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Chiasmus

The State of the Art

Edited by
John W. Welch and
Donald W. Parry

A supplemental issue of



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Introduction

Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch

This book comprises fourteen of the papers presented at “Chiasmus: An Open Conference on the State of the Art,” held at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, on August 15–16, 2017. That date marked the fiftieth anniversary of events in Germany and Austria which soon grew into the publication of *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981), edited by John W. Welch. Generated forty years ago, that widely-cited volume with a preface by David Noel Freedman featured contributions by authors including Yehuda T. Radday, Jonah Frankel, Bezael Porten, Wilford G. E. Watson, John W. Welch, and Robert F. Smith, about chiasmus in Ugaritic, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and other literatures.

This present volume now reflects and assesses the current state of the art regarding the use of chiastic analysis in an equally wide-ranging body of languages and texts, including the Hebrew Bible, Babylonian epics, the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and even Mayan inscriptions. Overall, the academic state of chiastic affairs is productive, insightful, innovative, wide-spread, expanding, and well established. The bibliography at the conclusion of this collection lists only the most useful and reputedly recognized studies published since 1981, thus updating the bibliography found in *Chiasmus in Antiquity*. For the most comprehensive, consolidated chiasmus bibliography, together with indices, resources, and archived materials dealing with chiasmus, one can visit the non-profit website, chiasmusresources.org. In addition, videos of all the presentations and panel discussions from this 2017 conference, including all

but two of the papers contained in this volume, are conveniently posted on <https://chiasmusresources.org/chiasmus-open-conference-state-art>.

The papers from this conference feature detailed textual analyses, striving to identify inverted structures and seeking for meanings that can be derived from these features of these texts. The articles in the main part of this book, “Textual Analyses: Structures and Meanings,” explore many uses of chiasmus in Genesis (with contributions by Gary A. Rendsburg and Steven R. Scott), Leviticus (Jonathan Burnside), Deuteronomy (Bernard M. Levinson), Isaiah (Donald W. Parry), and Jeremiah and Deuteronomy (David Rolph Seely); in the Book of Mormon (papers by John W. Welch and Noel B. Reynolds); in the Gospels of Matthew (H. Douglas Buckwalter) and John (Wayne Brouwer); and in Mayan texts (Kerry Hull).

The second part of this book, “Criteria: Findings and Reflections,” adds three studies dealing with past and current criteria used in determining the presence of chiasmus (Neal Rappleye), in measuring intentionality (Boyd F. Edwards and W. Farrell Edwards), and in functionally analyzing ideas, words and phrases in macro-chiasms (Stephen Kent Ehat).

The following synopsis introduces this fascinating collection and also gives a current sense of the present state of academic uses of chiasmus, why it is used, how it is judged, when it is recognized, and what insights it yields.

Textual Analyses: Structures and Meanings

Gary A. Rendsburg, “Chiasmus in the Book of Genesis,” examines three sweeping chiastic structures in the following Ancestral Narratives of the text of Genesis—Abraham (Gen 11:27–22:24), Jacob (Gen 25:19–35:22), and Joseph (Gen 37–50). For each of the three structures, Rendsburg points out the various elements that constitute the chiasmus—the focal point and the mirrored elements that exist on each side of that focal point. Mirrored elements include both narrative themes and specific lexical items. The three chiastic structures are identified and developed in Rendsburg’s book *The Redaction of Genesis*. In this 2017 proceeding, Rendsburg presents new material, arguing that the major themes of the focal points of the three chiasms for the Ancestral Narratives are, respectively, the covenant (Abraham Cycle), the land of Caanan (Jacob Cycle), and the people of Israel (Joseph Cycle). The same three major themes, proffers Rendsburg, create the essential message of the Hebrew Bible.

Steven R. Scott, “Chiastic Structuring in the Genesis Flood Story: The Art of Using Chiasm as an Effective Compositional Tool for Combing

Earlier Chiastic Narratives,” argues contrary to David Wenham, who argued that the presence of a chiastic structure for the whole of the flood story points to the story being composed by a single author, that careful structural analysis of the text actually upholds the two-source theory. He finds evidence for two chiastic structures created independently by the Yahwist (J) and Priestly (P) authors, which were later combined by a Redactor (R). He concludes that chiasm as a compositional device was well known by the authors of the various elements of Genesis, and such knowledge aided the final editor(s) to combine effectively two authoritative traditions into a virtually seamless whole while remaining faithful to both.

Jonathan Burnside, “Exegesis or Eisegesis: Does Chiastic Analysis Help Us to Understand Leviticus 20?” argues that a chiastic structure not only governs Lev 20 but reveals several complexities in the text. “In fact, Lev. 20 is characterized by a high degree of internal structure, even by the standards of biblical law.” The key to comprehending the chiastic structure of Lev 20 is to recognize the various penalties that are attached to proscribed acts, especially those of a sexual category. The penalties, introduced with various formulas, for example, “shall be put to death,” “shall be cut off,” plus others, are exacted by human agents (see vv. 2, 9–16, 27) or by God (see vv. 3–6, 17–21). The chiasm’s center in Lev 20 consists of verses 10–16, which sets forth six complex “binary oppositions,” such as adultery “outside family/inside family”; “heterosexual intercourse/homosexual intercourse”; and prohibited sex “man initiates/woman initiates.” After explaining several purposes for the use of chiasmus in Lev 20, Burnside affirms that “all claims regarding the existence of chiasmus must overcome the charge that the argument is rather more a matter of eisegesis rather than exegesis.”

Bernard M. Levinson, “At the Intersection of Scribal Training and Theological Profundity: Chiasm as an Editorial Technique in the Primeval History and Deuteronomy,” argues that ancient Israelite scribes were gifted writers who “were well-trained in a wide range of technical devices associated with the composition, copying, transmission, editing, collation, revision, reworking, and interpretation of texts.” Such individuals were not only scribes; they were also to some degree editors and authors who reworked texts using a number of literary techniques and strategies, including the figure of chiasm. To emphasize the scribes’ abilities to transform ancient traditions and earlier texts, Levinson presents four case studies: “1: Narrative Complexity in the Primeval History (Genesis 1 and 6);” “2: Integrating Law and Narrative

(Deuteronomy 11:32 and 12:1)”; “3: Deuteronomy’s Renewal and Transformation of Israelite Religion (Deut 12)”; and “4: Reimagining the Nature of Divine Justice (Deuteronomy 7:9–10).” Rather than examining chiasms merely in static or aesthetic terms, Levinson explores these literary figures to determine what they “can tell us about the compositional history of a text: how it came to be written or edited.” He sums up, “The chiasm thus is more than simply a technical scribal device; in the skilled hands of the editors of ancient Israelite literature, the device was also an agent of the theological imagination, literary and religious creativity, and cultural change.”

Donald W. Parry, “Chiasmus in the Text of Isaiah: MT Isaiah versus the Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a),” examines textual variants in sixteen randomly selected chiasmic structures in the book of Isaiah. His objective is to determine whether textual variants belonging to 1QIsa^a or the Masoretic Text (MT) of Isaiah impact the structure or clarity of one or more of the particular chiasmic elements in each example of chiasmus. He concludes that many of these variants are consequential, consisting of various content words, changes, pluses, and minuses; other variants are minor and pertain to conjunctions, articles, prepositions, the paragogic *nûn*, the directional *hê*, and the like. Furthermore, some of the variants are identifiable as scribal errors (e.g., haplography, harmonization, dittography, confusion of graphic sets, plus others), while one is a well-known euphemism, and several constitute indeterminate readings. In sum, it becomes evident that ten of the sixteen structures present textual variants that impact the clarity and significance of the chiasmus.

David Rolph Seely’s paper, “Chiasmus in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah: ‘With strong hand and with outstretched arm’ (Deuteronomy 4:34); ‘With outstretched hand and with strong arm’ (Jeremiah 21:5),” examines instances of chiasmus and inclusio—both of which deal with the principle of repetition—in the texts of Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. Seely provides multiple examples of how these two literary techniques interplay in these scriptural texts. A famous example is in Deuteronomy, “with strong hand and with outstretched arm” (Deut 4:34), which is inverted, creating a chiasmus, in Jeremiah, “With outstretched hand and with strong arm” (Jer 21:5). Seely finds four distinctive categories of chiasmus in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah: “1. Chiasmus of the Speaker; 2. Chiasmus in the Position of Completing a Unit of Text; 3. Particles Create Semi-chiasmus in Middle Two Cola of 4-Cola Units; and 4. Occurrence of Rhetorical Questions in the Middle of a Chiasmus.” After presenting examples of these four categories in the Bible, Seely

demonstrates the presence of the same four types of chiasms in the Book of Mormon, a text that can be read productively in conjunction with the words of Jeremiah.

John W. Welch, “Narrating Homicide Chiastically: Why Scriptures about Killings Use Chiasmus,” examines eight chiastic structures that pertain to homicides—three legal texts and five homicide narratives. The legal texts include “The Case of the Blasphemer (Leviticus 24:13–23)” and “The Law of Homicide (Numbers 35).” The narratives include “Abimelech’s Killing of Seventy of His Brothers (Judges 9:56–57);” “The Case of Phinehas (Numbers 25);” and “The Slaying of Laban (1 Nephi 4:4–27).” Welch concludes that these eight structures assist readers in recognizing the broader context of each homicide passage and “to discern the key central point on which the case turns.” Welch’s paper also contributes on a further level by cataloguing thirteen possible reasons why authors employed chiasmus when narrating a homicide. These purposes include, “propelling logic and persuasiveness,” “creating order,” “restoring equilibrium,” “processing circumstances,” “probing relevancy,” and “reinforcing memory.”

Noel B. Reynolds, “Chiastic Structuring of Large Texts: Second Nephi as a Case Study,” reviews the work of scholars regarding rhetorical criticism in biblical studies, especially with regard to rhetorical structures that give prominence to parallelism and repetition. Many structures consist of large chiasms that contain subordinate units (smaller, inner chiasms or extended parallelisms of some form), and these subordinate units, in turn, “may contain their own subordinate units.” According to some scholars, these formations may be composed of eight levels, especially when one considers corresponding philological or grammatical elements. After reviewing biblical rhetorical criticism, Reynolds examines, as a case study, the book of 2 Nephi in the Book of Mormon. He demonstrates that this book features one macro-chiasm with thirteen subunits labeled, A-B-C-D-E-F-G-F’-E’-D’-C’-B’-A’. Each of the subunits, in turn, consists of smaller subordinate units, some of them demarcated with repetitive units, such as *inclusio*. Reynolds then focuses on the pivotal G element, constituting 2 Nephi 11:2–8, which is Nephi’s witness of Jesus Christ.

H. Douglas Buckwalter, “Jesus and the Roman Centurion (Matthew 8:5–13): A Window to Chiasmus and Apostolic Pedagogy,” examines Matthew’s account of Jesus Christ’s interaction with the Roman centurion (Matt 8:5–13). Buckwalter finds that this account consists of a six-part chiasmus—an A-B-C-C’-B’-A’ structure—with the centurion’s “great faith” serving as the focal point. This six-part chiasmus, Buckwalter

observes, is placed in the greater context of Matt 8:1–11:1, which consists of nine miracle episodes set in clearly demarcated structures, with the narrative of the centurion and his servant being the second of the nine miracles. Buckwalter concludes that his study contributes “in five ways to understanding apostolic pedagogy in relation to structured text,” namely (1) the apostle’s teachings were designed to be understood by lay persons; (2) the text’s structure was created to facilitate memorization by individuals who lacked their own personal scriptures; (3) the text’s structure was designed to provide practical lessons to its readers; (4) memorization of the apostles’ writings allowed Christians to possess God’s word in various parts of the known world where written texts were rare or even nonexistent; and (5) memorization of the text would have encouraged Christians to take God’s word “to heart” and to apply it to one’s life.

Wayne Brouwer, “The Chiasmic Structure of the Farewell Discourse in the Fourth Gospel,” examines the parallel and repetitive elements of John 13–17, which form a macro-chiasm. The chiasm’s pivotal point is Jesus’s Discourse of the Vine and the Branches, with the repeated expression *abide in me*. Recognition of this pivotal point provides a better comprehension of the remaining parts of the macro-chiasm. For example, the mirrored elements “foot washing scene” (13:1–35) and Jesus’s Intercessory Prayer (17:1–26), are both to be “understood as parallel explications of the central theme: ‘Abide in me!’” Brouwer’s presentation comprises a new understanding of the Farewell Discourse which strives to solve several certain scholarly challenges.

Gabriella Gelardini, “From ‘Linguistic Turn’ and Hebrews Scholarship to *Anadiplosis Iterata*: The Enigma of a Structure,” uses scholarship about the Epistle to the Hebrews as a case study amid the broader history of linguistics and hermeneutics. Building on three key insights developed by Hebrews scholars—concentric structures, homiletic forms, and covenant theology—this paper shows that argumentation in Hebrews operates at a concentric macro-structural level, while its thoughts unfold as concentric circles or symmetries at the micro-structural level. This result helps readers to appreciate the bi-level elegance of the Epistle to the Hebrews, to draw meaningful connections between and comparisons with sister paragraphs, and to understand this important New Testament text as a coherent whole. Methodologically sound, this study shows how Hebrews scholars today can enlist chiasmus as an effective tool of literary-rhetorical analysis.

Kerry Hull, “Mirrored Poeticity: Chiastic Structuring in Mayan Languages,” demonstrates that Mayan hieroglyphic texts feature various poetic devices, including parallelisms and coupleted forms. According to Hull, “parallelism forms the rhetorical backbone for Mesoamerican indigenous poetry.” Ancient, indigenous Maya authors and scribes also employed chiasmus, a form that features parallel lines. Hull establishes that “ancient Maya scribes incorporated chiasmus into hieroglyphic texts and particular moments of emphasis as a means of highlighting key narrative events.” In fact, these scribes engaged in “rhetorical stacking,” meaning they employed multiple rhetorical components into larger poetic units, including large, developed chiastic structures. Poetic devices and rhetorical forms that are attested in the Late Classic period, circa 250 to 900 CE, continued to thrive during the colonial period, and these forms persisted into Modern Mayan writings and languages.

Other papers and the panel discussions presented at the August 2017 gathering can be viewed on <https://chiasmusresources.org/chiasmus-open-conference-state-art>. For example, the every elaborate and erudite presentation given by George Mlakuzhyil, S.J., “Chiasmus in the Gospel of John,” examined various literary and rhetorical elements in John’s Gospel, including numerous chiastic structures, as he revisited and updated his monumental volume, *The Christocentric Literature Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, *Analecta Biblica* 117 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1987). Allowing room for multiple criteria, Mlakuzhyil’s intricately interwoven graphical presentation samples many chiastic/concentric structures of all sizes within the overall Christocentric literary drama of the Gospel according to John. For example, the larger units include John 2–4, John 5–10, and John 18–20, while other units such as John 13–17 consists of a “concentric structure,” and the introduction (John 1:1–2, 12) and conclusion (John 20:30–31) are chiastically organized into an A-B-C-C’-B’-A’ pattern.

Criteria: Findings and Reflections

In part 2 of this volume, three final contributions deal with issues regarding the criteria to be used in identifying and evaluating proposed chiastic structures. Neal Rappleye’s “Chiasmus Criteria in Review” should become a standard resource for comparing and coalescing the main scholarly attempts to create standards or criteria for determining the chiastic qualities and “merits”—what may be called the “chiasticity”—of any proposed chiasm. He conveniently charts and meticulously

examines mainly the writings of ten scholars—Nils Lund (1942), David Clark (1975), Craig Blomberg (1989), Ian Thomson (1995), John Breck (1994), John Welch (1995), Mark Boda (1996), David Wright (2004), David Dorsey (1999), James Patrick (2016)—who have presented sets of criteria. Lund, for example submitted seven “laws governing chiastic structures,” Clark introduced five “criteria types,” and Welch presented a list of fifteen criteria, which include *objectivity*, *purpose*, *boundaries*, *density*, *mavericks*, plus others. While no precise consensus exists regarding the conceptual formulation of such criteria, six most commonly agreed factors have emerged. Rappleye identifies them as: “1. Chiasms should conform to natural literary boundaries. 2. A climax or turning point should be found at the center. 3. Chiasms should display a relatively well-balanced symmetry. 4. The structure should be based on major keywords, phrases, or themes. 5. Chiasms should manifest little, if any, extraneous repetition or divergent materials. 6. The chiastic order should typically not compete with other strong literary forms.”

Boyd F. Edwards and W. Farrell Edwards, in their “Truth or Cherry Picking: A Statistical Approach to Chiastic Intentionality,” use a statistically-based methodology for determining chiasmus created by authorial intent as opposed to the existence of “inadvertent” chiasms. As a case in point, they examine a “chiastic” structure from a physics abstract that has an A-B-C-D-E-E’-D’-C’-B’-A’ pattern, which mirrors the elements *flow*, *chemical reaction fronts*, *propagation*, *solutions*, and *gaps*. But on closer look, other repeated content words also exist in the abstract that were ignored, such as two additional occurrences of *flow*, the double attestation of *direction*, and the existence of *advects* and *advection*, which disarrange the mirrored lines. There was no authorial intent to create this particular chiasm and “cherry picking” content words thus creates falsifiable chiasms. Edwards and Edwards summarize that “ignoring elements that do not fit the form gives misleading chiastic patterns and meaningless statistical results, and can lead to false conclusions regarding intentionality. Including these elements gives truthful chiastic patterns, valid statistical results, and reliable conclusions regarding intentionality.”

Stephen Kent Ehat, “The Roles of Words, Phrases, and Ideas in Macro-Chiasms,” examines the capacity and function of words and ideas in scriptural chiastic structures. As test cases, he examines several large chiasms—in Psalm 23; the entire book of Genesis; Leviticus 24:13–23; Ezekiel 20:3–31; Luke’s Travel Narrative (Luke 9:51–19:27) in the New Testament; and Alma 36 in the Book of Mormon. His objective

is to shed “light on the interrelated roles that words, phrases, and ideas play in chiasitic analysis.”

Concluding this volume is a bibliography listing the main works cited in this volume along with other numerous significant books and articles dealing with chiasmus that have appeared since the publication of *Chiasmus in Antiquity* in 1981. This bibliography distills the much longer bibliographic catalogue found on the web at <https://chiasmusresources.org/chiasmus-bibliography>. Dedicated efforts in working on these bibliographies by many assistants, including Neal Rappleye, Tyson Yapias, Jared Riddick, and Daniel McKinlay, are very gratefully acknowledged. This book then concludes with a list of contributors to this volume, as well as an index of primary texts cited and analyzed, and an index of authors and subjects discussed herein.

Where Might the Art of Chiastic Studies Go from Here?

What might come next? From the early nineteenth century through much of the twentieth century, chiastic studies focused primarily on identifying, outlining, and classifying chiasms in ancient literature. Indeed, the main focus of *Chiasmus in Antiquity* was “defining and demonstrating the presence of chiasmus in selected ancient literatures” (15). In recent decades, chiasmus scholarship has firmly established the use of this literary phenomena and methodologies have now moved much farther beyond only identifying chiastic structures toward probing why a writers, scribes, or redactors would have chosen to use this particular literary form rather than other narrative forms. One wonders more intently, how does chiastic construction add meaning, understanding, and context to narratives, laws, rituals, or sacred expressions? What can be learned from a text as a result of its chiastic structures that would be missed if this feature were overlooked? Why and how is the presence of chiasmus in a text significant?

In recent years, scholars and investigators have developed multiple academic tools and digital resources that no doubt will impact future chiastic studies significantly. Such resources, now becoming quite readily available for most bodies of literature, include fully integrated and computerized collection of texts. These reference libraries for the Hebrew Bible, for example, are tagged to reveal morphological, lexical, or grammatical elements, and with tagged texts, users can search very specific content, including inflected or lexical forms, lemmas, verbal aspects, and grammatical parts of speech. Some tagged texts allow users

to identify linguistic components, such as vocatives, suffixal endings, exclamations, paragodic forms, subjects and predicates, and so forth. Researchers can define and limit searches by the range of texts (e.g., search literary units, pericopes, parallel or synoptic texts), and search options allow users to design sophisticated word or phrase searches for all or selected forms of any words, including wildcard searches. Computerized digital resources also permit users to create charts based on word attestations or groupings, to aid in determining syntactical relationships and in conducting collocation studies. For example, users can now parse or diagram particular texts in order to determine word or phrase groupings and their functions within respective pericopes. Such breadth and detail is only one way in which future investigations will certainly require and afford greater specificity and sophistication.

