanced but not symmetrical" (243–244). The difficulty begins at v. 4, which is interpreted as the start of "a new section of the stanza" (245), a feature not reflected in most English versions. Instead, the main break in this opening poetic unit would appear to be located in the middle of the verse (4c), where a new speaker group ("Friends" of the female "Beloved" [NIV]) interrupt the discourse to laud her "Lover": נָגִילָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה בָּךְ ("Let us rejoice and be glad in you [M.SG.]!").[13] The close semantic "echoic" correspondence between cola vv. 4e and 3c is well noted (245), but I would regard this instance of disjunctive parallelism as being an indicator of structural "closure"—namely, of the strophe spanning vv. 2–4b and the choral insertion constituted by v. 4c–e.

Ezekiel 7:5–7

Grosser notes concerning the "elevated style and mixing" frequently found in the prophetic literature that "[i]n this kind of elevated discourse, the patterning of the language produces rhetorical and emotional effects, but the patterning is not organized into poetic structures of lines and integrated line-groupings" (288).[14] The example of Ezekiel 7:5–7 is given along with the conclusion that although this passage "includes distinct short phrases with much repetition and patterning of sounds and words, … the phrases do not emerge in lines within line-groupings, that is, as parts of integrated, patterned *wholes*" (288–289, original emphasis). However, this assumption would be difficult to maintain if the strict line-focused, Gestalt principles that Grosser is applying were loosened. In fact, according to my analysis the entire stanza covering 7:5–9 offers a patent display of continuous textual parallelism (ESV):[15]

[13] For a detailed examination of the different literary "voices" and reiterated segmental "refrain" indicators in the Song, see Wendland (2013:211–222).

[14] As I have noted previously, "Lunn asks why 'marked, as distinct from defamiliar[ized], word order is … seen to be more extensive in poetic discourse than in narrative. …' In addition to the two reasons proposed by Lunn, namely, 'the lack of linearity in poetic discourse' and its encoding in the form of direct speech, giving rise to the need for more new topics and focus constructions, the feature of parallelism itself is obviously a factor. Two or more lines are available for creating emotively expressive religious expression instead of just one" (Wendland 2017a:196).

[15] The endings of this stanza and the preceding unit are marked (structural "closure") by Ezekiel's judgment refrain וְיָדַעְתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה (vv. 4, 9; see also 6:5, 10, 13, 14).

[5] "Thus says the Lord GOD:	5 כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה
Disaster after disaster!	רָעָה אַחַת רָעָה
Behold, it comes.	הִנֵּה בָאָה׃
[6] An end has come;	6 קֵץ בָּא
the end has come;	בָּא הַקֵּץ
it has awakened against you.	הֵקִיץ אֵלַיִךְ
Behold, it comes.	הִנֵּה בָאָה׃
[7] Your doom has come to you,	7 בָּאָה הַצְּפִירָה אֵלַיִךְ
O inhabitant of the land.	יוֹשֶׁבֶ הָאָרֶץ
The time has come;	בָּא הָעֵת
the day is near, a day of tumult,	קָרוֹב הַיּוֹם מְהוּמָה
and not of joyful shouting on the mountains.	וְלֹא־הֵד הָרִים׃
----------[16]	
[8] Now I will soon pour out my wrath upon you,	8 עַתָּה מְקָרוֹב
	אֶשְׁפּוֹךְ חֲמָתִי עָלַיִךְ
and spend my anger against you,	וְכִלִּיתִי אַפִּי בָּךְ
and judge you according to your ways,	וּשְׁפַטְתִּיךְ כִּדְרָכַיִךְ
and I will punish you	וְנָתַתִּי עָלַיִךְ
for all your abominations.	אֶת כָּל־תּוֹעֲבוֹתָיִךְ׃
[9] And my eye will not spare,	9 וְלֹא־תָחוֹס עֵינִי
nor will I have pity.	וְלֹא אֶחְמוֹל
I will punish you according to your ways,	כִּדְרָכַיִךְ עָלַיִךְ אֶתֵּן
while your abominations are in your midst.	וְתוֹעֲבוֹתַיִךְ בְּתוֹכֵךְ תִּהְיֶיןָ
Then you will know that I am the LORD, who strikes.	וְיָדַעְתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה מַכֶּה׃