Massive electronic databases now also enable researchers to access texts in ways not possible through other means. Linguistic comparisons across large bodies of diverse literatures allow scholars who are conducting chiasmic studies to ascertain individual word frequencies and to identify rare vocabulary combinations that may bear on conclusions regarding relationality and intentionality in arrangements pertinent to their literary studies. Preliminary efforts have also been made to use matrix theory to chart word placements in order to display graphically repetitive patterns that may aid in the detection or confirmation of proposed chiasmic structures.

Bibliographies are now readily available which can be linked to books and articles accessible online. As in every academic pursuit, these resources will greatly facilitate comparative studies, visual inspection of previous graphic portrayals, and awareness of novel approaches that one had not even thought of entertaining. For example, many creative and imaginative applications of the idea of concentric literary patterns or inverted word orders spring to mind. As this book's bibliography shows, chiasmus has been pressed into service in comparing competing methods of historical and modern literary criticism (Baden), appreciating the art and meaning of narrative and prose (Bar-Erfrat, Boers, Breck), identifying poetically parallel word pairs (Barney), detecting inverted quotations (Beentjes), explaining theological reversals (Beker, Bilbro), sensing rhetorical dynamics, strategy, and cohesion (Berlin, Bliese, Ceresko), distinguishing sources from redactions (Branick), recognizing numerological arrays (Christian), explicating spiritual themes and conflicts (Clarke), as well as guiding translators (Zogbo), inspiring

worshippers (Wolfe), and in musing about the place of chiastic inversions “in social interactions, cultural creation and, more generally, human thought and experience” (Wiseman and Paul, 1)—to name only a few such ingenious applications found in various entries at the beginning and ending of the selected bibliography in the back of this book.

All of these new and expansive results affirm that studies utilizing chiasmus continue to yield good results. Of course, refinements and course corrections will always be needful, but going forward now with a developed sense of consensus regarding controlling criteria for the identification of chiastic patterns, scholars can be confident as they continue to advance well-reasoned interpretations that take cognizance of chiasmus. With thanks to many workers and supporters at BYU Studies, Book of Mormon Central, and our 2017 conference host Brigham Young University, the authors of the diverse studies found in this volume hope to have added to the scholarly momentum of this well marked line of reasoning and remarkable field of vision.

Chiasmus in the Book of Genesis

Gary A. Rendsburg

Introduction

Since I have published a detailed discussion on the subject announced in the title of this article, the present essay will provide only a summary of my earlier work, with ample key illustrations. My earlier treatment may be found in chapters 2, 3, and 5 of my book *The Redaction of Genesis* (1st ed., 1986; 2d ed., 2014).¹ As indicated, in what follows, I rehearse that material here, though for the sake of simplicity, I do not footnote each individual discussion.

Put simply, large-scale chiasmus may be seen in the three main cycles of the Ancestral Narratives in the book of Genesis: (1) The Abraham Cycle (Gen 11:27–22:24); (2) The Jacob Cycle (Gen 25:19–35:22); and (3) The Joseph Story (Gen 37–50). Earlier scholars, such as Umberto Cassuto, Nahum Sarna, and Yehuda Radday, had detected hints of the chiasmus in the Abraham cycle, though no one had developed a full study.² Michael Fishbane receives the credit for identifying chiasmus in the Jacob cycle, and my analysis thereof is indebted to him throughout.³ Prior to my observations about the Joseph story, however, no one had recognized the same literary structure operative there as well.⁴

In each of these three main sections of the book of Genesis, a series of episodes unfolds, the narrative reaches a focal point or pivot point,⁵ and then the parallel episodes unfold in reverse order. Moreover, for each of the matching units, one finds a series of lexical items which serve to solidify the connections inherent in the shared themes.

I. The Abraham Cycle (Genesis 12–22)⁶

The outline of the Abraham cycle is presented in figure 1:

Figure 1: The Abraham Cycle (chs. 12–22)

- A Genealogy of Terah (11:27–32)
- B Start of Abram’s Spiritual Odyssey (12:1–9)
- C Sarai in foreign palace; ordeal ends in peace and success;
 Abram and Lot part (12:1–13:18)
- D Abram comes to the rescue of Sodom and Lot (14:1–24)
- E Covenant with Abram; Annunciation of Ishmael (15:1–16:16)
- Focal Point: 17:1–5: Abram > Abraham | Elohim introduced | covenant*
- E’ Covenant with Abraham; Annunciation of Isaac (17:1–18:15)
- D’ Abraham comes to the rescue of Sodom and Lot (18:16–19:38)
- C’ Sarah in foreign palace; ordeal ends in peace and success;
 Abraham and Ishmael part (20:1–21:34)
- B’ Climax of Abraham’s Spiritual Odyssey (22:1–19)
- A’ Genealogy of Nahor (22:20–24)

Five units, labeled A through E, comprise the first half of the Abraham cycle. Throughout these episodes, (a) the patriarch is called Abram; (b) God is referred to as YHWH ; and (c) the word *bərit* “covenant” is mentioned only once, in the voice of the narrator (15:18). As we reach the focal point of the narrative in 17:1–5, our attention is drawn to further developments of these three key elements: (a) Abram’s name is changed to Abraham (v. 5), and he will be called such for the remainder of his life; (b) the word Elohim “God” is introduced (v. 3), and the term will appear alongside YHWH for the remainder of the Abraham cycle; and (c) the covenant concept is elucidated in great detail, with the word *bərit* “covenant” occurring now in the voice of God (2x in the focal point verses, and 13x altogether in ch. 17). Five matching units, labeled E’ through A’, comprise the second half of the Abraham cycle, with the themes and motifs of A and A’, B and B’, etc., aligning. To further solidify the connections between two corresponding units, the text uses the same, similar, or like-sounding lexical items.

To demonstrate this last point, I elect to use the two matching units B and B’, especially since they constitute two well-known episodes within the Abraham cycle. In the first unit, B = 12:1–9, God commands Abram to leave his ancestral home and journey to Canaan. In the second unit, B’ = 22:1–19, God commands Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. The

following themes, motifs, and lexical items serve to highlight the correspondence between B and B':

1. 12:1–3 God speaks to Abram for the first time.

22:16–18 God speaks to Abraham for the final time.

NOTE: Several more stories concern Abraham (ch. 23, the death of Sarah and Abraham's purchase of a burial site in Hebron; ch. 24, the procurement of a bride for Isaac; ch. 25, Abraham's sons [vv. 1–6] and the death and burial of Abraham [vv. 7–11]), but 22:16–18 represent God's final words to Abraham.

2. 12:1 לֵךְ-לָךְ *lek laka* "go forth"

22:2 לֵךְ-לָךְ *lek laka* "go forth"

NOTE: These are the only two places in the entire Bible where this key phrase occurs.

3. 12:1 "to the land that I will show you"

22:2 "to the land of Moriah . . . which I will point-out to you"

NOTE: In both cases, Abra(ha)m is unaware of the specific destination of his journey.

4. 12:1 "from **your** land, and from **your** birthplace, and from the house of **your** father"

22:2 "**your** son, **your** favorite, whom **you** love, Isaac"

NOTE: Note the three-fold use of **you/your** in both passages.

5. 12:6 Abram's journey takes him to the terebinth of **Moreh**.

22:2 Abraham's journey takes him to the land of **Moriah**.

NOTE: The two toponyms alliterate with each other, albeit at a distance of ten chapters.

6. 12:7 "And he built there an altar to YHWH"

22:9 "And Abraham built there the altar"

NOTE: True, Abram builds an altar in 13:18 as well, but the construction of the two altars at Moreh (12:7) and at Moriah (22:9) serve as a nexus between the two scenes nonetheless.

7. 12:3 "And all the families of the earth shall be blessed through you"

22:18 "And all the nations of the earth shall be blessed through your seed"

NOTE: Only in these two passages in the Abraham cycle does God speak in such fashion to Abra(ha)m (though see also 18:18).

8. 12:6 "the place of Shechem" (*maqom šakem*)

22:6 / 22:3 "the place" (*maqom*) + "and he arose" (*wayyaškem*)

NOTE: The two words of 12:6 within the B unit echo in two separate verses within the B' unit (vv. 3 and 6).

9. 12:7 “and YHWH appeared to Abram” . . .
 “to YHWH who appeared to him”
 22:14 “YHWH of Appearance” (*YHWH-yir’ē*) . . .
 “on the mount of YHWH who appeared”

NOTE: God also appears to Abraham in 17:1 and in 18:1, with the use of the same verb (Niph‘al of הֵרָא *r-’-h*), but the double usage of the verb in 12:7 and 22:14 highlights the nexus between these two passages.⁷

10. 22:9 Abram journeys to the Negev.
 22:19 Abraham journeys to Beer-sheva.

NOTE: Beer-sheva is the largest city in the Negev region of southern Israel.

11. 12:1–9 The story unfolds in two stages.
 22:1–19 The story unfolds in two stages (see v. 15 *šēnit*).

NOTE: In unit B, Abram journeys from Harran to Shechem (vv. 1–7), and then again to the area of Ai and Bethel and thence to the Negev (vv. 8–9). In unit B’, there are two stages to the story, with two sets of divine speeches, as indicated by the word *šēnit* (v. 15), before Abraham journeys to Beer-sheva (v. 19).

12. 12:8 וַיֵּצֵא wayya ‘*teq* “and he proceeded”
 22:9 וַיִּקְדַּב wayya ‘*aqod* “and he bound”

NOTE: This pair of words constitutes one of the best examples of long-range alliteration in the Bible. The like-sounding lexemes cannot be present in the story coincidentally, but must have been selected quite purposefully, as one final item to enhance the interrelationship between the two episodes. I make this claim based on the rarity of both vocables. The former verb *wayya ‘teq* “and he proceeded” occurs only here in Gen 12:8 and (as a clear echo) in Gen 26:22. The root ‘*t-q* occurs twelve other times in the Bible, with a range of meanings, among which are three additional instances of the Hiph‘il stem (Prov 25:1, Job 9:5, 32:15), though with different connotations. The latter verb, *wayya ‘aqod* “and he bound,” from the root ‘*q-d*, is a *hapax legomenon* in the Bible, used here instead of the common root *q-š-r* “tie, bind” (see, e.g., Gen 38:28, Josh 2:18, 2:21, Job 39:10, etc.).

To my mind, the overarching chiastic structure of the Abraham cycle bespeaks a single authorial hand for Gen 12–22. The series of linkages which yoke the individual scenes to one another, as demonstrated here for units B and B’, only confirms that conclusion. This approach of literary unity stands in contrast to those scholars who divide the Abraham narrative into three separate sources (‘J’, ‘E’, ‘P’).⁸ For the specific case of units B and B’, note that most scholars assign the main portion

of Gen 12:1–9 to the ‘J’ source⁹ and all or most of Gen 22:1–19 to the ‘E’ source.¹⁰ And yet, one wishes to know, how is it possible, according to this theory, that two separate authors used the same words, themes, motifs, etc., which coincidentally ended up as the crucial scenes in the book of Genesis bracketing God’s relationship with Abra(ha)m? The approach utilized here, which analyzes sustained narratives as narrative wholes, is much to be preferred.

II. The Jacob Cycle (Genesis 25–35)¹¹

We now turn our attention to the Jacob cycle, for which see figure 2:

Figure 2: The Jacob Cycle (chs. 25–35)

- A Oracle sought, struggle in childbirth, Jacob born (25:19–34)
- B Interlude: Rebekah in foreign palace, pact with foreigners (26:1–34)
- C Jacob fears Esau and flees (27:1–28:9)
- D Messengers (28:10–22)
- E Arrival at Haran (29:1–30)
- F Jacob’s wives are fertile (29:31–30:24)
- Focal point: 30:22–25: Rachel gives birth, Jacob decides to return to Canaan*
- F’ Jacob’s flocks are fertile (30:25–43)
- E’ Flight from Haran (31:1–54)
- D’ Messengers (32:1–32)
- C’ Jacob returns and fears Esau (33:1–20)
- B’ Interlude: Dinah in foreign palace, pact with foreigners (34:1–31)
- A’ Oracle fulfilled, struggle in childbirth, Jacob becomes Israel (35:1–22)

As with the Abraham cycle, so here with the Jacob cycle: we observe a chiasmic structure which builds from the beginning of the narrative to the pivot point, and which then “unwinds” (for lack of a better term) from the pivot point to the end of the narrative. Six units, labeled here A through F, recount the first half of the story, including the story of Jacob’s birth, his dealings with Esau, the journey to Aram, his settling there, and his life there. The focal point at 30:22–25 describes Rachel’s giving birth to Joseph (after the period of her extended barrenness) and Jacob’s concomitant decision to return to the land of Canaan. As the narrative recounts the second half of the story, six additional units follow, labeled here A’ through F’, including Jacob’s preparations for the return home, his return journey, his reunion with Esau, and the eventual arrival

in Canaan. As we saw above in the Abraham cycle, here as well: to highlight the connections between two corresponding units, the text uses the same, similar, or like-sounding lexical items, alongside the matching themes and motifs.

To illustrate this last point, I elect to use the two matching units C and C', the two scenes in which Jacob and Esau take center stage.

1. 27:18–29 Jacob deceives Isaac (and Esau).

33:1–2 Jacob plans to deceive Esau.

NOTE: No further comment is needed.

2. 27:41–45 Jacob fears Esau.

33:1–8 Jacob fears Esau.

NOTE: Again, the parallel is obvious.

3. 28:5 Jacob flees Canaan.

33:18 Jacob returns to Canaan.

NOTE: Once more, an extended comment is unnecessary here.

4. 27:18–29 Jacob steals the *bəraka* “blessing” from Esau.

33:11 Jacob presents Esau with a *bəraka* “gift.”

NOTE: The key noun *bəraka* “blessing” occurs 7x in unit C,¹² especially since the goal of Jacob’s deception was to procure the blessing from his father Isaac. The author managed to include the same word *bəraka*, albeit with the meaning “gift,” in unit C’ at 33:11. These attestations constitute the only usages of this noun in the entire Jacob cycle.

5. 27:26–27 Isaac kisses Jacob (~ Esau).

33:4 Esau kisses Jacob.

NOTE: The significant kiss which Isaac places upon Jacob (thinking he was Esau, of course) in 27:26–27 is echoed by the kiss which Esau places upon Jacob in 33:4.

6. 27:10, 27:14 Jacob brings good things to Isaac.

33:11 Jacob brings good things to Esau.

NOTE: Once more, what transpired in the scene in which Jacob presented himself before Isaac is paralleled in the scene in which Jacob appears before Esau.

7. 27:21–27 Verbal root *n-g-š* “approach, come near, bring near” (6x)

33:6–7 Verbal root *n-g-š* “approach, come near, bring near” (4x)

NOTE: The same verbal root occurs commonly in both scenes.¹³

8. 27:11 Jacob tells Rebekah that his brother Esau is *ša’ir* “hairy.”

27:23 Jacob’s hands were *še’irot* “hairy,” like Esau’s.

33:14, 33:16 Esau travels *še’ira* “to Seir” (land of Edom).

NOTE: The hairiness of Esau is a key feature in unit C, and thus the author weaves the like-sounding word, albeit as a toponym, into unit C'.

9. 27:28 Jacob will receive *rov* “abundance.”

33:9 Esau informs Jacob that he is *rav* “abundant.”

NOTE: Isaac promises Jacob (though he believes that he is speaking to Esau) abundance in 27:28, and thus the reader (from a sense of fairness) is gratified to learn in 33:9 that Esau too has achieved abundant possessions.

10. 27:29 Jacob’s brothers “will bow down” to him.

33:3 Jacob “bows down” to Esau.

NOTE: Again, when he spoke the words of the first blessing in unit C, Isaac imagined that one day Jacob would bow down to Esau, even though the reader knows that, in light of the deception, it is the other way around. Once more, in a sense of fairness perhaps, the reader may gain some delight to see that in fact Jacob does bow down to Esau in unit C'.

11. 27:16 Rebekah placed goat skins over the smooth skin of Jacob’s hand and neck.

27:40 Esau will throw off the yoke “from your neck.”

33:4 Esau “fell upon his [sc. Jacob’s] neck.”

NOTE: These are the only instances of the word צָוּאר *sawwār* “neck” in the Jacob cycle. In fact, they represent the first three occurrences of the word in the book of Genesis.

12. 27:38 “And he [sc. Esau] cried”

33:4 “and they [sc. Jacob and Esau] cried”

NOTE: Esau’s cry of anguish in unit C is an emotional highpoint in that scene, and thus the more loving tears in C', shed by both brothers, serve to assuage both the reader and the characters.

13. 27:16 חֵלְקַת צִוְּאָרָיו *helqat sawwār'aw* “the smoothness of his neck”

33:19 חֵלְקַת הַשָּׂדֶה *helqat haś-śade* “the portion of the field”

NOTE: The Hebrew word חֵלְקָה *helqa* (appearing in these two phrases as the construct form חֵלְקַת *helqat*) means both “smoothness” and “portion” (especially for a plot of land). The adept author of the Jacob cycle skillfully employed the identical lexeme, albeit with different meanings, to create one further nexus between units C and C'.

14. C two individuals present in each scene, but never Jacob and Esau together
C' Jacob and Esau meet

NOTE: The long unit C, comprised of 55 verses (27:1–28:9), includes seven individual scenes, in which two characters (and two characters

only) are “on stage”:¹⁴ Isaac and Esau (27:1–4); Rebekah and Jacob (27:5–17); Jacob and Isaac (27:18–29); Esau and Isaac (27:30–41); Rebekah and Jacob (27:42–45); Rebekah and Isaac (27:46); and Isaac and Jacob (28:1–5)—with the coda of Esau alone (28:6–9). The reader observes that the two key characters, Jacob and Esau, are never “on stage” together. They almost meet in 27:30, but do not. This makes the reunion of the two brothers in unit C’ all the more poignant.

As we saw above with the Abraham cycle, so here: the overarching chiasmic structure of the Jacob cycle bespeaks a single authorial hand for Gen 25–35. The series of linkages which yoke the individual scenes to one another, as demonstrated here for units C and C’, only confirms that conclusion. This approach of literary unity stands in contrast to those scholars who divide the Jacob narrative into three separate sources (‘J’, ‘E’, ‘P’).¹⁵ For the specific case of units C and C’, note that scholars typically assign portions of both pericopes into separate sources. In the former, 27:1–45 is allocated to ‘J’ and Gen 27:46–28:9 is allocated to ‘P’; while for the latter, source critics differ on the allotment of the verses. One scheme identifies three sources, 33:1–17 = ‘J’, 18a = ‘P’, and 18b–20 = ‘E’;¹⁶ while another assigns the entire chapter to ‘E’, save for the middle segment of v. 18, which is assigned to ‘R’ (the final Redactor).¹⁷

If one follows the former arrangement, then most of C and most of C’ are attributed to the ‘J’ source, so my criticism is not as forceful this time, since the same author easily could be responsible for the vast majority of the items listed above—indeed, basically all of them, save no. 13.¹⁸ Let us look, accordingly, at item no. 13, with the remarkable use of the word *הֶלְקָה* *helqa* with its two meanings of “smoothness” (27:16) and “portion, plot of land” (33:19). And yet the former is ascribed to the ‘J’ source, while the latter is attributed to the ‘E’ source.

If one were to follow the latter approach, with most of C and most of C’ assigned to different sources, then once again an entire litany of corresponding lexical items would need to be explained, per the list above, since most in unit C would appear in ‘J’ and most in unit C’ would appear in ‘E’.

A better approach, to my mind, is to see a single author responsible for the Jacob cycle. Reading the narrative as a narrative whole allows the reader to appreciate the chiasmic structure, to focus on the significance of the pivot point (more on this below), and to behold the manner in which linguistic and thematic features serve to unite the matching units.

III. The Joseph Story (Genesis 37–50)¹⁹

Let us now analyze the Joseph story, for which see figure 3:

Figure 3: The Joseph Story (chs. 37–50)

- A Joseph and his brothers, Jacob and Joseph part (37:1–36)
- B Interlude: Joseph not present (38:1–30)
- C Reversal: Joseph guilty, Potiphar's wife innocent (39:1–23)
- D Joseph hero of Egypt (40:1–41:57)
- E Two trips to Egypt (42:1–43:34)
- F Final test (44:1–34)
- Focal point: 45:1–4: Joseph reveals himself to his brothers*
- F' Conclusion of test (45:1–28)
- E' Two tellings of migration to Egypt (46:1–47:12)
- D' Joseph hero of Egypt (47:13–27)
- C' Reversal: Ephraim first-born, Manasseh second-born (47:28–48:22)
- B' Interlude: Joseph nominally present (49:1–28)
- A' Joseph and his brothers, Jacob and Joseph part (49:29–50:26)

By now, the large-scale chiasmus should be familiar to the reader. The Joseph story has six initial units, A through F, which build to the climax, or focal point, after which six corresponding units, A' through F' bring the novella to its conclusion. In the case of the Joseph story, the climactic focal point is rather obvious: 45:1–4, where Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. As we saw above in the Abraham and Jacob cycles, here too: to highlight the connections between two corresponding units, the text uses the same, similar, or like-sounding lexical items, alongside the matching themes and motifs.

To illustrate the technique with parallel units from the Joseph story, I elect to use units C and C', the two reversal scenes. In so doing, I specifically select two units in which the nexus may not be that obvious. That is to say, the relationship between units B and B' in the Abraham cycle (analyzed above) was announced to us rather clearly with the two usages of the phrase לֶךְ-לָכָה *lek laka* “go forth” (12:1 and 22:2). Similarly, the correspondence of units C and C' in the Jacob cycle (also analyzed above) is rather forthright, since both deal with Jacob and Esau. By contrast, in the Joseph story, there is nothing which at first glance would allow us to see the nexus between units C and C', as the former deals

with Joseph and Potiphar's wife, while the latter deals with Jacob's blessing to Ephraim and Manasseh. And yet, as we shall see immediately below, the author of this narrative found numerous ways to produce the necessary connections.

1. Reversal: Joseph guilty, Potiphar's wife innocent.

Reversal: Ephraim first-born, Manasseh second-born.

NOTE: The major theme which joins the two units is that of reversal.

2. Joseph's superior (Potiphar) responsible for the reversal.

Joseph's superior (Jacob) responsible for the reversal.

NOTE: As indicated, the reversal is not due to Joseph's actions or words, but rather due to the actions and words of a superior.

3. 39:7 Action centers around the bed: implicit in C: "lie with me."

47:31 Action centers around the bed: explicit in C': *mitta* "bed."

NOTE: See also the next item and comment.

4. Verbal root כ-ב-ש *š-k-b* "lie"—39:7, 39:10, 39:12, 39:14

Verbal root כ-ב-ש *š-k-b* "lie"—47:30

NOTE: The root כ-ב-ש *š-k-b* "lie" is central to the falsehood fabricated by Potiphar's wife (note its four-fold use in 39:7–14, three times in her voice) in unit C;²⁰ and thus the author wove one usage of the same verbal root into unit C'. These are the only instances of this lexeme in the entire Joseph story.

5. Verbal root ב-ר-כ *b-r-k* "bless"—39:5

Verbal root ב-ר-כ *b-r-k* "bless"—48:3, 48:9, 48:15, 48:16, 48:20 (2x)

NOTE: In this case, the opposite occurs. The verbal root ב-ר-כ *b-r-k* "bless" is central to unit C', in which Jacob blesses Ephraim and Manasseh, and thus the author incorporated the same verbal root into one verse in unit C.²¹

6. 39:8 "and he [sc. Joseph] resisted and said"

48:19 "and his father [sc. Jacob] resisted and said"

NOTE: The phraseology is strikingly similar, with the collocation of the verbal root נ-ס-ח *m-ʿ-n* "resist" and the common verbal root א-מ-ר *'m-r* "say."

7. 39:4 "and Joseph found favor in his [sc. Potiphar's] eyes"

47:29 "if I [sc. Jacob] have found favor in your [sc. Joseph] eyes"

NOTE: The idiom "to find favor in one's eyes" is relatively common in the Bible, and indeed the phrase occurs elsewhere in the Joseph story (47:25, 50:4). Nonetheless, one will assume that the placement of these two usages, in 39:4 in unit C, and in 47:29 in unit C', is intentional, as the

author of the narrative grasped every opportunity to correlate the wordings in the corresponding units.²²

8. 39:21 *hesed* "favor, fealty, kindness"

47:29 *hesed* "favor, fealty, kindness"

NOTE: Once more we are dealing with a common word (it appears again in the Joseph story in 40:14), but regardless of that point, the author once again places one instance of the word in unit C and another in unit C'.

9. Noun *yad* "hand" used 9x in C

Noun *yad* "hand" used 5x in C'

NOTE: The word *yad* "hand" is exceedingly common in the Bible.²³ Accordingly, any two pericopes or sections or chapters or texts of any length are almost undoubtedly sure to have the word present within the text. That said, we note that unit C attests to the word *yad* "hand" 9x, more than in any other unit within the book of Genesis. This noun is clearly an important lexical feature for the author of Gen 39.²⁴ Moreover, the word occurs in manifold connotations: (a) Potiphar buys Joseph *miy-yad* "from the hand" of the Ishmaelites (v. 1); (b) everything prospers in Potiphar's house with all matters and concerns (save for Potiphar's wife) *bə-yado* "in his (sc. Joseph's) hand" (vv. 3–4) or *bə-yad yosep* "in the hand of Joseph" (v. 6), a point which Joseph himself makes with the word *bə-yadi* "in my hand" (v. 8); (c) Joseph leaves his garment *bə-yadah* "in her hand," that is, in the hand of Potiphar's wife (vv. 12–13); and then (d) the jailer puts everything in Joseph's charge, once again with either the phrase *bə-yad yosep* "in the hand of Joseph" (v. 22) or the word *bə-yado* "in his hand" (v. 23).²⁵ In the matching unit C' the word *yad* "hand" occurs 5x, in order to create the nexus, with three of the attestations used in the key scene of Jacob's blessing Joseph's two sons. Note the following: (a) Jacob's instructions to Joseph to place his hand under his thigh (47:29); (b) Jacob's criss-crossing his hands during the blessing of Manasseh and Ephraim (48:14, 48:17 [2x]); and (c) the expression *miy-yad* "from the hand of" the Amorites (48:22).²⁶

10. 39:6 *lehem* "bread" (though figuratively "wife")

48:7 *bet lehem* "Beth-lehem" (lit. "house of bread")

NOTE: The word *lehem* "bread" may be understood literally in 39:6, if we assume that Potiphar entrusted everything to Joseph, except for the food that he ate, given different dietary customs amongst the Egyptians and the Israelites (as intimated in Gen 43:22). But the word also carries a sexual connotation, as is revealed by Joseph's own speech in 39:9, where he informs Potiphar's wife that the only item in the household not in his charge is she.²⁷ The presence of this key word in unit C demands its presence in unit C', and the author obliges with the phrase

בַּדֶּרֶךְ אֶפְרַת הִיא בֵּית לֶחֶם *bə-derek 'eprat hi' bet lahem* “on the way to Ephrath, that is, Beth-lehem.” Many scholars have questioned either the whole of Jacob’s thrust here (why raise the matter of Rachel’s death at all), and/or the last three words as a later gloss, especially as it sounds extremely odd in Jacob’s speech.²⁸ One would expect him to refer to his burial of Rachel “on the way to Ephrath” without defining the location as “that is, Beth-lehem.” But the words are necessary, I submit, in order for the word *lehem* “bread” (the second component in the toponym “Beth-lehem”) to echo its mate in 39:6.

As I noted above (see n. 19), the Joseph story constitutes a more integrated narrative than the Abraham and Jacob cycles—hence, my use of the word “story” as opposed to “cycle.” In the case of the two earlier cycles, with more loosely connected scenes about Abraham and about Jacob, the chiasitic structure helps to weave the disparate units into a consistent narrative. Given the greater unity inherent in the Joseph story, accordingly, one might think that a chiasitic structure was less necessary for Gen 37–50. And yet, given the manner in which the stage was set with the first two major narratives concerning the ancestors of Israel, the author of the Joseph story felt the need to follow suit. The result is once again a superb narrative with a crucial scene serving as the pivot point—more on this anon.²⁹

In my treatments of the Abraham cycle and the Jacob cycle above, I identified a number of lexical features in matching units which militate against the documentary hypothesis. The same may be demonstrated for the Joseph story. According to the source theory, all of chapter 39, our unit C, is ascribed to ‘J’; while 47:28–48:22, our unit C’ divides into three authors: 47:29–31 = ‘J’, 48:1–2, 8–22 = ‘E’, and 47:28, 48:3–7 = ‘P’.³⁰ And yet once again we observe a host of interconnections between these two sections of the Joseph story, including as specific a phrase as “and he resisted and said” in 39:8 (with Joseph as subject) and “and his father resisted and said” in 48:19 (with Jacob as subject)—see item no. 6 above.

For a second specific example, we may look at item no. 10 above, already discussed in some detail. As indicated, the key word *lehem* “bread” (though figuratively “wife”) in 39:6 is assigned to ‘J’, but its echo embedded within the toponym *bet lehem* “Beth-lehem” (lit. “house of bread”) in 48:7 is ascribed to ‘P’.

One can only repeat the words already expressed above: rather than dividing the Genesis (and other) accounts into dissected parts, the literary approach employed here, which reads sustained storylines as narrative wholes, is much to be preferred.³¹

Conclusion

With one or two minor exceptions, everything that I have expressed above may be found in my aforementioned monograph, *The Redaction of Genesis*. Here towards the article's end, accordingly, I would like to offer something new. Indeed, what I present in the following occurred to me neither while writing the first edition of the book (1986), nor while preparing the second edition of the book (2014), but rather only while contemplating the material yet again in advance of the chiasmus conference held at Brigham Young University in August 2017.

Let us look more closely at each of the three focal points standing at the center of the three main cycles of the Ancestral Narratives. As we saw, in the Abraham cycle, the focal point at 17:1–5 introduces the crucial concept of covenant, the linkage between God and Abraham, and through his descendants, between God and the people of Israel. In the Jacob cycle, the focal point at 30:22–25 highlights Jacob's decision to return to the land of Canaan. Finally, in the Joseph story, the focal point at 45:1–4 shines the spotlight on the emotional reunion of Joseph and his brothers.

The three themes expressed in the three pivot points, when read together, constitute the essence of the book of Genesis. Indeed, one could say, they embrace the essence of the Torah, if not, in fact, the entire Bible. The three themes are: (a) the *covenant*; (b) the *land* of Canaan; and (c) the *people* of Israel. When woven together, these three elements—*land, people, and covenant*—create the essential message of the Bible: God and the people of Israel are forever inextricably linked via the covenant; God is to be the God of the people of Israel, while Israel is to be people of God; and this drama is to unfold in the land of Canaan, a gift from God to the people of Israel. The three items appear together in a number of biblical passages, though two citations will suffice here:

- Gen 17:7–8—“And I will establish my covenant between me and you, and between your seed after you for their generations, as an everlasting covenant, to be for you as God, and to your seed after you. And I will give to you, and to your seed after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”
- Ezek 37:25–26—“And they shall dwell in the land which I gave to my servant Jacob, and in which your ancestors dwelled; they and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever; and David my servant shall be their leader forever. And I

will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will set them and I will multiply them, and I will set my sanctuary in their midst forever.”

The Genesis passage anticipates the long relationship of God and the people of Israel resident in the land of Canaan. The Ezekiel passage, spoken in Babylonian Exile after a tortuous history, foresees the restoration of that vision.³²

Nowhere, of course, is any of this spelled out for the reader of the book of Genesis. Nowhere, for example, does the text state: pay attention, dear reader, to these three pivot points, for in them is to be found the essential message. Though this is true, of course, for the entire ancient Hebrew literary tradition. To state the obvious, the Bible does not come with charts of the type that I have produced above, in order to highlight the role of the pivot point in each of the three narrative cycles. Rather, the text reveals little, thereby demanding the reader’s active engagement. Only through such an encounter with the text will the reader garner the fullness of its message.

Appendix: The Primeval History

There is, of course, one additional large chunk of text in the book of Genesis, to wit, the Primeval History, comprising the first eleven chapters of the book. The alert reader already may have asked him- or herself: does chiasm appear in Gen 1–11 as well? The answer is no, it does not. Instead, a different manner of redactional structuring occurs in this narrative, per the following outline in figure 4:

Figure 4: The Primeval History (chs. 1–11)

A Creation, God’s Words to Adam (1:1–3:24)

B Adam’s Sons (4:1–16)

C Technological Development of Mankind (4:17–26)

D Ten Generations from Adam to Noah (5:1–32)

E Downfall: The Nephilim (6:1–8)

Focal point: 6:8–9: Noah found favor in God’s eyes, Noah was righteous

A’ Flood, God’s Words to Noah (6:9–9:17)

B’ Noah’s Sons (9:18–29)

C’ Ethnic Development of Mankind (10:1–32)

E’ Downfall: Tower of Babel (11:1–9)

D’ Ten Generations from Noah to Terah (11:10–26)

As the reader can determine, in the Primeval History, the five units proceed A through E, and then are repeated in the same order, A' through E' (and not in chiasmic order), with one necessary diversion, since D' and E' have switched slots. Credit for this discovery goes to Jack Sasson,³³ and then once again I direct the interested reader to my book for further details.³⁴ Apparently, the overall author/editor/compiler/redactor of the book of Genesis sought to distinguish the Primeval History, with its more universalistic tones (creation, flood, nations of the world, etc.), from the Ancestral Narratives, with their more particularistic concerns, per the above, with their focus on the covenant, the land of Canaan, and the people of Israel. He accomplished this distinction not only through the contents of the different sections but via the different literary patternings inherent in the extended narratives.

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Notes

1. Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (2d ed.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014). The relevant page numbers are: pp. 27–52 (= ch. 2); pp. 53–69 (= ch. 3); pp. 79–97 (= ch. 5), though other material is germane as well. Note that the page numbers are the same for both the first edition and the second edition of the book.

2. Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part Two; From Noah to Abraham* (trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1964), 296; Nahum Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Schocken, 1966), 160–61; and Yehuda T. Radday, “Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structure, Analysis, Exegesis* (ed. John W. Welch; Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981), 104–5. To be sure, Cassuto died while working on the Abraham material for his multivolume commentary on the book of Genesis, so all that we possess is his outline statement.

3. Michael Fishbane, “Composition and Structure in the Jacob Cycle (Gen. 25:19–35:22),” *JJS* 26 (1975): 15–38; Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 40–62. This book was reprinted as *Biblical Text and Texture* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), with the same pagination.

4. Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 79–97. See also Gary A. Rendsburg, “Redactional Structuring in the Joseph Story: Genesis 37–50,” in *Mappings of the Biblical Terrain: The Bible as Text = Bucknell Review* 33, no. 2 (ed. Vincent L. Tollers and John Maier; Lewisburg, Penn.: Bucknell University Press, 1990), 215–32. For a very brief treatment, see also Radday, “Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative,” 102.

5. I shall use the terms “focal point” and “pivot point” interchangeably.

6. As we shall see immediately below, the Abraham Cycle properly begins at Gen 11:27, though in this section heading, as the reader can see, I prefer to use whole chapter numbers only. See similarly, n. 11 below.

7. Admittedly, though, my rendering of the verb *yir'ē* as “Appearance” plays slightly with the grammar, since this form of the verb is in the Qal construction.

8. For the clearest and most important recent statement, see Richard E. Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed* (Harper: San Francisco, 2003), 49–66. Here and below, I simplify Friedman’s slightly more complex formulation, which includes ‘RJE’ (Redactor of combined ‘J’ and ‘E’), ‘R’ (final Redactor), and the occasional ‘Other’ (e.g., Gen 14). From more than a century ago, see the classic treatment of S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1913), 11, 15. See also the convenient chart based on Driver’s analysis in Nahum M. Sarna and S. David Sperling, “Genesis, Book of,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2d ed.; Detroit: Macmillan, 2007), 7:443.

9. Most scholars, including Driver and Friedman cited in the previous note, assign 12:4b–5 to the ‘P’ source.

10. Driver assigns all of Gen 22:1–19 to the ‘E’ source, whereas Friedman sees the hand of ‘RJE’ (that is, the redactor who combined ‘J’ and ‘E’) in vv. 11–15 and in the two-word phrase *nā’um yhw̄h* “utterance of Yhw̄h” in v. 16. Friedman analyzes the text in such fashion in order to explain the five-fold use of the name Yhw̄h in this short section, for according to his view in the Elohist source God does not reveal his name Yhw̄h until later in the Torah, specifically to Moses in Exod 3:14–15.

11. Technically, the Jacob cycle does not commence until Gen 25:19, and it ends at Gen 35:22, with a few verses in ch. 35 remaining, but to keep the chapter numbers whole, I have simplified the range to Gen 25–35 in this section heading. See similarly above, n. 6.

12. The fact that specifically seven occurrences of this key noun appear in unit C may not be a coincidence.

13. For the sole other attestation of this verb in the Jacob cycle, see 29:10.

14. Again, the fact that the account may be subdivided into specifically seven (!) scenes is probably intentional. In my listing of the two individuals, I place the more active and dominant character first.

15. See, for example, Friedman, *Bible with Sources Revealed*, 71–90; and Driver, *Introduction*, 11, 16, with the latter summarized by the convenient chart in Sarna and Sperling, “Genesis, Book of,” 443.

16. Thus, Driver, *Introduction*, 16; see also Sarna and Sperling, “Genesis, Book of,” 443.

17. Thus, Friedman, *Bible with Sources Revealed*, 86–87, though with the caveat that this section of the narrative offers “some of the most difficult problems for distinguishing between J and E” (p. 86, n.).

18. To be more precise, both elements in items nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 above appear in passages ascribed to ‘J,’ while both elements in item no. 3 above appear in passages ascribed to ‘P.’ Item no. 14 is very general (save for the specifically seven scenes in unit C), so a single author, presumably ‘J,’ could be responsible for the large picture which emerges by comparing C and C’.

19. I have adopted the scholarly consensus here, which is to refer to the Abraham and Jacob narratives as “cycles,” as they are comprised of relatively disparate scenes (see, for example, ch. 14 in the former and ch. 34 in the latter), but to refer to the Joseph narrative as a “story,” since it reveals a more integrated storytelling and continuous plot line.

20. My prose here includes an unintentional pun. I use the word “lie,” per the meaning of the Hebrew verb, in the sense of “lie down.” The continuation of my comment, however, segues into the “lie, falsehood” perpetrated by Potiphar’s wife.

21. In the same verse, see also the noun phrase בְּרִכַּת יְהוָה *birkat Yhwh* “blessing of Yhwh.”

22. The Hebrew noun in these two passages is *hen* “favor,” used frequently in this idiom. Its near synonym *hesed* “favor, fealty, kindness” is treated in the next item.

23. In fact, the word occurs 1627 times, thereby ranking 12th in frequency amongst nouns in the Bible.

24. See further Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (2d ed.; New York: Basic Books, 2011), 137–38.

25. The reader using a Bible translation may not encounter the word “hand” 9x, however. I note, for example, that RSV uses “hand” only 4x, while NJV uses “hand” 5x. Neither translation renders it in v. 1, electing for the simpler “from the Ishmaelites.” In other instances, RSV and NJV have matters in Joseph’s charge (in Potiphar’s household) or in Joseph’s care (in the prison). It is for this reason that translations such as those by Everett Fox and Robert Alter are to be preferred, especially in this instance since both scholars use “hand” 9x. See Everett Fox, *The Five Books of Moses* (New York: Schocken, 1995), 186–89; and Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 221–25.