Prophetic passages

So, what distinctive kind of poetic lineation do we have on display in prophetic passages like these (see also Ezek. 7:15–22; Isa. 24:4–13; Nah. 3:1–7; Hab. 1:5–11)? Perhaps in such cases, this prominent feature could be termed "dramatic" parallelism, where the latter is understood, not with strict reference simply to bi- and tri-cola, but to a sequence of integral line (utterance) forms that are set alongside each other, one after the next, over a coherent and cohesive span of poetic discourse. In any case, whether deemed exegetically to be poetry, prose, or "poetic-prose", the practical application question for translators is: "How should we render this text stylistically in our language?"

[16] A strophic break within the larger stanza could be posited at this point in the text.

4 Application

The issue of whether we are dealing with "parallelistic" and/or Gestalt principles in the biblical literature naturally has some important implications for Scripture exegetes and translators in particular. Through the sustained application of a principled methodology, they must be able to perceive, interpret, and replicate in their work at least some of the diverse rhetorical, as well as pragmatic, functions of stylistically marked discourse. Any theoretical approach to the subject of BH poetics must also consider how "teachable" the methodology is. One wonders, for example, how many typical Bible translators or exegetes would manage to apply the following instructions:

> Just like the other segments of text we have analyzed thus far, this [poetic lineal] symmetry has the potential to unfold temporally as the active listener/reader mentally organizes the shapes of the text. That is, the structure of the text is aurally discernable in real-time processing of the verbal artistry; we do not need complex formal or structural analyses to uncover it or account for it. ... The symmetry can be mentally organized from the local patterns and shapes of the text, as it unfolds—shapes and patterns that can be further enhanced through performance of the text, whether vocal or mental. To process the symmetry ... the listener/reader must hear the shapes of the individual lines and line-groupings and how these units come together to form the shapes of larger units or stanzas (Grosser 2023:161).

One might conclude that only a highly "informed reader" (Fish 1982:49), or even a "Super-reader" (Hopkins 2007) would be able to accomplish such an interpretive task (Martin 1979:260).

5 Conclusion

Grosser's admirable exposition offers many insightful suggestions that accompany her detailed linguistic, cognitive-poetic text analyses. These reveal a great deal of helpful information, especially with reference to the underappreciated phonological dimension of the BH text. Her precise lyric lineal demarcations via Gestalt principles also serve to highlight the importance of aurality/audition (for example, 2023:15–19). Above all is her big-picture perspective (301):

> [T]he biblical poetic versification system is grounded in normal cognitive processing. This cognitive poetics approach to the biblical poetic line [and I would add, the principle of parallelism!] is able to provide a unified account of how lines emerge in diverse biblical

> poems. … How we mentally organize poetic structure affects our aesthetic experience and response to the [biblical] poems; it affects poetry's potential to move us.

On this point, we completely agree—probably also with respect to the challenge that confronts all translators and teams: How can we reproduce these artistic and emotive dimensions along with an accurate restatement of the biblical text's semantic content in a contemporary language? One way to achieve meaningful as well as natural "poetry" (or some degree of heightened, dynamic composition) in the vernacular is to adopt a comparative translation methodology that aims to reproduce a certain measure of "functional equivalence",[17] namely, through the use of genre-suitable, idiomatic, oral-aurally sensitive forms in the receptor (or "consumer") language.[18] This would make it possible for the great oratorical power and aesthetic appeal of parallelism in biblical poetry to be communicated in an appropriate as well as appreciable degree.

The aim of this article has been to encourage readers not only to critically evaluate the different perspectives, procedures, and conclusions surveyed herein, but in future also to contribute their own studied expositions of this multidimensional, ever-engaging issue.

"Parallelism, *Vivat in pace!*" (cf. Holmstedt 2019)

[17] Alternatively, "sufficient similarity", "closest correspondence", "adequate relevance", or whatever one wishes to call their methodological approach.

[18] "To preserve the variety of the original. The literary forms employed in the original text, such as poetry, prophecy, narrative and exhortation, should be represented by corresponding forms with the similar communicative functions in the receptor language. The impact, interest, and mnemonic value of the original should be retained to the greatest extent possible" (FOBAI 2017, cited in Frost 2024:92).

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