26. In this case, RSV uses “hand” all 4x, though NJV omits the word in the last instance.

27. Such was recognized by the rabbis of old, for which see Bereshit Rabba 86:6, along with the medieval commentaries of Rashi (1040–1105) and Ramban (1194–1270). Abraham ibn Ezra (1089–1167) was aware of this interpretation, but he stressed the plain meaning “bread, food,” with an eye to the different dietary customs, as I indicated above.

28. For details, see Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 88. See further below, regarding the assignment of these verses to ‘P’, in an otherwise mainly ‘E’ narrative.

29. See below, in the Conclusion to this chapter.

30. Thus Friedman, *Bible with Sources Revealed*, 97–98. Driver, *Introduction*, 17, agrees in the main, though he found it too difficult to distinguish ‘J’ and ‘E’ in 48:8–22 and thus contented himself with the designation ‘JE’. See also the convenient chart in Sarna and Sperling, “Genesis, Book of,” 443.

31. If I have engaged herein consistently with the publications of S. R. Driver and of Richard Elliott Friedman, even if to take issues with their apportionment of the narratives into different sources, I do so with the utmost respect for these two singular scholars. It goes without saying that Driver was the greatest biblical scholar of his day; while Friedman remains the most eloquent spokesperson for the JEDP Theory, a sincere dialogue partner on the academic issues which separate us, and an esteemed colleague. For a recent essay of mine, with similar content and with similar engagement with the analyses of Driver and Friedman, see Gary A. Rendsburg, “The Literary Unity of the Exodus Narrative,” in *“Did I Not Bring Israel Out of Egypt?” Biblical, Archaeological, and Egyptological Perspectives on the Exodus Narratives* (ed. James K. Hoffmeier, Alan R. Millard, and Gary A. Rendsburg; Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement 13; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 113–32.

32. The rabbis of old, in fact, saw the connection between Ezek 37:15–28 and the focal point in Gen 45:1–4, for the former serves as the prophetic reading which accompanies the Torah portion of *way-yiggaš* “and he [sc. Judah] approached,” the incipit of Gen 44:18–47:27. In the former, the prophet foresees the reunion of the Judahites (led by Judah) and the Israelians (led by Joseph) embodied by the diptych created by the two pieces of wood. This vision, in turn, evokes the scene of the brothers, led by Judah, reunited with their long-lost brother Joseph. (The Karaites, incidentally, use a different prophetic portion for this section of the Torah, to wit, Josh 14:6–15, based on the opening phrase of v. 6, “and the children of Judah approached.”)

33. Jack M. Sasson, “The ‘Tower of Babel’ as a Clue to the Redactional Structuring of the Primeval History,” in *The Bible World: Essays in Honor of Cyrus H. Gordon* (ed. Gary A. Rendsburg et al.; New York: Ktav, 1980), 211–19.

34. Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 7–25.

Chiastic Structuring of the Genesis Flood Story

The Art of Using Chiasm as an Effective Compositional Tool for Combining Earlier Chiastic Narratives

Steven R. Scott

Introduction

The story of the flood is perhaps one of the best-known stories of the Bible, and its chiastic nature has long been recognized by scholars, most prominently by Yehuda T. Radday and Gordon Wenham.¹ These scholars' theses will briefly be discussed before proceeding to a detailed analysis of the text, which will demonstrate that the biblical flood story is two chiasms combined—one by author "J" and another by author "P."

Radday, in his proposal, notes the verbal parallelism in the flood story on either side of the turning point of the narrative where "God remembered Noah" (Gen 8:1), and the flood starts to recede. He proposed the following chiastic structure based on this parallelism:

A1 Divine monologue (6:3, 7)

B1 It grieved him in his heart (6:6)

C1 "I will establish my covenant" (6:18)

D1 Four stages of entering the ark "as commanded" (6:22; 7:5, 9, 16)

E1 "Go into the ark" (7:1)

F1 The fountains of the deep burst forth (7:11)

G1 Seven verbs of ascent: increased, bore, rose (7:17), prevailed, increased greatly (7:18), prevailed mightily, mountains were covered (7:19)

H God remembered Noah (8:1)

F2 The fountains of the deep were closed (8:2)

G2 Seven verbs of descent: subsided (8:1), were restrained (8:2), receded, abated (8:3), came to rest (8:4), continued to abate, mountains were seen (8:5)

E2 “Go forth from the ark” (8:16)

D2 Four stages of leaving the ark (once a raven, thrice a dove) (8:7–12)

B2 The Lord said in his heart (8:20)

C2 “I established my covenant” (9:9)

A2 Divine monologue (9:12–16)

Though some of the parallelism may not be especially strong (levels B and D for example), and there is overlap of chiasmic levels (D, E, and F), there is a clear balance on either side of 8:1.

Wenham, on the other hand, offers a more detailed proposal based more on conceptual parallels than direct word parallels:

A1 Noah (6:10a)

B1 Shem, Ham and Japheth (6:10b)

C1 Ark to be built (6:14–16)

D1 Flood announced (6:17)

E1 Covenant with Noah (6:18–20)

F1 Food in the ark (6:21)

G1 Command to enter ark (7:1–3)

H1 7 days waiting for flood (7:4–5)

I1 7 days waiting for flood (7:7–10)

J1 Entry to ark (7:11–15)

K1 Yahweh shuts Noah in (7:16)

L1 40 days flood (7:17a)

M1 Waters increase (7:17b–18)

N1 Mountains covered (7:19–20)

O1 150 days waters prevail (7:21[–24])

P God remembers Noah (8:1)

O2 150 days waters abate (8:3)

N2 Mountain tops visible (8:4–5)

M2 Waters abate (8:5)

L2 40 days (end of) (8:6a)

K2 Noah opens window of ark (8:6b)

- J2 Raven and dove leave ark (8:7–9)
- I2 7 days waiting for waters to subside (8:10–11)
- H2 7 days waiting for waters to subside (8:12–13)
- G2 Command to leave ark (8:15–17 [22])
- F2 Food outside ark (9:1–4)
- E2 Covenant with all flesh (9:8–10)
- D2 No flood in future (9:11–17)
- C2 Ark (9:18a)
- B2 Shem, Ham and Japheth (9:18b)
- A2 Noah (9:19)

Despite a few lacunas (between B1 and C1, and in O1, and G2), the conceptual parallelism is clear and, as Wenham notes, goes beyond the natural reversal of a story where there is a flood which rises and then abates.

The above proposals point to there being an overall chiastic design. The following analysis will indicate there are concentric patterns on several levels of the text, which interplay with each other. Also, by paying attention to whether the text seems to be from either the J or the P source, it would seem that both compositions were originally composed chiastically.² This is in opposition to Wenham, who argues the overall chiastic design points to one author. However, such a design can also be explained as the combining of two chiastic designs into a final one by a redactor who was likely responsible for the shape of the Torah as we have it. Besides preserving the two-source theory of the flood story, which is widely supported by scholars, such a conclusion would indicate a long tradition of chiastic use by three different authors over a long period of Israelite-Judean history, depending on when one dates the different sources and the final redaction.

We shall begin by analyzing the redactor's chiasm, then the J chiasm, and the P chiasm. For each, we will discuss the emphasis that each chiasm produces.

Methodology

The most important criteria in proposing and judging chiasm is to respect the composition as we have it, unless there are very good reasons to do otherwise. This means that the chiastic units must respect the natural divisions of the composition. If this is done, then a chiasm shaped by the author should become fairly self-apparent. This is the case with the flood story, as will shortly be shown.

In a story, the primary unit is the scene, which occasionally has sub-scenes. The scenes themselves can also be composed chiasmically. In this case, depending on the length of the scene, the chiasmatic units will be stanzas/paragraphs, sentences, and perhaps even clauses. Again, if these natural divisions are respected, then whether an author used chiasm should become relatively self-apparent.

We shall thus begin by breaking the flood story into its main scenes and studying some of these scenes in more detail.

The Redactor's Chiasm

The flood story consists of an introduction and conclusion and 14 separate scenes. These compositional units contain doubles—not only of the chiasmatic units, but of actual repeated scenes—due to the use of two sources by the final redactor and her/his apparent desire to preserve both versions. The whole story thus becomes doubly “two by two,” which is artistically appropriate and likely intentional.

Below you will see that the seven repeating chiasmatic elements (A₁–G₁ and G₂–A₂) are clearly demarked. In addition, the fourteen scenes are arranged in the proposed chiasm with their traditional source assignation:

Genealogy: Noah's sons (5:32)

Introduction: sexual sin and punishment (5:32–6:10) J

Genealogy: Noah's sons (6:10)

A₁ Scene 1: God tells Noah about the flood, provides instructions for the ark, and makes a covenant with him (6:11–18a) P

Noah will go in ark with his sons (9:18b)

B₁ Scene 2: God instructs Noah on the animal collection I (6:19–22) P

Statement that Noah obeyed God (6:22)

C₁ Scene 3: God instructs Noah again on the animal collection II (7:1–4) J

Statement that Noah obeyed God

Mention of date (7:6a)

D₁ Scene 4: Ark entry I (7:6–9) J

Statement that Noah obeyed God (7:9c)

Line mentioning flood came in 7 days (7:10)

Mention of date (7:11a)

E₁ Scene 5: Flood description I (7:11–12) J

Line mentioning rain fell 40 days (7:12)

F1 Scene 6: Ark entry II (7:13–16) P

Line mentioning flood lasted 40 days (7:17)

G1 Scene 7: Flood description II (7:17–24) mostly P

Line mentioning flood lasted 150 days (7:24)

G2 Scene 8: Flood abatement I (8:1–5) mostly P

Line mentioning 40 days had passed (8:6)

F2 Scene 9: Ark exit I (6–12) J

Mention of date (8:13a)

E2 Scene 10: Flood abatement II (8:13–14) P

Mention of date (8:14)

D2 Scene 11: Ark exit II (8:15–19) P

Noah does as God instructs (8:18–19) P

C2 Scene 12: Animals sacrificed as food for LORD (8:20–22) J

God blessed Noah and his sons (9:1)

B2 Scene 13: Animals as food for humans (9:2–7) P

Then God said to Noah and his sons (9:8)

A2 Scene 14: God makes covenant to never end all flesh again (9:9–17) P

Genealogy: Noah's sons (9:18)

Conclusion: sexual sin and punishment (9:18–10:1) J

Genealogy: Noah's sons (10:1)

The scenes are demarked, for the most part, with a statement concerning either Noah and his sons (i.e., that he obeyed God) and/or a statement of time (i.e., a date or how long an event lasted). The clearest example is the genealogical information surrounding the introduction and conclusion. These lines that demark the scenes thus function as inclusios, and this seems to be the intention of the author. It is of note that where the inclusio statements change from being about Noah to time statements at scene D1 when Noah first enters the ark, both types are used. It is as if the author is indicating this change of use.

This type of demarcation is least clear between A1, God's covenant with Noah, and B1, the first set of instructions to collect animals, and between C2, B2, and A2, which describes Noah's sacrifice and following blessing and covenant. Both A1–B1 and B2–A2 consist of a single speech by God, and thus each is technically a single scene. However, in each there is clear separation of topic: A1 describes how God will make a covenant with Noah, B1 the instructions on how to build the ark, B2 that humans can now eat flesh, and A2 the rainbow as the sign of God's covenant with Noah.

B1 and C1, the two sets of instructions to collect animals, could also be seen as part of one scene. However, both end with a statement that Noah obeyed God. They are thus clearly separated from each other as separate scenes, with the second set of instructions becoming a second speech by God. Likewise, D2, the full debarkation from the ark, concludes by describing Noah obeying God's instructions to leave, which provides separation from the following scene where Noah sacrifices to God, which could be considered part of the debarkation scene.

In the above cases, the lines of demarcation divide what would have been a singular scene into separate scenes, creating clear structural function.

The parallelism between the chiasmic units will now be discussed along with some of the internal structures. The last is necessary because the internal structures help define the contours of the larger scene units.

We shall begin with the introduction and conclusion:

Introduction

A1.1 Noah's descendants (5:32)

Noah's age given and his sons are listed

B1.1 Sexual sin (6:1–4)

a1 Sons of God take wives—b1 LORD limits human life—a2 On the children born to the sons of God

B1.2 Punishment due to sin (6:5–8)

a1 LORD sees wickedness of humans—b1 LORD sorry he created humans—c1 Lord decides to blot out humans and animals

A1.2 Noah's descendants (6:9–10)

Noah finds favor with LORD and is righteous and his sons are listed

Conclusion

A2.1 Noah's descendants (9:18–19)

Noah and his sons are listed

B2.1 Sexual sin (9:20–23)

Introduction: Noah plants a vineyard and gets drunk

a1 Ham sees Noah's nakedness—b1 Ham tells brothers—a2 Shem and Japheth do not see nakedness as they cover Noah

B2.2 Curse because of sin (9:24–27)

a1 Noah awakes and knows what Ham did—b1 Noah curses Ham's son Canaan—c1 Noah blesses Shem and Japheth

A2.2 Noah's descendants (9:28–10:1)

Noah's death dated and his sons are listed

In the above outline, the internal structures of the B-units are shown using miniscule letters. Thus, both B1.1 and B2.1 have internal chiasms (a1-b1-a2) and B1.2 and B2.2 have linear structures (a1-b1-c1). Consequently, there is structural parallelism on the B-level as well as content parallelism—here sexual sin and the consequences of sin.

As mentioned above, the genealogical listings of Noah's sons form clear inclusios around these two stories of sexual sin. In neither story are we told explicitly why the incidents are considered sin. However, the mixing of the sons of God with humans breaks the clear desire of the LORD in the J tradition to keep the godly and human spheres separate. For example, Adam and Eve are punished for eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge and becoming like the LORD (Gen 3), and the nations are given different languages to prevent them from building of the Tower of Babel and becoming like the LORD (Gen 11).

The children of the mixing of heaven and earth, the heroes of yore, seem to be the cause of the wickedness the LORD sees, and thus the cause of the flood. However, the nature of the sin is not exactly clear. Likewise, in the story where Ham and his son Canaan are cursed, we are told that Ham saw his father's nakedness, and this in the context of the story is clearly seen as something wrong. Again, it is unclear exactly what the sin is, though it is clearly of a sexual nature.³

Thus, in both the introduction and conclusion, it can be argued there is a story concerning sexual sin with resulting punishment surrounded by genealogical inclusios. From this perspective, the structural parallelism could hardly be clearer, and consequently two seemingly unrelated stories become connected. This clear structural parallelism indicates that the story of Noah in his vineyard should be considered a part of the flood story.

Turning to the flood story proper, the beginning, middle, and end units with their internal chiastic and linear structures are as follows:

A1 Scene 1: God decides to end all flesh, but makes a covenant with Noah (6:1–17) P

- a1 Gods sees corruption and violence and decides to destroy all flesh
 - b1 Noah to build ark
- a2 God will bring flood
 - b2 God will make covenant with Noah and family

G1 Scene 7: Flood description II (7:17–24) mostly P

a1 On the flood

(a1) flood continues for 40 days

(b1) waters raise ark

(c1) mountains are covered

b1 On humans and animals

(a1) All flesh dies

(a2) Only those in ark saved

c On the flood

(a1) Flood continues for 150 days

G2 Scene 8: Flood abatement I (8:1–5) mostly P

b2 On humans and animals

(a1) God remembers those in ark

a2 On the flood

(a1) Waters turned off

(b1) After 150 days the ark rests on Ararat

(c1) mountains are uncovered

A2 Scene 14: God makes covenant to never end all flesh again (9:8–17) P

a1 God establishes covenant

b1 covenant is that flood will not destroy again

c1 sign of covenant (*a*) is the rainbow (*b*) which is sign of covenant (*a*)

b2 Rainbow will remind God of covenant not to destroy

a2 Rainbow will remind of covenant

a3 Rainbow is sign of covenant

The conceptual parallelism between these scenes is multiple and clear. First, in A1, God decides to destroy all flesh by a flood, and then in G1 all flesh is destroyed by flood. In A2, God promises never to destroy all flesh by flood again. Second, in A1, God instructs Noah to make the ark so that Noah and those with him will be saved, and in G2, Noah and those in the ark are saved. Third, in both A1 and A2, God makes covenants with Noah regarding destroying flesh with a flood. Fourth, in G2, God remembers Noah, and the covenant made in A1. In A2, God sets up the rainbow so he will remember this covenant. Finally, in G1, the flood comes, raises the ark, and covers the mountains. In G2, it abates, the ark rests on land, and the mountains are uncovered.

The above structural proposal also explains the odd placement of the announcement of God's covenant with Noah in A₁, which comes after the instructions to build the ark. One would expect the announcement of the covenant and then the instructions. However, by having the announcement at the end of A₁, clear parallelism is created with the beginning of A₂, which contains a very similar worded announcement concerning a covenant with Noah. The placement creates chiastic structural balance.

The internal structures of A₁ and the two central G-units will now be analyzed, because they help delineate the outlines of these structures. We shall begin with the G-units, whose stanzas form a simple micro-chiasm: *a₁-b₁-c-b₂-a₂* where *a₁* and *a₂* have parallel internal linear structures (a₁)-(b₁)-(c₁).

G₁ begins with a three-level description of the flood: it continued for 40 days (a₁), which caused the ark to float high above the earth (b₁), and the water covered the mountains (c₁). In turn, (b₁) and (c₁) have internal chiasms:

(a₁) Description of the Flood (single line, J tradition)

7:17 And was the flood forty days on the earth;

(b₁) Fate of the Ark (chiastic structure, P tradition)

a₁ and increased the **waters**,

b₁ and they lifted up the *ark*,

c₁ and it rose thus above the earth.

d 7:18 And swelled the **waters**

c₂ and they increased greatly on the earth;

b₂ and floated the *ark*

a₂ on the face of the **waters**.

(c₁) Fate of the Mountains (chiastic structure, P tradition)

a₁ 7:19 The **waters swelled** mightily,

b₁ Mightily on the *earth*

c And covered all the mountains high

b₂ That (were) under all the *heavens*

a₂ 7:20 fifteen cubits deep above **swelled the waters**,
and they were covered.⁴

Here we have a single isolated line describing the coming of the flood (a₁) from the J tradition, which is followed by two chiastic stanzas

from the P tradition describing the flood's effect on the ark (b₁) and the mountains (c₁). The lack of structural connection between (a₁) from J and (b₁) from P indicates it should be treated as a separate structural unit, a scene-demarkation line. The different sources are thus distinguished not only by their use of language (i.e., the J use of 40 days), but also by the lack of structural connection.⁵

The threefold sequence of flood description (a₅)—ark (a₆)—mountains (a₇) is repeated in a₂ at the end of G₂:

(a₂) Description of the Flood Recession (chiastic structure, P tradition)

a₁ 8:1b And caused God a wind over the **earth**,

b₁ and subsided the *waters*;

c 8:2 And were closed the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens,

and was restrained the rain from the heavens,

b₂ 8:3a and receded the *waters*

a₂ from over the **earth** they left and returned.

(b₂) Fate of the Ark (linear structure, P tradition)

a₁ 8:3b And had abated **the waters** by the end of one hundred fifty days;

b₁ 8:4 and rested the ark in *the seventh month*,

c₁ *on the seventeenth day of the month*,

d₁ Upon the mountains of Ararat.

(c₂) Fate of the Mountains (linear structure, P tradition)

a₁ 8:5 And **the waters** became gone,

b₁ and (they) abated until *the tenth month*;

c₁ *on the first day of the tenth month*,

d₁ appeared the tops of the mountains.

In (a₂), instead of the coming of the flood being described, the opposite, its departure, is described. As Radday notes, there are seven verbs of increase in (a₁)–(c₁) and seven verbs of decrease in (a₂)–(c₂).⁶ The first stanza, (a₂), is a full stanza with a chiastic structure as opposed to the one line of (a₁). This imbalance seems to be due to the combining of the J and P accounts as we shall see below. The next two stanzas describing the fate of the ark and the mountains are in linear form. Thus, in G₁, the pattern presented is linear—chiastic—chiastic, and in G₂, it is chiastic—linear—linear. This type of structural reversal for stanzas is quite common in Hebrew poetry.

The remaining unit on the flood, unit *c*, is at the center of the micro-chiasm that covers G1 and G2. It, like (a1), is a single line: "And swelled the waters on the earth one hundred and fifty days" (7:24), which describes the number of days (here 150 as opposed to 40) and picks up the language of b1 (waters on the earth) and c1 (swelled). Thus, it could also be considered part of the a-level, but due to its central position is labeled *c*.

The *b*-level units of the G1-G2 chiasm refer to Noah and the animals. They are as follows:

b1 On Humans and Animals

(a1) On Humans and Animals not in Ark (chiastic structure: 7:21–22 P tradition; 7:23a–c J tradition)

- a1 7:21 And all flesh died that moved on the **earth**,
- b1 *birds*,
- c1 domestic animals, wild animals, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth,
- d1 and all *human beings*;
- e1 7:22 everything on dry land
- f1 in whose nostrils was the breath of life died.
- f2 7:23 He blotted out every living thing
- e2 that was on the face of the ground,
- d2 *human beings*
- c2 and animals and creeping things
- b2 and *birds* of the air;
- a2 they were blotted out from the **earth**.

(a2) On Humans and Animals in Ark (P tradition)

- a1 7:23d And he spared, however,
- b1 Noah and those
- c1 with him in the ark.

c: On the flood: 7:24: And swelled the waters on the earth one hundred and fifty days

b2 On Humans and Animals

(a3) On Humans and Animals in Ark (P tradition)

- a2 8:1a And remembered God
- b2 Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals
- c2 with him in the ark

The first *b*-level stanza forms a very tight chiasm with clear word parallelism, and the last two stanzas are parallel linear stanzas with the structure *a*₁–*a*₂ reference to God—*b*₁–*b*₂ reference to Noah and animals—*c*₁–*c*₂ reference to ark. These last two stanzas are separated by the short *c*-level reference to the flood swelling for 150 days.

While the above proposal is not a perfectly balanced chiastic structure in regards to content—two *b*-units describing the fate of humans and animals, (*a*₁) and (*a*₂) are opposite a single unit, (*a*₃)—there is nevertheless a clear concentric pattern in *G*₁–*G*₂ that alternates between descriptions of the flood (*a*₁, *c*, and *a*₂) (*A*) and descriptions of the fate of humans and animals (*b*₁ and *b*₂).

Also, if one looks at the structural nature of the stanzas, then the following perfect chiastic structure emerges:

(Lord shuts Noah in: end of previous main unit *F*₁)

*a*₁ 40 days (single line)

*b*₁ Two chiastic stanzas (ark lifted and mountains covered)

*c*₁ 15 cubits (end of description of mountains covered)

*d*₁ Chiastic stanza (life on earth destroyed)

*e*₁ Linear stanza (life in ark saved)

f 150 days (single line *a*₄)

*e*₂ Linear stanza (God remembers life in ark)

*d*₂ Chiastic stanza (flood turned off)

*c*₂ 150 days (beginning of description of ark resting on mountain)

*b*₂ Two linear stanzas (ark rests on mountain and mountains uncovered)

*a*₂ 40 days (opening clause of next main unit *F*₂)

(Noah opens window: continuation of opening clause of *F*₂)

Here the mention of numbers is used to divide the four pairs of stanzas (*b*₁, *d*₁–*e*₁, *e*₂–*d*₂, *b*₂). These pairs of stanza have a reverse order in the second half of the chiasm in regards to whether they have a linear or chiastic structure: chiastic-chiastic, chiastic-linear, linear-chiastic, linear-linear.

One can thus see the high degree of compositional thought that has gone into these central units. There is also overlap with the previous and following main textual units, *F*₁ and *F*₂. The second mention of the forty days is an introductory clause to the story opening the window of the ark and sending out the birds. This story begins with Noah opening a window, which breaks and reverses the LORD shutting Noah in at the end of *F*₂.

Finally, as with the priestly creation account, there is hidden number symbolism: there are seven verbs of increase, seven words of decrease, and ten textual units in the combined G1 and G2 (7 a-level units and 3 b-level units).⁷ This is combined with the clearly significant numbers of 15 cubits and 150 days, the symbolism of which is not known.

From the above analysis, it is clear that G1 and G2 are a single compositional unit. However, from the perspective of the compositional structure of the whole flood story, they should be considered two separate, though interconnected, units. This is because these two units are part of the double scene nature of the whole composition: there are two descriptions of the collection of animals (B1 and C1), entry into the ark (D1 and F1), the coming of the flood (E1 and G1), the flood abating (G2 and E2), leaving the ark (F2 and D2), and two descriptions of animals as food (C2 and B2). From this perspective G1 and G2 should be treated as two scenes that are divided by mention that the flood lasted 150 days. This line also marks the halfway point of the entire story where the first half describes the reasons for the flood and its coming, and the second half describes its abating and God's promise not to do it again.

The above analysis also slightly contradicts Radday's and Wenham's proposals in regards to the exact center of the flood story. They both place God remembering (b₃ above) at the center. Wenham's chiasm for the central part of the story is as follows:

- K1 Yahweh shuts Noah in (7:16)
 - L1 40 days flood (7:17a)
 - M1 Waters increase (7:17b-18)
 - N1 Mountains covered (7:19-20)
 - O1 150 days waters prevail ([7:21-]24))
 - P God remembers Noah (8:1)
 - O2 150 days waters abate (8:3)
 - N2 Mountain tops visible (8:4-5)
 - M2 Waters abate (8:5)
 - L2 40 days (end of) (8:6a)
 - K2 Noah opens window of ark (8:6b)

Wenham's proposal places too much emphasis on the word parallelism concerning 150 days rather than looking at the structure of the stanzas of this section. His proposal also does not take into account 7:21-23, the account of the perishing of all life besides Noah (b₁ and b₂

of the chiasm proposed here) nor 8:2, the description of the flood being turned off (a5 above). He thus fails to notice the A1-B1-A2-B2-A3 alternating pattern between descriptions of the flood and descriptions of the animals and Noah. As argued above, the second mention of 150 days is actually chiastically opposite the mention of 15 cubits. However, though God remembering Noah and those in the ark is not the exact chiastic center, because it begins G2, it does mark the turning point in the narrative. From this perspective Radday and Wenham are correct in noticing its central position. However, this position is shared with the mention of the flood lasting 150 days, the end of G1.

As one can see, paying attention to the smaller structural levels helps to determine the precise demarcation of the larger structural levels. This does not mean that such determination is always easy; it can be quite difficult, as in the case of the dividing line between A1 and B1:

A1 Scene 1: God decides to end all flesh, but Noah to make Ark (6:11–18)

- a1 Gods sees corruption and violence and decides to destroy all flesh (11–13)
 - b1 Noah to build ark (14–16)
- a2 God will bring flood to destroy all life (17)
 - b2 God will make covenant with Noah (18a)

B1 Scene 2: Animal collection I (6:18b–22)

- a1 Noah is to take family into ark
 - b1 Noah is to take animals into ark

As mentioned above, these two scenes are actually part of the same scene—namely, a single speech by God. However, from the perspective of the schema of double scenes, the animal collection is clearly intended to be a separate unit.

At this point in the text, the exact dividing line is not clear. Should 6:18a, God saying he will set a covenant with Noah, be part of A1 or B1? The full text is as follows:

God Will Make Covenant (linear stanza)

- a1 6:18a And I will set up
 - b1 with (תנ) covenant,
 - c1 *with you* (ותנ)

What to Bring in Ark (double chiastic stanza)

- a1 6:18b–c And you will **bring** into the ark,
- b1 *yourself* (תבא)

- c1 and sons-your
and wife-your
and wives
of sons-your
- b2 **with you** (אִתְּךָ)
- a2 6:19 And of every living thing, of all flesh,
you shall **bring** two of every kind into the ark,
- b3 to **keep them alive with you** (אִתְּךָ);
c2 they shall be **male and female**.
- 6:20 Of the birds according to their kinds,
and of the animals according to their kinds,
of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind,
two of every kind shall come in to you,
- b4 to **keep them alive**.
- a3 6:21 Also **take** with you every kind of food that is eaten and store it up; and
it shall serve as food for you and for them.”

Noah Obeyed (single linear line)

6:22 Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

Here, 6:18b–c and 6:19–22 are clearly connected: both concern instructions on who will enter the ark and instructions that both humans and animals are to enter in couples. The two stanzas also form a double chiasm based on what Noah is to bring with him on the ark (a-level), with himself (b-level), and a specific list of what to bring (c-level). The b-level transitions from you/yourself to “keeping alive”: yourself (b1), with you (b2), keep alive with you (b3), keep alive (b4).

Traditionally, 6:18a is seen as being the introduction to the instructions on what to take into the ark. In support of this, it does contain the keyword “with you” (אִתְּךָ) at its end; however, this “with you” more parallels the “with covenant” or “this, a covenant” (אֶת-בְּרִיתִי). Also, besides this word parallel, there is no structural relationship with the instructions on what to take into the ark. In fact, the statement looks back to the previous verse (17) where God says he will destroy all flesh: “For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die.” The covenant with Noah is thus in contrast to the lack of one with all flesh: God will destroy all flesh but will save Noah and those with him.

16:18a, the mention of the covenant with Noah, also creates the following structural linear pattern with the rest of A1:

- a1 God's decision to kill all flesh
 - b1 God will save Noah: instructions to make ark
- a2 God's decision to kill all flesh
 - b2 God will save Noah: *covenant made with Noah*

The reference to the covenant explains the instructions to build the ark: Noah is to build the ark because God is making a covenant with him.

Also, in regards to the overall structure, the reference to the covenant creates strong parallels with both the G1 (God kills all flesh) and G2 (God remembers his covenant with Noah and saves him) and A2 (the rainbow covenant where God will never again destroy all flesh). In fact, A2 begins with almost the exact words as 6:18a: "Behold, I will set up a covenant with you" (9:9). Thus, on several structural grounds, the mention of the covenant with Noah should be considered as part of A1.

As noted above, the rest of the compositional sections are clearly delineated, usually with a line mentioning the passage of time. The parallelism between chiastic levels is also very clear and can be summarized as follows:

1. A1 describes God deciding to destroy all flesh by flood, but makes a covenant with Noah, and A2 describes God making a covenant with Noah never again to destroy all flesh by flood.
2. B1 Noah is to collect food for all animals and thus nourish them, and in B2 animals are to nourish humans. There is thus the logic that because humans saved all the animals and kept them alive, they can now eat them.
3. In C1, the second set of instructions on what to take, the LORD specifies that extra clean animals and birds are to be taken, and in C2 these extra animals and birds are used for sacrifices to the LORD. Since sacrifices were seen as supplying food to the gods, the two scenes of animal collection are thus paralleled by two scenes where they become food.
4. D1 describes the entry into the ark, which clearly parallels D2 which describes the exit from the ark.
5. E1, a brief description of the coming of the flood, parallels the brief description of the flood abating in E2.

6. In F1 there is another description of the entry into the ark and the ark being sealed, which is paralleled in F2 with the opening of the ark and a partial exit with the sending out of the birds.
7. G1 contains a second description of the flood coming and G2 the first description of the flood abating.

The above analysis shows the highly structured nature of the final flood story. There are 14 scenes or main compositional units in total besides the introduction and conclusion which, considering its relation to the number 7, is unlikely a coincidence. Seven is the number associated with the order of creation in the Ancient Near East, and, in the flood story, we have ordered destruction and re-creation. Such precise parallelism and structural balance do not occur by chance and indicate the chiastic structures were the compositional intent of the final redactor.

Separating the J and P Material: The Entries into the Ark

Wenham argues that the compositional wholeness of the flood story, due to the overarching chiastic structure, points to one author, and goes on to say, “The documentary hypothesis may yet be defended, if one is prepared to posit a most ingenious and thorough redactor who blended J and P into a most marvelous and coherent unity.”⁸ This supposed monumental task is, perhaps, not as difficult as Wenham proposes. While the above analysis does indicate ingenious artistry on the part of the redactor, the simplest means of creating a chiasm with two stories with similar scenes would be to double up on the scenes—which does not require a huge amount of ingenuity. The redactor does, however, do an excellent job using this technique.

The relative simplicity becomes apparent when one lays out the scenes of J and P in order. The following outline uses the standard division of the text into J and P:

| Scene | Division of Text | J or P |
|--------------|---|--------|
| Introduction | LORD decides to blot out humans, animals, and birds | J |
| Scene 1 | God decides to end all flesh | P |
| Scene 1 | God instructs building of the ark | P |
| Scene 1 | J text not present—likely completely subsumed into P | J |
| Scene 2 | God commands to take animals—male and female | P |
| Scene 3 | LORD commands to take 7 clean animals, 2 unclean animals, and 7 birds | J |

| | | |
|----------|---|------------------|
| Scene 4 | Entry into ark I | J (mostly) |
| Scene 5 | Flood description I | J (mostly) |
| Scene 6 | Entry into ark II | P (mostly) |
| Scene 7 | Flood description II | P (mostly) |
| Scene 7 | Animal destruction | P and J combined |
| Scene 8 | Flood abatement I | P |
| Scene 9 | Exit from ark I with mention of flood abatement I | J |
| Scene 10 | Flood abatement II | P |
| Scene 11 | Exit from ark II | P |
| Scene 12 | LORD promises not to destroy humans, animals, and birds | J |
| Scene 13 | No action parallel: God allows the eating of animals | P |
| Scene 14 | God promises not to destroy all flesh | P |

Generally, the division is clear due to the use of either Yahweh or Elohim when referencing God. When laid out in the above manner, the combining of the two stories in a chiastic structure does not seem overly complicated. For the most part, J and P scenes are alternated.

The major change seems to be the elimination of the J account of the building of the ark, which was likely merged with the P account in scene 1.⁹ If the two accounts differed and were thus contradictory, the redactor would have to pick one as his description.

The main editorial work seems to have been in the entry into the ark and flood description scenes. However, due to the specific types of language used by J and P, the unraveling of the strands is not difficult. Careful analysis reveals not only the editorial work, but the likely structures of the original J and P texts. The following shows the likely J, P, and R (redactor) elements of this section with reason for assignment in parentheses:

| Verse | Division of Text | Author (reason) |
|--------------------|---|-----------------|
| Ark entry I | | |
| 7:6 | Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came on the earth | P (Use of date) |

| | | |
|--------|---|--|
| 7:7 | And Noah with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood. | P (Same as wording for covenant with Noah in 6:18 and use of "flood" instead of "rain") |
| 7:8 | Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, | J (Matches descriptions of animals found in the J announcement of destruction [6:7] and J instructions to collect animals [7:2]) |
| 7:9a-b | two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, | J but possibly P (Both J and P animal descriptions use "male and female," but only P used "two and two," 6:19-20) |
| 7.9c | as God had commanded Noah. | P (Use of name Elohim [God]) |

Flood description I

| | | |
|-------|--|---|
| 7:10a | And after seven days | J (Schema of 7 days) |
| 7:10b | the waters of the flood came on the earth. | P (Use of "waters of flood" instead of "rain") |
| 7:11 | In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. | P (Use of date and use of flood caused by waters below and above instead of rain) |
| 7:12 | The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. | J (Schema of 40 days and use of "rain") |

Ark entry II

| | | |
|----------|--|---|
| 7:13 | On the very same day Noah with his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons entered the ark, | J (P does not name the sons elsewhere in the flood story) |
| 7:14-16b | they and every wild animal of every kind, and all domestic animals of every kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every bird of every kind—every bird, every winged creature. They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; | P (Matches description of animals in the P animal collection, 6:19-20) |
| 7:16c | and Yahweh shut him in | J (Use of name of Yahweh. This was moved by R and likely came after the entry into the ark but before the coming of rain) |

Flood description II

| | | |
|---------|---|--|
| 7:17 | The flood continued forty days on the earth | R (Addition using P and J wording to replace description of fountains and windows opening, 7:11) |
| 7:18–20 | The waters swelled and increased greatly on the earth; and the ark floated on the face of the waters. The waters swelled so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered; the waters swelled above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep. | P (Use of waters swelling due to fountains opened and use of the number 15) |

The redactor thus seems to have thoroughly mixed the material to create two entries into the ark and two descriptions of the coming of the flood/rains. This was likely done to preserve both traditions. If each was kept in the original form, it would be clear that there were two separate entries made and not one. The redactor combined the two entries into the same event described twice.

We shall begin by looking at the J and P material separately, beginning with the J material. The redactor, by combining the J and P materials, seems to have caused two sets of elements to be reversed, because he has the P people entry into the ark followed by the J animal entry, and then the J people entry into the ark followed by the P animal entry. Consequently, the original J animal entry likely came after the J people entry, and likewise for the P material. Second, this in turn would mean the J description of the rain starting after seven days (7:10a) and falling for forty days (7:12) should logically come after the LORD had shut Noah in (17:16c) and not before.

“Correcting” these reversals produces the following chiasm:

- a1 For in *seven days* I will send *rain* on the *earth* for *forty days and forty nights* (7:4)
- b1 And Noah did all that the LORD commanded him (7:5)
- c1 On the very same day **these entered**
- d1 Noah
- e1 and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah,
- d2 and the wife of Noah
- e2 and the three wives of his sons

- c2 with them **into the ark** (7:13)
 - d3 From the animals clean,
 - e3 and from the animals that are not clean,
 - d4 and of birds,
 - e4 and of everything that creeps on the ground,
- c3 two and two, **went with** Noah into the ark, male and female, (7:8–9b)
- b2 [P: as had commanded him God (7:9c/7:16b)] and shut the LORD him inside. (7:16c)
- a2 And after *seven days* (7:10a) the *rain* fell on the *earth* *forty days and forty nights* (7:12)

This chiasm is bound by an inclusio of the mention of the rain coming after seven days and falling for forty days and forty nights. It is interesting that the P phrase “male and female as had God commanded” (7:9c) is found at the end of the J account of the animals entering the ark (7:8–9b) and at the end of the P account of the animals entering (7:16a–b). There may thus have been an original “LORD” commanding in the J original, which has been changed to “God” by the redactor in his combining of the J and P material.

As with the J material, the P description of the animals entering the ark likely came after that of Noah entering, and the P description of the flood starting likely came after Noah and the animals had entered the ark. This produces the following P description:

- a1 Noah was **six hundred years** old (7:6a)
 - b1 when the *flood of waters came on the earth*. (7:6b)
 - c1 And Noah with his sons and his wife and the wives of his sons went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood (7:7), as God had commanded Noah. (7:9c)
 - d They and every wild animal of every kind,
 - and all domestic animals of every kind,
 - and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth,
 - and every bird of every kind—every bird, every winged creature.
 - c2 They went with Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; (7:14–16)
 - b2 the *waters of the flood came on the earth*. (7:10b)
- a2 In the **six hundredth** year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. (7:11)

Again, a chiastic structure is formed by this simple exchange of material. In addition, by placing the bursting forth of the fountains and opening of the windows after the entry into the ark, the following pattern occurs with the P descriptions of the coming and abating of the flood:

- a1 Fountains and windows are opened (linear stanza): instead of the single J line
 - b1 Ark lifted up (chiastic stanza)
 - c1 Mountains covered (chiastic stanza)
- a1 Fountains and windows closed (chiastic stanza)
 - b1 Ark comes to rest (linear stanza)
 - c1 Mountains uncovered (linear stanza)

This is a more balanced structure than the one created by the redactor and discussed above, because the singular J line is replaced by a full stanza, like the rest of the units.¹⁰

This reversal between stanzas being linear and chiastic also continues with the exit from the ark, which has a linear structure, and the entry, which, as noted above, has a parallel structure. The P exit is as follows:

- a1 God tells Noah and family to leave ark (8:15–16)
 - b1 and then to take animals out of ark (8:17a)
 - c1 This is so they can be fruitful and multiply (8:17b)
- a2 Noah and family leave ark (8:18)
 - b2 and then animals leave ark (8:19)

As the preceding analysis indicates, both the J and P accounts seem to have been arranged chiastically. This in turn would make the redactor's work easier.

The J Chiasm

The J material produces the following chiastic structure:

Introduction: On the children of the sons of God (6:1–4)

- a1 Sons of God take wives
 - b1 LORD limits human life
- a2 Children born to the sons of God

A1 LORD decides to destroy all humans and animals (6:5–10)

- a1 LORD sees wickedness of humans
 - b1 LORD sorry he made humans
 - b2 LORD decides to blot out humans and animals

a2 Noah righteous in LORD's sight and three sons are listed

B1 Noah is told to enter ark and take clean animals (7:1-3)

a1 LORD tells Noah to build ark (eliminated or merged with P)

b1 LORD tells Noah to go into ark because he, alone of his generation, is righteous

c1 LORD tells Noah to take 7 pairs of clean animals and 1 pair of unclean animals into ark

C1 Noah enters ark, rains come, LORD shuts Noah in ark, rains continue (7:4-5, 7-8, 10, 12, 16b, [17], 22-23)

a1 Rain will come in 7 days and it will rain 40 days and blot out life (7:4)

b1 Noah obeys the LORD (7:5)

c1 Noah's family enters ark (7:13)

c2 Animals enter ark (7:8-9b)

b2 LORD shuts Noah in the ark (7:16b)

a2 In 7 days waters come (7:10) and rains fall for 40 days (7:12) and blots out life (7:23a-c)

C2 Rains stop, Noah opens window and flood abates (8:6-12, 13b)

a2 Rains from heaven stop (8:2b) after 40 days

b3 Noah opens window of the ark (8:6)

c3 Raven sent out and does not return (8:7)

d1 Dove sent out and returns (8:8-9)

d2 After seven days, dove sent out and returns (8:10-11)

c4 After seven days, dove sent out and does not return (8:12)

b4 Noah removes cover from ark (8:13b)

a4 Noah sees earth is drying (8:13c)

Missing: description of Noah leaving ark

B2 Clean animals sacrificed (8:20)

a1 Noah builds altar

b1 he takes from clean animals and birds

a2 he offers them as burnt offering on the altar

A2 LORD promises never again to destroy all humans and animals (8:21-22)

The sacrifice pleases the LORD, he will not curse humans again because they are by nature wicked

Conclusion: On the children of Noah (9:18–27)

Sons of Noah leave ark; they are named; these three will people the whole earth

a1 Noah plants a vineyard and falls asleep naked

b1 Ham sees nakedness

c1 Shem and Japheth cover nakedness

a1 Noah knows what is done

b1 Ham is cursed

c1 Shem and Japheth blessed

It is not immediately clear whether the introduction and conclusion are actually part of the structure or whether they are separate units, because they are only indirectly linked to the story. One argument in favor of including them as part of the chiasmic structure is the fact that both concern the generations immediately before and after the flood. The mingling of the sons of God with humankind causes the LORD to limit human life in the introduction, and their children seem to be the cause or part of the wickedness the LORD sees in humans in A1. Things are clearly not as they should be.

After the flood, sin quickly recurs in the story of Ham seeing his father's nakedness, which, as noted above, is a sexual sin, and thus makes a parallel with the sexual sin of intercourse between sons of God and humans. The return to the state of sin confirms the LORD's observation made in A2 that the human heart is, by nature, wicked. Thus, despite the flood, the world still contains human wickedness. There are thus clear thematic links between the introduction and A1 and between A2 and the conclusion. There is also a minor structural link: A1 ends by naming Noah's sons, and the conclusion begins by naming Noah's son, and thus comes at the end of A2.

The parallels between the units of the flood story proper are very clear. This is especially true for the beginning, middle, and end where there are repeated word and phrase parallels.

A1: Punishment announced

a1 6:5 The **LORD** saw that

b1 the wickedness of *humankind* was great in the *earth*,

c1 and that every inclination of the thoughts of **their hearts** was only evil continually.

a1 6:6 And the **LORD** was sorry that

b1 he had *made humankind* on the *earth*,

c12 and it grieved him to **his heart**.

- a1 6:7 So the **LORD** said, “I will **blot out**
 - b1 *human beings* I have *created* from the *ground*,
 - d1 people
 - d2 together with animals and creeping things
 - d3 and birds of the air;

C1: Punishment fulfilled

- a1 7:23 **He blotted out** every living thing
 - b1 that was on the face of the *ground*,
 - d1 human beings
 - d2 and animals and creeping things
 - d3 and birds of the air;
- a2 they were **blotted out**
 - b2 from the *earth*.

A2: Punishment will not occur again

- a1 The **LORD** said in **his heart**,
 - b1 “I will never again curse the *ground* because of *humankind*,
 - c1 for the inclination of the human **heart** is evil from youth;
 - d1 nor will I ever again **destroy** every living creature as I have done.”

Here the parallels are both word and structural and thus extremely clear. The first part of A1 parallels A2, and the last part of A1 parallels C1.

Analysis of the B-level (the collecting and sacrificing of clean animals) shows a likelihood that B1 also contained instructions for building the ark. The building of the ark is a necessary plot item that is currently missing from the J account. It may have been merged with the P account and rendered indistinguishable by the redactor, or it may have simply been completely contradictory in its design to the P description and, consequently, omitted. The building of the ark was likely in B1, since this would create a parallel with the building of the altar in B2.

The entry into the ark and the coming of the rains in the C-level has already been discussed in detail. C2 picks up the themes of C1: we are told the rain stops after 40 days, Noah opens a window and later removes the cover (in contrast to the LORD shutting Noah in), and there are intervals of seven days. Missing is a description of the full exit from the ark, which was likely omitted by the redactor in order to keep structural balance in his new chiastic arrangement.

There is, thus, ample evidence that the original J version was also arranged in a chiastic manner. However, due to the rearrangement of the J material by the final redactor, the exact contours of J cannot be determined with precision.

The P Chiasm

The P material also produces a tight chiastic design.

A1: God decides to kill all flesh by a flood, but makes covenant with Noah (6:11–17)

- a1 God sees corruption and violence and decides to destroy all flesh
 - b1 Noah to build ark
- a2 God will bring flood to end all flesh
 - b2 God will make covenant with Noah and family

B1: Noah to collect animals and food for them (6:18–22)

Noah, family, and two of all land creatures will be saved and Noah to provide food

C1: Waters begin and Noah and animals enter ark (7:6–7; 7:14–16b)

Noah is 600 years old (7:6a)

- a1 The flood waters begin (7:6b)
 - b1 Noah and family enter ark (7:7) as God commanded (7:9c)
 - c1 Animals enter ark (7:14)
 - b2 Two by two animals with Noah enter ark as God commanded (7:15–16b)
- a1 On day waters began (7:10b)

D1: Waters rise over earth (7:11; 7:17b–20)

In Noah's 600th year, 2nd month, and 17th days (7:11a. This is 77 days [2 times 30 plus 17] after waters began to rise)

- a1 The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven open (7:11b)
 - b1 Ark raised up over earth (7:17b–18)
 - c1 Mountains covered with water 15 cubits (7:19–20)

E: All flesh dies from flood and God remembers (7:21–22; 7:24–8:1)

- a1 All flesh with breath of life dies, except for those in the ark (7:21–22, 23)
 - b1 **The waters cover the earth for 150 days (7:24)**
- a2 God remembers Noah and animals (8:1a)

D2: Waters abate from the earth (8:1–5)

a1 Fountains and windows closed (8:1b–3a)

b1 *Waters abate for 150 days,*

In the 7th month and 17th day (which is exactly 150 days after fountains opened and raised ark, 7:11),

The ark rests on Ararat (8:3b–4)

b2 *In 10th month and 1st day* (73 days later plus 77 days of waters gradually rising equals 150 days)

Mountain tops appear (8:5)

c1 *In Noah's 601st year, 1st month, 1st day* (This is exactly one year after waters started covering the earth)

The waters are dried up from the earth (8:13a)

c2 *In Noah's 601st year, 2nd month, 27th day* (This is one year and ten days since fountains of heaven opened)

Earth is dry (8:14)

C2: Earth dries and Noah and animals leave ark (8:13–19, 9:1)

a1 God tells Noah and family to leave ark

b1 And then to take animals out of ark (8:15–17a)

c1 This is so they can be fruitful and multiply (8:17b)

a2 Noah and family leave ark (8:18)

b2 and then animals leave ark (8:19)

c2 Humans to be fruitful (9:1)

B2: Humans can now eat animals (9:1–7)

a1 Humans to be fruitful (9:1)

b1 Creatures will fear humans (9:2)

c1 Creatures are food for humans (9:3)

c2 Humans cannot eat animal blood (9:4)

b2 All flesh will be punished for shedding human blood (9:5–6)

a2 Humans to be fruitful (9:7)

A2: God makes covenant with Noah, promises never to destroy all flesh with a flood, rainbow as sign to remember (9:8–17)

a1 God makes covenant with Noah

b1 And with all creatures

c1 God will never destroy all flesh by flood, the sign of the covenant is the rainbow, and it will help God remember

b2 Rainbow will make God remember covenant with all flesh

a2 Rainbow is sign of covenant

As already noted in discussing the redactor's chiasm, the parallelism between the chiasitic units is very strong.¹¹ In both A₁ and A₂, God makes a covenant with Noah concerning the destruction of all land life by flood. What was said in A₁ becomes true in E, and God remembers Noah. Then in A₂, God sets up a rainbow in order to remember the new covenant. In B₁, Noah is told to collect the animals and provide them food, and in B₂ animals are allowed to be food for humans. Then in C₁, there is a doubled description of Noah entering the ark, which parallels the doubled mention of them leaving the ark in C₂. D₁ describes the coming of the water, and D₂ its abatement. E describes the destruction of the animals, which was declared in A₁, and is promised never to happen again in A₂. E also fulfils the covenant made with Noah.

The removal of the J material adds two extra parallel stanzas to the description of the abatement of the flood:

And it was in the first and six-hundredth year

On the first of the first month

The waters were dried-up from the earth

And in the month the second

In the seventh and twentieth day of the month

Was made dry the earth

This provides four stanzas describing the actual abatement, perhaps to indicate the totality of the abatement. Four, in the ancient world, was a number of completeness (expressed, for example, in the concept of the world having four directions and four winds).

The dates also provide another level of parallelism between the sections:

| | |
|---|--|
| Beginning of C ₁ : | Noah is 600 as flood first begins |
| Beginning of D ₁ : | In 600th year, 17th day of 2nd month, fountains and windows open |
| Middle of E ₁ : | 150 days flood endures |
| Beginning of 2nd D ₂ stanza: | 150 days flood abates |
| Beginning of 2nd D ₂ stanza: | 17th day of 7th month: ark rests on Ararat |
| Beginning of 3rd D ₂ stanza: | 1st day of 10th month: mountains appear |
| Beginning of 4th D ₂ stanza: | 601st year, 1st day of 1st month: flood waters gone |
| Beginning of 5th D ₂ stanza: | 27th day of 2nd month: earth dried |

The flood first begins when Noah turns 600. However, the fountains of the deep and windows of heaven are not opened until 77 days later (2 months of 30 days plus 17 days). The time it takes Noah to enter the ark (C₁) is thus 77 days. The action of D₁ all seems to take place on the same day: the fountains and windows opening causes the ark to rise up and the mountains to be covered. The actual flood begins at this point—the point when the earth is completely covered with water. We are told in E that this lasts 150 days, which in turn is also the timespan of unit E. Then at the beginning of D₂, we are told the fountains and windows are shut off, and the ark seems to rest on Ararat on the same day. It rests on Ararat exactly five months after the fountains and windows were opened, which is 150 days (five 30-day months).

The next two dates in D₂ provide further numerical order: the mountains appear 73 days later, which is 300 days after the flood first began (the 10th month of Noah's 600th year), and the flood waters are completely gone a year after the flood began (Noah's 601st birthday).

The dates as a whole indicate the full control of God and that everything is done in an orderly manner. The symbolic numbers 7 and 10 predominate (77, 7 and 10th [17th] day twice, 10th month, 73 days, 27th day) as they do in the priestly creation account.

To this list of significant numbers, we can add the number 150, whose significance is unknown. The same is also true for the last date given—that for the earth being completely dry. We are told this date is the 27th day of the 2nd month, that is, it is 87 days (two 30-day months plus 27 days) after the waters were gone (the 1st day of the 1st month of the 601st year). It is also 427 days since the flood first began, 1 year and ten days since the fountains and windows opened (or 12 30-day months plus 10 days, or 370 days), and 220 days since the fountains were shut off. None of these numbers appears to have any significance, though the numbers 7 and 10 do recur.

All of the numbers of the dates likely have some precise religiously symbolic significance, most of which are lost to us. What these precise numbers do, though, is indicate the orderly control of God in his bringing and removing the flood. This order is paralleled fittingly by the orderly construction of the story. Thus, though the story of the flood is one of chaos inundating the world, it is an orderly account, and the chaos is presented as being firmly under the control of God.

Conclusion

The above analysis provides strong evidence that chiasmic structuring was used over several centuries—no matter which dating scheme one uses for J, P, and R. J is usually dated to the monarchy, P to the Exilic Period, and R in the Persian Period. There is a high likelihood that R was fully aware of the chiasmic structuring of both J and P, because of the meticulous inter-splicing of the two chiasms. The redactor was careful to preserve both accounts: both versions were likely well established and cherished within various sections of the Jewish community.

Also, contrary to Wenham's thesis, because both J and P were arranged in chiasmic structures, it would not have been overly difficult for the redactor to splice the two stories together into one story. The two-source theory remains the best explanation for the doubling of events and also the two different language styles found in the text as we have it.

This paper has also shown the usefulness of paying attention to lower/micro-level structures when analyzing the text. A mid-level analysis may not be adequate for determining structural units of a text nor for determining the source material used by the redactor. Such structural analysis is, thus, a useful tool for both source and redaction criticism.

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Notes

1. Gordon J. Wenham, "The Coherence of the Flood Narrative," VT no. 28 (1978): 336–48, repr. in *"I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood": Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11* (ed. Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994): 436–47; Yehuda T. Radday, "Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structure, Analysis, Exegesis* (ed. John W. Welch; Provo, UT: Research Press, 1981): 99–100.

2. It is widely accepted that the Torah is the combination of several sources, a J source (this author refers to God Yahweh, which is Jahweh in German), an E source (this author refers to God as Elohim), a P source (this author has priestly concerns), and a D source (this author has the same style as the author of Deuteronomy). The flood story is widely accepted as being a combination of J and P and is often used as the prime example to demonstrate the source theory, because of the ease of separation of the sources according to style, which produces two almost complete versions of the story.

3. This vagueness has led some scholars to suggest that Canaan did more than simply look. However, there is no real evidence of this, besides the extremity of the curse which seems disproportionate to the sin. That being said, the laws on sexual relationships in Lev 18 and 20 speak of “uncovering the nakedness” when referring to sex, and furthermore connect these illicit sexual practices with the Canaanites. However, in the Noah story, Ham did not uncover his father’s nakedness, but Noah, due to his drunkenness, left his nakedness uncovered.

4. My own translation which follows the word order of the Hebrew (Leningrad Codex).

5. The criteria for deciding which lines belong to J and which to P is discussed below. The use of the number 40 is seen as being of the J source.

6. Radday, “Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative,” 99.

7. In the priestly creation account (Gen 1–2:4), creation is done in 7 days with 10 commands by God.

8. Wenham, “Coherence of the Flood Narrative,” 347–48.

9. Note that there are seemingly two beginnings for the description for building the ark: “Make yourself an ark of cypress . . .” (6:14); “This is how you are to make it . . .” (6:15). The second has very precise numerical measurements, which likely indicate the P source, because P seems to have a love of numbers.

10. See p. 38 above, “Redactor’s Chiasm,” and the chart providing reasons for the division of the text: 7:12: “Use of the name of Yahweh. This was moved by R and likely came after the entry into the ark but before the coming of the rain”.

11. See pp. 55–56 above, and the discussion of the redactor’s chiasm beginning p. 38 with the summary of the parallelism on p. 50.

Exegesis or Eisegesis

Does Chiastic Analysis Help Us to Understand Leviticus 20?

Jonathan Burnside

Chiastic studies have been vulnerable, on occasion, over the past fifty years to the charge that their existence may be more a matter of eisegesis rather than exegesis. This paper contends that it is possible to have objective, textual grounds for the existence of a chiasmus which can, in turn, be key to exegesis. In particular, it proposes that chiasmic analysis helps us to understand the complexities of Lev 20 and, furthermore, that this text should be held up as an example of a well-developed chiasmus in biblical law.¹ Towards the end of the paper I speculate on some of the particular functions this literary device may perform in the context of Lev 20. I also suggest some general criteria that may encourage us in developing rigorous and robust chiasmic analyses, so that we have even more to celebrate over the next fifty years.

1. Why Leviticus 20?

The stimulus for my looking closely at Lev 20 was the fact—obvious to the most casual reader—that this chapter covers similar ground to that of Lev 18. Both chapters have sexual offenses and other customs in neighboring nations as their theme, and many of the paradigm cases are the same (e.g., 18:8/20:11; 18:9/20:17; 18:15/20:12; 18:17a/20:14; 18:19/20:18; 18:20/20:10). However, although the substantive content is similar, the cases are presented very differently. This led me to the presumption that the literary presentation of the texts must be highly significant in some way, since nothing in *Torah* is redundant. McClenney-Sadler had shown that Lev 18 has a distinct internal structure, so, given the parallels between this and chapter 20, it was reasonable to assume that chapter 20

should have a formal structure as well. Nevertheless, that presumption ran counter to most commentators who have tended to regard Lev 20 as a miscellaneous collection which lacks any kind of literary presentation.² Grabbe concedes that original authors or redactors “may have arranged the material according to a logical pattern”³ but offers no suggestion as to what this might be.

Perhaps the most compelling reason to assume literary structure in Lev 20 is because of the broad hint towards the end of the chapter. At verse 25 we find the following exhortation: “You shall therefore make a distinction between the clean . . . and the unclean.” This implies that the preceding material is itself structured around a series of distinctions, and since the division between clean and unclean is a binary opposition (see the discussion under 4, below), it is plausible to suggest that at least part of Lev 20 may be structured as a series of binary oppositions. This is not to say that we cannot tolerate some degree of miscellany in biblical law, or Leviticus. It is to suggest that miscellany is a less plausible explanation where the text includes such an exhortation as Lev 20:25.

In fact, Lev 20 is characterized by a high degree of internal structure, even by the standards of biblical law. One aspect of this internal structure is signaled straightaway by the fact that Lev 20 is patterned on the Decalogue. Verses 5–21 echo the sequence of taboos in the Decalogue (e.g., Exod 20:3–14), as follows:

“Serving other gods” (e.g., Exod 20:3–5)

→ “honouring father and mother” (e.g., Exod 20:12)

→ “adultery” (e.g., Exod 20:14)

“Molech worship” (vv. 2–5)

→ “cursing parents” (v. 9)

→ “sexual offences” (vv. 10–21)

I have discussed the significance of the Decalogue pattern in Lev 20 elsewhere, suggesting that it helps to explain why the chapter begins and ends with cases concerning necromancy.⁴ This is because necromancy is closely tied to each of the main Decalogue headings in the chapter: (1) there is a close connection between necromancy and idolatry (vv. 2–6); (2) necromancy is seen as dishonoring to ancestors and is thus connected to the dishonoring of parents (v. 9); and (3) necromancy is also seen as being, in some sense, sexual since the form of necromantic divination described in verse 27 is thought to involve actual penetration of the ancestor spirit in the body of the practitioner.

I mention this only to signal, at an early stage of the argument, that Lev 20 is a highly sophisticated literary unit. However, as befits the focus of this publication, the rest of this paper will address a different aspect of the literary presentation of Lev 20—namely, its chiastic structure. I will argue that the overall chapter (20:2–27) is arranged chiastically and can be broken down to three main sections (vv. 2–6; 9–16; 17–21). *We will also see that the first and third sections (vv. 2–6 and 17–21) are themselves arranged chiastically and that the middle section (effectively, verses 10–16) is presented as a series of binary oppositions.*

2. Chiastic Penalties in Leviticus 20

The key to unlocking the internal structure is to take seriously the fact that whereas Lev 20 states the penalties for each prohibited sexual act, Lev 18 does not. I argue that the penalties of Lev 20, in fact, hold the key to the entire structure. This can be seen in table 1 below. It summarizes the different offenses in Lev 20 and identifies who is responsible for meting out the particular punishment.

Table 1: Responsibility for Punishing Human Beings in Leviticus 20

| Verse | Offense | Description of punishment | Punisher |
|--------|------------------------------------|--|----------|
| 20:2 | Molech worship | <i>“shall be put to death; the people of the land shall pelt him with stones”</i> | Humanity |
| 20:3 | Molech worship | <i>“I myself will set my face against that man and will cut him off from among his people”</i> | God |
| 20:4–5 | Turning a blind eye | <i>“I will set my face against that man and against his family, and will cut them off from among their people, him and all who follow him”</i> | God |
| 20:6 | Mediums and wizards | <i>“I will set my face against that person and will cut him off from among his people”</i> | God |
| 20:9 | Cursing parents | <i>“shall be put to death”</i> | Humanity |
| 20:10 | Adultery | <i>“shall be put to death”</i> | Humanity |
| 20:11 | Relations with father’s wife | <i>“shall be put to death”</i> | Humanity |
| 20:12 | Relations with daughter-in-law | <i>“shall be put to death”</i> | Humanity |
| 20:13 | Male homosexuality | <i>“shall be put to death”</i> | Humanity |
| 20:14 | Relations with wife and her mother | <i>“shall be burned with fire”</i> | Humanity |

| | | | |
|-------|--|---|----------|
| 20:15 | Bestiality (man) | "shall be put to death" | Humanity |
| 20:16 | Bestiality (woman) | "shall be put to death" | Humanity |
| 20:17 | Relations with sister | "shall be cut off" | God |
| 20:18 | Menstruant | "shall be cut off from among their people" | God |
| 20:19 | Relations with mother's sister/ father's sister | "they shall bear their guilt" (JPS) | God |
| 20:20 | Relations with uncle's wife | "they shall bear their guilt: they shall die childless" (JPS) | God |
| 20:21 | Relations with brother's wife | "they shall remain childless" (JPS) | God |
| 20:27 | Mediums and wizards | "shall be put to death; they shall be stoned with stones" | Humanity |

It is clear from table 1, then, that Lev 20 has a complex internal structure based on who has responsibility for punishing the offender. This is arranged chiastically, as follows (see fig. 1 below):

Figure 1: The Overall Chiastic Structure of Leviticus 20

| | |
|------------|---------------------|
| A | Humanity (v. 2) |
| B | God (vv. 3–6) |
| C [center] | Humanity (vv. 9–16) |
| B' | God (vv. 17–21) |
| A' | Humanity (v. 27) |

According to verse 2, *humanity* is responsible for meting out punishment (“[the offender] *shall be put to death*; the people of the land shall stone him with stones”). This contrasts with verses 3–6, where *God* is responsible (“I myself will *set my face against* that man, and will *cut him off from among his people*”). Short versions of these phrases (“shall be put to death” and “set my face against” and “cutting off from among their people”) recur throughout the chapter. They signify punishment either by humanity or by God. This means that humanity is also responsible for “putting to death” in verses 9–13 and 15–16. Verse 14 refers to a burning, rather than to a simple stoning, and hence is phrased differently (“they shall be burned with fire”); however, the implication is that humanity is also responsible. Likewise, the repetition of cutting off seems to indicate that God is responsible for punishing in verses 17–18 because *karet* (cutting off) is a characteristically divine form of punishment.⁵ Other

characteristically divine forms of punishment include bearing iniquity (v. 19), dying childless (v. 20), and being childless (v. 21).

It could be argued that if the cutting off in 20:17 and 20:18 were seen as human rather than divine punishments, table 1 would be a neater chiasm balanced by three divine punishments apiece. However, there are several reasons for rejecting this. First, it is contrary to the use of *karet* elsewhere in Lev 20 and to its typical use in the Hebrew Bible. Second, and this is an important methodological point in the context of this publication, a chiasm has validity because of its content and sequence and not because of the length or number of the units that comprise that sequence. Third, and perhaps most important, designating 20:17–21 as divine punishments produces an independent chiastic arrangement for 20:17–21 that balances the chiastic structure of 20:3–6 (see the discussion under 5, below).

On this basis, I propose that Lev 20:2–27 can be divided into three main sections. These are:

1. verses 3–6 (section B, above),
2. verses 9–16 (section C, above, which is the center of the chiasm),
and
3. verses 17–21 (section B', above).

This is a breakthrough in understanding both the structure and the content of this passage because when we look at each of these sections individually, we find that each section, in turn, has its own internal literary structure. If we look at verses 3–6 (section B above), we find that they have a chiastic structure. We also find that verses 17–21 (section B' above) have a chiastic structure, while verses 10–16 (section C) are a series of binary oppositions (see further below). (The surrounding frame of verses 2 and 27 can be addressed separately, as indicated above.)⁶ They are also connected by several hortatory passages (20:7–8, 22–26) that connect sections B and B' to the Decalogue.

We will look at each section in turn, starting with section B (vv. 3–6).

3. Chiastic Structure of Leviticus 20:3–6: God's Punishment of the Offender and His Family

Starting with section B, we noted in table 1 and figure 1 above that Lev 20:3–6 is a single unit because God is responsible for punishing this group of offenses. I argue that this section has a chiastic literary structure because the object of the punishment moves from the individual

offender (in verse 3) to the “offender plus *mishpachah*” (in verse 5) and back to the individual offender again (in verse 6; see fig. 2 below).

Figure 2: The Chiastic Structure of Leviticus 20:3–6

| | | |
|------------|--|---|
| D | Punishment of offender <i>alone</i> | “I myself will set my face against <i>that man</i> , and will cut <i>him</i> off from among his people” (20:3; <i>God speaking</i>) |
| E [center] | Punishment of offender <i>and his mishpachah</i> (i.e., group of families) | “I will set my face against <i>that man and against his family [mishpachah]</i> , and will cut them off from among their people, him and all who follow him” (20:5; <i>God speaking</i>) |
| D’ | Punishment of offender <i>alone</i> | “I will set my face against <i>that person [lit. soul]</i> , and will cut <i>him</i> off from among his people.” (20:6; <i>God speaking</i>) |

The word *mishpachah* (here translated “kin”) is usually thought to refer to a “suprahousehold social unit” or “protective association of families” and is “generally understood to be coterminous with the inhabitants of a village.”⁷ This means that the pivot of the chiasm is the punishment of “the man *and* his group of nuclear households” (*mishpachah*). Special emphasis is placed on the fact that the man’s behavior has serious consequences not only for him but also for his *mishpachah* (“I will set my face against that man *and against his family*”). This observation is not unique to the structure of Lev 20. We will see, in the discussion under 4 below, that verse 9 (which prohibits cursing father and mother) is the overall heading for the sexual offenses described in verses 10–21. This determines how we read the sexual taboos themselves. Biblical law defines sexual offenses partly in terms of how they impact the offender’s family.

The chiasm moves from the individual offender to the offender plus *mishpachah* and back to the individual offender. The chiastic structure would be perfect if the offender in 20:6 was described as a “man” (*’ish*) instead of a soul (*nefesh*). However, the use of a variant noun highlights the precise nature of the offence, namely the turning towards the *’obot* (familiar spirits) and *yidd’onim* (those who have familiar spirits). Also, the word *nefesh* has the advantage of not being gender-specific. This makes sense, given that the paradigm case of necromancy in 20:27 envisages either “a man or a woman.” More intriguingly, the dual reference to man (*’ish*) and soul (*nefesh*) may reflect humankind’s dual nature.⁸ It may be that what is being punished is both the human and divine elements of Molech worship and wizardry. To put it another way, the use

of these words may highlight the physical and spiritual aspects of these offenses, that is, deeds done with the body and with the spirit. This may help to explain why both humankind and YHWH punish these offenses. The duality of human and divine in 20:3–6 may anticipate another significant duality that runs through the chapter as a whole—namely, rebellion against human and divine forms of authority. Molech worship and wizardry (20:3–6) constitute rebellion against divine authority whilst cursing parents (20:9) and various sexual offences (20:10–16) constitute rebellion against family authority.⁹

4. Structure of Leviticus 20:9–16: The Center of the Chiasm

Based on my argument, the center of the chiasm is Lev 20:9–16. This section is not set out chiastically. Instead, my argument is that the sexual offenses in verses 10–21 are developed through a series of paired binary oppositions. Each pair of oppositions is placed in an orderly fashion at a relative distance from the paradigm of heterosexual relations. Although this section is not itself structured chiastically, it supports the broader argument regarding the chiastic structure of Lev 20. First, the sequence of binary oppositions starts at verse 9 and ends at verse 16, which corresponds to the center of the chiasm. Second, the fact that these verses are intricately structured is consistent with the idea that special significance is given to the center of the chiasm. As a result, the center of the chiasm can be set out briefly.


I have argued elsewhere that verses 10–16 cannot be regarded as a self-contained group of sexual offenses.¹⁰ Verse 9 (which prohibits adultery) is part of the Decalogue pattern in Lev 20 and forms the heading for verses 10–21.¹¹ This is confirmed by the fact that, in purely drafting terms, 20:10–21 is a continuation of 20:9. Verse 9 begins with *ki-ish 'asher* (“If anyone”; JPS), and each of the verses in 10–21 follow with either *weish 'asher* (“If a man”; JPS) or *weishshah 'asher* (“If a woman”; JPS). The sole exception is verse 19, which is singled out as a “hard case” (see fig. 3 below). It is thus impossible to formally exclude verse 9 from an understanding of verses 10–21 because it is the first verse in a series. The fact that verse 9 (which prohibits cursing father and mother) is the heading for verses 10–21 determines how we read the sexual taboos themselves.

The key question now is: how are the sexual offenses in verses 10–21 organized, and what is the relationship between adultery in verse 9 and the various forms of it in verses 10–21? The answer is that they are developed through an extended series of binary oppositions. A binary

opposition is “a pair of terms conventionally regarded as opposites” (e.g., hot/cold; on/off).¹² Binary oppositions are frequently used as a means of structuring biblical thought. They are also frequently used in biblical law.¹³ By structuring thought through related oppositions, binary oppositions allow us to establish categories, construct sense, and create order.

Lev 20:10–16 contains a set of binary oppositions that is based around the identity of the sexual parties (see table 2 below). There are a total of six in all, and each column presents a different pair of oppositions.

Table 2: Binary Oppositions Regarding Identity of Sexual Partner(s) in Leviticus 20:10–16¹⁴

| Verse | Verse content | # 1 | # 2 | # 3 | # 4 | # 5 | # 6 |
|-------|---|---------------------------|--------|-----|-------------|---|-------------|
| 20:10 | "If a man <i>com-mits adultery</i> with another <i>man's</i> wife, if he <i>commits adultery</i> with his neighbour's wife" | Out-side family (non-kin) | — | ♂ ♀ | No marriage | ♂ ♀ | ♂ initiates |
| 20:11 | "The man who <i>lies</i> with his <i>father's</i> wife" | Inside family (kin) | Father | ♂ ♀ | No marriage | ♂ ♀ | ♂ initiates |
| 20:12 | "If a man <i>lies</i> with his <i>daughter-in-law</i> " | | Son | ♂ ♀ | No marriage | ♂ ♀ | ♂ initiates |
| 20:13 | "If a man <i>lies</i> with a <i>male</i> as with a woman" | | | ♂ ♂ | No marriage | ♂ ♂ | ♂ initiates |
| 20:14 | "If a man <i>takes</i> a <i>wife</i> and her <i>mother</i> also" | | | | Marriage | ♂ ♀ ♀ | ♂ initiates |
| 20:15 | "If a man <i>lies</i> with a <i>beast</i> " | | | | | ♂  | ♂ initiates |
| 20:16 | "If a woman <i>approaches</i> any <i>beast</i> and lies with it" | | | | | | ♀ initiates |

The biblical paradigm of normal sexual relations is that of marriage between a man and a woman (assuming they are not prohibited to each other for any reason). Adultery—which is the general heading for this section (v. 10)—is the archetypal sexual offense in the Bible because it is the paradigm case of sexual relations outside marriage. Each pair of

oppositions in this sequence (vv. 10–16) is placed, in order, at relative distance from the paradigm of normal sexual relations. Each represents a further deviation from the norm of heterosexual marriage. Lev 20:10–16 is thus a sophisticated play on a series of binary oppositions, as follows:

1. Outside family/inside family
2. Father/son
3. Heterosexual intercourse/homosexual intercourse
4. Nonmarriage/marriage
5. Sex between human beings/sex between human beings and animals (bestiality)
6. Man initiates/woman initiates

We can unpack this further, as follows:

- Lev 20:10 is opposed to the narrative typification of normal sexual relations because it concerns relations between one man and one woman who is already married to another man.
- Lev 20:11 is further opposed to the paradigm because the woman in question is *a family member*, as opposed to the wife of a neighbor (column 1).
- Lev 20:12 offers a further variation on the “same family” complication; *going “down” to the next generation* instead of “up” to the previous one (column 2).
- Lev 20:13 is even further opposed to the narrative typification of normal sexual relations because it is no longer one man and one woman but *one man and another man* (column 3).
- Lev 20:14 is yet further opposed to the narrative typification because it is no longer one man and one sexual partner but *one man and two sexual partners*, specifically a marriage between two partners who have the closest possible blood tie (column 4). Anthropologists note that this sexual encounter is widely abhorred. From a structural perspective, the reason for this may be, not that mother and daughter come into sexual contact with the same man but that they come into contact with each other through the same man.¹⁵
- Lev 20:15 is still further opposed to the normal narrative typification because it concerns relations between *a man and an animal* (column 5).

→ Finally, Lev 20:16 is further opposed to the narrative typification of normal sexual relations because it concerns relations between a human and an animal in which *the woman takes the initiative*, and the male submits (column 6). In verse 15, the man has sexual relations with a beast. However, he is still behaving “like a man” in terms of his sexual role. By contrast, in verse 16, the woman “approaches” the beast and behaves “like a man.” Although she performs the role of a man, she also performs the role of a woman by being the submissive partner. She, too, behaves like a beast. The beast, on the other hand, behaves like a beast, but it also behaves “like a man.” That is why it is the last in the series. It is the most extreme case of confusion imaginable—so much so that it is impossible to differentiate between the woman and the beast.

5. Chiastic Structure of Leviticus 20:17–21:
Cases of Uncovering Nakedness

Finally, we turn to verses 17–21 (section B’ in fig. 1, above). Verses 17–21 consist of six cases, all of which refer to uncovering nakedness, *viz.*, sexual intercourse. Sections B and B’ are parallel units because, in both sections, God is responsible for meting out punishments for these offenses (see table 1 above). Section B’ is also similar to section B because it, too, has a chiastic structure. This chiasm moves from taking and lying in the first two cases (vv. 17–18) to a pair of cases that contain no reference to either taking or lying (v. 19) and then to two final cases that refer to lying and taking (vv. 20–21; see fig. 3, below).

Figure 3: The Chiastic Structure of Leviticus 20:17–21

| | | | |
|------------|-----------|----------------------------------|---|
| F | [♂ and ♀] | ♂ said to uncover nakedness of ♀ | <i>takes</i> (v. 17) |
| G | [♂ and ♀] | ♂ said to uncover nakedness of ♀ | <i>lies</i> (v. 18) |
| H [center] | [♂ and ♀] | ♂ said to uncover nakedness of ♀ | (<i>neither takes nor lies</i>) (v. 19) |
| | [♂ and ♀] | ♂ said to uncover nakedness of ♀ | (<i>neither takes nor lies</i>) (v. 19) |
| G' | [♂ and ♀] | ♂ said to uncover nakedness of ♂ | <i>lies</i> (v. 20) |
| F' | [♂ and ♀] | ♂ said to uncover nakedness of ♂ | <i>takes</i> (v. 21) |

According to this, the center of the chiasm is 20:19. This concerns two cases: the mother's sister and the father's sister. Although the English language does not discriminate between these identities, subsuming both under the term "aunt," many cultures do distinguish between the two, including biblical Israel.¹⁶ These cases receive special emphasis because they are "hard cases." They are also the only cases in the whole of verses 19–21—and the entire chapter—not to have a designated punishment. This is explained by the motive clause in verse 19: "for that is to make naked one's near kin." The reference to "near kin" indicates that they are hard cases because they are right on the boundary of what constitutes near kin or family in early Israel, as far as sexual ethics is concerned. Family units must have a boundary, and there must come a point when that boundary is reached. The cases in Lev 20:19 are therefore at the limit of what is classified as wrongdoing. This means that it is hard to find the right punishment, and so none is given. Even so, the behavior is not recommended ("they shall bear their iniquity"). As in verses 3–6, above (where the offender's behavior was said to impact his *mishpachah*), ideas about the family help to structure the biblical understanding of sexual offenses.

6. Purpose of the Chiasm

Is this overall chiastic structure a purely literary device (art for art's sake)? Or is it an aid to transmitting and retaining information (art for memory's sake)? Or does it have some other purpose? Several motives may be suggested, although these are necessarily speculative. I do not wish to be dogmatic. I offer these in the hope they may connect with other ideas raised in this publication.

a. Its Perfection Is Appropriate to Describe Divine Intervention

The use of a chiasm to structure a short list of divine punishments in Lev 20:3–6 may be significant. This is because the basic form of a chiasm is ABA and can be as simple as the phrase *'ayin tachat ayin* ("an eye for an eye"; Exod 21:24). It is a perfectly symmetrical literary form. In that sense, the use of a chiasm is characteristically divine.¹⁷ This may be the reason why a chiasm is used to structure direct divine intervention. This is not, of course, to say that this is the only occasion in which a chiasm may be used. Nonetheless, there is a sense that this literary form is a particularly appropriate means of structuring offenses for which YHWH is the punishing agent.

b. It Brings Out the Unity of a Double-Sided Event

Wenham claims that “chiasmus brings out the unity of a double-sided event”¹⁸ (e.g., Lev 15:1–33 where the chiasmus demonstrates the unity of male and female as one gender made in God’s image). In Lev 20 there are two sides to punishment (YHWH and humankind). The chiasmus serves to bring out the unity of these events, namely that there is a divine-human partnership in punishment. This divine-human partnership is, in fact, underlined at the beginning and end of the text. The first offense (Molech worship) is punished by both humankind (Lev 20:2) and YHWH (20:3) in different ways. Likewise, the second offense (turning to mediums and wizards) is punished by both YHWH (20:6) and humankind (20:27).

Levine is puzzled by the repetition of mediums and wizards at the end of the chapter, but the *inclusio* gives the chapter its overall chiasmic structure (see table 1).¹⁹ The outer edge of the large chiasm (20:2, 27), where humankind punishes for Molech worship and wizardry, parallels the outer edge of the smaller chiasm (20:3, 6), where YHWH punishes for Molech worship and wizardry. Normally, when a particular party is given responsibility for punishing an offense, it is assumed that this is on the basis of jurisdiction. Lev 20, however, is interesting because it shows that the purpose of assigning responsibility is not to parcel up jurisdiction but to emphasize collaboration.²⁰

c. It Emphasizes Humankind’s Duty to Punish

One function of a chiasm is to draw attention to its center. The fulcrum of Lev 20 is verses 20:9–16, which focus on humankind’s responsibility to punish. Why is the responsibility of humankind stressed? It may be because, although God and humankind *together* punish serious offences (see section b above), humankind has a tendency to shirk its responsibilities. The chiasm emphasizes humankind’s responsibility because, of the two parties, humankind is apt to avoid meting out punishment, especially for idolatry, family, and sexual offenses. This is expressly anticipated by Lev 20:4, which describes the “people of the land” hiding their eyes from offenses committed in their midst. This problem is compounded when we reflect that the offenses listed in Lev 20 (and especially 20:9–16) would most likely have taken place either at home or close to home. Thus, the people most likely to know whether these offenses took place will be the offender’s own family. Verse 9 refers to parents, and so it is possible that they are the ones who, for all practical

purposes, are expected to initiate proceedings. Leviticus 20 is not unique in emphasizing this responsibility. Biblical law is familiar with the problem of reluctance to prosecute for capital offenses, especially among family members (see, e.g., Deuteronomy 13:6–11).

d. It Emphasizes the Relational Consequences of the Offenses

We saw in 2 above that the center of the chiasm in Lev 20:3–6 is the offender plus their *mishpachah*. The emphasis on penalties for the *mishpachah* is important for several reasons. First, it provides a powerful motive for overcoming any reluctance to initiate proceedings against an offender (see section c above). If humankind fails to punish, YHWH will punish anyway, but punishment will fall not only on the offender but also on the *mishpachah*. The offender has a primary responsibility not to lead his *mishpachah* into idolatry, and the *mishpachah* has a secondary responsibility not to follow him. Their responsibility is to resist the offender and to root him out. This confirms the suggestion, above, that the offenses listed in 20:3–6 are likely to take place close to home. Certainly, it is highly likely that an offense involving the offender's children (Lev 20:2) will be known within the wider group of families to which he belongs.²¹ Failure to act has consequences not only for the offender but also for this social unit. The midturn of this chiasm thus corresponds to the midturn of the chiasm for the chapter as a whole (i.e., humankind's responsibility to act). It also corresponds to the fulcrum of the chapter as a whole. It emphasizes the danger an individual may present not only to himself but also to the wider family structure. We have seen that the list of offenses in 20:9–16 form a single unit and that the juxtaposition of 20:9 with 20:10–16 implies that these are not sexual offenses but family offenses. All this means that there is a community aspect to sexual ethics in the Bible. What people do with each other sexually is not a matter for themselves only; it has implications for their families, other families, and society as a whole. This is why the midturn of 20:3–6 is important. It corresponds to the fulcrum of the chapter as a whole.

A third function of this small chiasm is to correspond not only to the midturn of the chapter but also to the midturn of the chiasm in Lev 20:17–21. The center of that chiasm indicates that the boundaries of permitted and prohibited sexual intercourse correspond to the boundary of the *mishpachah*. For these reasons, the chiasm in Lev 20:3–6 plays an important role by emphasizing the significance of the offender's acts for

his *mishpachah*, namely that God will set his face against the offender's *mishpachah* and "cut them off from among their people" (v. 5).

e. It Alludes to Well-Known Texts

Weinfeld claims that a chiasm may be used when the author or redactor wishes to quote from or allude to well-known established texts.²² It is a means of drawing attention to the source. In Lev 20:2–6, the chiastic structure is closely connected to the Decalogue. There we find the ban on having other gods besides YHWH (Exod 20:3) and the ban on making and worshipping an idol (Exod 20:4). These prohibitions recur in Lev 20:2–6, which prohibit the prostitution of following Molech (20:2–5) and "mediums and spiritists" (20:6). An important verbal parallel is the repetition of the phrase: "I am the Lord your God" (Exod 20:2). This key phrase opens the Decalogue and is repeated in the motivation clause (Lev 20:7) that follows the first chiasm (Lev 20:2–5).²³ It underlines the link between the chiasm and the Decalogue and makes it explicit.²⁴ The chiasm in Lev 20:2–6 invests the content with the specific and unique authority of God's direct voice to the people (Exod 20:1, 18–19). Lev 20 gains immeasurably in coherence when it is viewed as a literary reworking of themes from the Decalogue. This is not unusual. Jackson has made exactly the same claim in respect of the chiasm in Lev 24,²⁵ whilst Hartley has shown the close linguistic similarities between the Decalogue and Lev 19.²⁶

The internal structure of Lev 20:2–6 is also closely connected to the Covenant Code. Exod 22:18–20 lists a small group of self-contained cases concerning witchcraft, bestiality, and idolatry, which the Israelites appeared to associate with the practices of foreign peoples. Idolatry and witchcraft are the subject of the first chiasm (Lev 20:3–6), whilst bestiality appears as the climax of the middle section (Lev 20:9–16). Allusions to the Covenant Code occur elsewhere in *Leviticus*. Jackson notes that the chiastic structure of Lev 24 is closely connected, thematically, to the first section of the Covenant Code.²⁷

7. Concluding Comments

All claims regarding the existence of chiasmus must overcome the charge that the argument is more a matter of eisegesis rather than exegesis. This is a recurring challenge in the literature. For example, Douglas claimed to find a (chiastic) ring structure in *Leviticus*²⁸; however, Kiuchi found this unpersuasive, claiming Douglas's "seemingly arbitrary characterization

of the chapters is doubtful.”²⁹ More specifically, in regard to Lev 20, Milgrom’s meticulous study followed Hildenbrand in finding the following chiasm in Lev 20:2–27³⁰:

Figure 4: Proposed structure of Leviticus 20 by Milgrom (following Hildenbrand)

- A Worship of chthonic deities (Molech and necromancy) (20:1–6)
- B Sanctification (20:7)
- C Exhortation to obedience (20:8)
- X Penalties for violation (20:9–21)
- C’ Exhortation to obedience (20:22–25)
- B’ Sanctification (20:26)
- A’ Worship of chthonic deities (necromancy) (20:27)

I find Milgrom’s analysis unpersuasive for two reasons. First, categorizing A and A’ as worshipping chthonic deities is rather loose. This abstraction is, in reality, a means of getting around the fact there is no corresponding mention of Molech in A’. The absence of Molech is a problem for Milgrom. It is not a very convincing chiasm if Molech is heavily emphasized four times at the start but there is no reference at all to Molech in the concluding section. The second problem is that Milgrom locates the fulcrum of the chiasm in verses 9–21, which are categorized as penalties for violation. But there are penalties for violation throughout the unit, not just in verses 9–21. In fact, the penalties start in verses 2–6 and continue to verse 27. Thus, I conclude that Milgrom and Hildenbrand’s proposal is not persuasive.

Determining whether a chiastic analysis is valid must, in the end, be subject to the threefold test we apply to any persuasive theory:

1. Does it gather in all the available data?
2. Does it do so with simplicity and economy?
3. Does it shed light on cognate areas?

I am hopeful that my proposed chiastic account succeeds on all three fronts. I have argued that the chiastic structure exactly maps those features of the text that commentators find awkward and try to avoid. The chiasm I submit holds together the key themes of the chapter with simplicity and elegance whilst also shedding light on themes prevalent elsewhere in biblical law (though for the latter I must refer the reader elsewhere).³¹ I further suggest that my proposal argues for an internal structure for Lev 20 that is more detailed and less abstract than

Milgrom's proposed structure (avoiding my first criticism of Milgrom's study) whilst also covering the entirety of the text (avoiding my second criticism). As for its reception, time will tell.

Finally, the value and significance of using chiasmus as an interpretive tool is that it enables us to break the chapter down to its component parts and to appreciate the care with which it is assembled. Chiasmus also helps us to understand how form mirrors content. The orderliness of Lev 20 is clearly intended to reflect the claim of the text—that it presents a picture of relational and sexual order. The chiasmic arrangement of Lev 20 is thus a key way in which the chapter sets out its vision of a society characterized by well-ordered sexual relationships.

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Notes

1. In doing so, I draw upon arguments developed in several previous articles including Jonathan Burnside, "The Medium and the Message: Necromancy and the Literary Context of Leviticus 20," in *Text, Time, and Temple: Literary, Historical, and Ritual Studies in Leviticus* (ed. Francis Landy, Leigh M. Trevaskis, and Bryan D. Bibb; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2015), 41–62; J. P. Burnside, "Rethinking 'Sexual' Offenses in Biblical Law: The Literary Structure of Leviticus 20," in *Jewish Law Association Studies XVI: The Boston 2004 Conference Volume* (ed. E. Dorff; Binghampton: Global Academic, 2007), 37–55; Jonathan P. Burnside, "Strange Flesh: Sex, Semiotics and the Construction of Deviancy in Biblical Law," *JSOT* 30, no. 4 (2006): 387–420. These can be downloaded from <https://bristol.academia.edu/JonathanBurnside>. For a summary of some of the key issues, see Jonathan Burnside, "Sexual Offences," in *God, Justice, and Society: Aspects of Law and Legality in the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 247–387.

2. For example, W. H. Bellinger Jr., *Leviticus and Numbers* (New International Bible Commentary; Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 124; Philip J. Budd, *Leviticus* (New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 289.

3. Lester L. Grabbe, *Leviticus* (Old Testament Guides; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 80.

4. See Burnside, "Medium and the Message."

5. Jacob Milgrom, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 405–8.

6. For details see Burnside, "Medium and the Message."

7. Carol Myers, "The Family in Early Israel," in *Families in Ancient Israel* (Leo G. Perdue et al.; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 13, 37.

8. Compare Gen 2:7 "then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being [*chayyah lenefesh*]."

9. Family authority itself being divinely-appointed (for example, Exod 20:12).

10. Burnside, "Strange Flesh."

11. Contra Martin Noth, *Leviticus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), 149, who claims that verse 9 "does not fit on to what follows."

12. Bernard S. Jackson, *Making Sense in Law: Linguistic, Psychological, and Semiotic Perspectives* (Liverpool: Deborah Charles Publications, 1995), 510.

13. For example, Jonathan P. Burnside, *The Signs of Sin: Seriousness of Offense in Biblical Law* (JSOTSup 364; London: Continuum International, 2003), 222–23; Bernard S. Jackson, *Wisdom-Laws: A Study of the Mishpatim of Exodus 21:1–22:16* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 80–85.

14. Burnside, "Strange Flesh," 414.

15. Françoise Héritier, *Two Sisters and Their Mother* (trans. Jeanine Herman; New York: Zone Books, 1999).

16. See Madeline Gay McClenney-Sadler, "A Synopsis of Key Findings in Re-covering the Daughter's Nakedness: A Formal Analysis of Israelite Kinship Terminology and the Internal Logic of Leviticus 18" (paper presented to Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, 2002).

17. I owe this point to Bernard Jackson.

18. Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 217.

19. Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 140.

20. Examples of divine-human partnership in punishment are found elsewhere in the Pentateuch. A classic example is found in Gen 9:5–6: "For your lifeblood I [God speaking] will surely require a reckoning; of every beast I will require it and of man; of every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image." Here, Gen 9:5 states that God will punish whilst Gen 9:6 states that man is to punish (unless "by man" means "in exchange for that man"). However, these verses are not necessarily incompatible. Human institutions are a remedy, but if they fail, then God punishes directly. There is a divine-human partnership in punishment, as there is in adjudication generally (cf. Deut 1:17; 2 Chr 19:6). This is borne out by narrative and legal accounts of homicide, which demonstrate that both God and humankind have an interest in prosecuting and adjudicating upon homicide (e.g., Gen 4:9–15 and Num 35:22–24, respectively). Human institutions do not exclude direct divine involvement. Even the motive clause in Gen 9:6 ("for God made man in his own image") preserves the ambiguity and stresses the interplay between God and humankind.

21. The paradigm case may indeed envisage the offender as an individual who has particular cultic responsibility within his *mishpachah*.

22. Quoted by Bernard Jackson, "Talio and Purity: Some Glosses on Mary Douglas," in *Reading Leviticus: A Conversation with Mary Douglas* (ed. John F. A. Sawyer, JSOTSup 227; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 120.

23. It also reappears in a motivation clause (Lev 20:24) following the second chiasmus (Lev 20:17–21).

24. There are further verbal parallels in the chapter as a whole. The Decalogue makes a link between honouring father and mother with long life in the land (Exod 20:12). Similarly, Lev 20 makes a link between punishment for cursing father and mother (20:9) and punishment for sexual offenses, which are seen as prototypical of cursing parents (20:10–16 and 20:17–21). Applying the penalties is thus linked with retaining the land (20:22).

25. Jackson, “Talion and Purity,” 120–21.

26. J. E. Hartley, *Leviticus* (Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word Books, 1992), 309–11.

27. Jackson, “Talion and Purity,” 119–23.

28. Mary Douglas, “Sacred Contagion,” in *Reading Leviticus*, 86–106.

29. Desmond T. Alexander and David W. Baker, eds., “Leviticus, Book of,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 524. Instead, Kiuchi identifies a chiastic arrangement across three large blocks of material (Lev 12–16; 18–22; 23–26); see “Leviticus, Book of,” 524–25.

30. J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22* (Anchor Bible Commentary 3A; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1728.

31. See Burnside, “Sexual Offences,” 247–387.

At the Intersection of Scribal Training and Theological Profundity

Chiasm as an Editorial Technique in the Primeval History and Deuteronomy

Bernard M. Levinson

Introduction

There can be little doubt that ancient Near Eastern scribes, including those in ancient Israel, were well-trained in a wide range of technical devices associated with the composition, copying, transmission, editing, collation, revision, reworking, and interpretation of texts.¹ My focus in the present study will be on one of the most interesting of these devices, the literary chiasm, in which textual content is ordered in an ABC::C'B'A' chiastic, or “x-shaped,” pattern. In many cases, once this pattern is recognized within a chapter or literary unit, an ostensibly haphazard or difficult to follow textual sequence gains a sense of order, as a logical structure emerges from the text. As such, recognition of the chiasm provides an intellectual and religious gain for the reader. Moreover, a study of chiasmus can provide a window into how scribes and editors worked with texts in antiquity.

My research focus is less on the chiasm as an isolated literary device than on what the chiasm can tell us about the compositional history of a text: how it came to be written or edited. My primary interest is in the legal, literary, and religious history of ancient Israel. I have investigated the full range of literary devices that were employed in the editing, copying, transmission, revision, and interpretation of texts, using the controls of cuneiform literature in Akkadian and Ugaritic, as well as the reception of the biblical text in Second Temple Judaism and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The ways in which some scholars have made use of chiasms raise two major concerns. First, the criteria for constructing the chiasm in a number of cases can often become, to use the technical term, “wobbly.” These criteria can shift between thematic correspondence and lexical coherence, and they sometimes work much better in English than in the original Hebrew. In some cases, they overlook repetitions of the same words in other structural components of the chiasm that could throw off the neat symmetry if they were taken into account.²

Second, too often there is a prevailing assumption that chiasm always points to the work of an original ancient author and therefore provides evidence for the antiquity and literary coherence of an ancient text. When this happens, the chiasm—which is more accurately viewed as a neutral device having a range of uses and a diversity of functions—gets taken up into something like a scholarly culture war. Such controversies have frequently arisen in the analysis of chiasm by some religiously conservative scholars, both Christian and Jewish, who use the chiasm as an argument against the standard tools of historical criticism and source criticism. That approach is methodologically problematic, because it is too narrow and inconsistent with the historical evidence. Ancient scribes were much more gifted, both as composers and as editors, than we often give them credit for. They worked within a scribal curriculum, they were literate and well-trained, and they could use the same tool for multiple functions. These functions included creating literary elegance, plot complication, bold rethinking of religious and cultural conventions, critical engagement with the past, and imagining new religious, legal, ethical possibilities. The focus of this study will be on this more dynamic and complex role of the chiasm in the Hebrew Bible. The goal is to highlight the versatility of chiasm by presenting a series of cases that demonstrate how chiasm points to the role of editors reworking traditions, responding to earlier texts, and transforming them.

Case Study 1:

Narrative Complexity in the Primeval History (Genesis 1 and 6)

The first case study focuses on the role of chiasm in plot development and the creation of narrative complexity in the account of the Great Flood in Gen 6–9. In the story, after discovering, to his chagrin, that the humanity he has made devotes itself only to evil, God repents—this is one of the most extraordinary lines in the Bible—that he has made humans (Gen 6:6) and sets out to destroy all life.³ “Yahweh said, ‘I will

blot out [אמחה] from the earth humankind whom I have created—from humans, to cattle, to creeping things, to birds of the sky; for I regret that I made them” (Gen 6:7; cf. 7:23).⁴ The divine intent signaled by the verb מחה is to transform the earth into a *tabula rasa*: to wipe the slate clean.⁵ In order to emphasize this point, the divine announcement of doom repeats the account of God’s creation of life, as told in Gen 1, in precise reverse order:⁶

Exhibit 1: The Chiastic Relationship between the Creation Account (Genesis 1) and the Flood Narrative (Genesis 6)

Creation Story: Days 5 and 6

God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures,
and *birds* [עוף] that fly above the earth . . .” (Gen 1:20). A

God said, “Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature:
cattle [בהמה], *creeping things* [רמש], and wild beasts of every kind . . .”
(Gen 1:24). B

And God said, “Let us make *humans* [אדם] in our image . . .” (Gen 1:26). C

Flood Narrative

“Yahweh said, ‘I will blot out [אמחה] from the earth humankind
whom I have created—from *humans* [אדם], C’
to *cattle* [בהמה], to *creeping things* [רמש], B’
to *birds* [עוף] of the sky; A’
for I regret that I made them” (Gen 6:7)

The telling sequence of the life-forms listed in Gen 6:7 thus ominously concretizes the verbal action of מחה in that verse. As exhibit 1 demonstrates, God cites in chiastic order (ABC::C’B’A’) the series of creative acts he undertook on days five (“birds”) and six (“cattle and creeping things”) as a pair,⁷ and “humankind”) of the creation of the world. The as yet unspecified form of destruction is thereby presented as a step-by-step reversal and undoing of the creation of life.

There are two main points to stress about the chiasm in this text. First, the chiasm here is much more than just a formal marker of scribal activity. It also creates a major narrative pivot. In effect, within the world of the narrative, the chiasm acquires ontological status. It serves as the theological key of the plot at this point, presenting the flood as anti-creation, as an exact reversal of God’s creative acts in Gen 1. God announces his plan to pull the plug, both literally and metaphorically, on creation. There the story would abruptly end—not only leaving the

scholar without a Bible to discuss but more seriously leaving the reader embarrassed by a Yahweh who, however omnipotent, patently lacks divine omniscience—if not for the omniscient narrator’s qualification, “But Noah found favor with Yahweh” (Gen 6:8). From this point onward in the story, Noah will become the basis for an experiment in divine eugenics: by means of Noah, Yahweh hopes to create a new human stock from a righteous root, after extirpating the wicked rest of humanity. God renews the covenant he had made with Adam, now with Noah.

Second, this is a case where the chiasm pushes the boundaries of our own scholarly understanding of the historical composition of the Pentateuch. The creation story in Genesis 1 is traditionally attributed to the Priestly source. Genesis 6:7, on the other hand, is not generally thought to be part of the Priestly source. In fact, it is conventionally assigned to the Yahwist source. Therefore, in Genesis 6:7, we have a case where it appears that a non-Priestly text, a Yahwistic text, cites a Priestly text. That reverses the conventional model of source criticism, according to which the Yahwist source would be older than the Priestly source. The entire question of citation and reversal thus raises questions about the literary history of the Pentateuch. It is impossible in the confines of this short study to address all of the issues here, but it appears that this text points in the direction of a non-Priestly text in this case being post-Priestly—and drawing upon Priestly material as a source—in effect making an exegetical bridge between the divergent literary traditions of the Pentateuch.⁸

Case Study 2:

Integrating Law and Narrative (Deuteronomy 11:32 and 12:1)

The second example to be examined demonstrates how chiasm was used as a structuring device for creating a single, coherent text out of diverse material. This case study, as well as the two that follow it below, derives from the text of Deuteronomy. The materials now assembled in the book of Deuteronomy have a complex literary history and very likely arose from several different sociological contexts within ancient Israel. They represent diverse literary genres, they contain different kinds of Hebrew linguistic expressions and rhetoric, and they draw upon earlier texts, both Israelite and Near Eastern. In some cases, later layers may disagree with and modify earlier layers to express a new religious understanding of the covenant and of God’s will.

One obvious example of the diversity of materials in Deuteronomy is the way the collection of laws in chapters 12–26 has been embedded in a narrative frame consisting of chapters 1–11 and 29–34. This kind of composition has an historical precedent. The famous Hammurabi's Code, discovered in 1901 and dating to 1755 BCE, has a similar composite literary structure: the legal corpus, consisting of 280 casuistic laws, was embedded into a mytho-poetic frame, consisting of a prologue and an epilogue. The literary frame differs from the laws in dialect, grammar, imagery, and point of view (first person versus third person discourse). The available evidence suggests that this literary frame and the legal collection originally circulated independently yet were combined together by scribes to make a powerful statement about the monarch's commitment to justice.⁹

Deuteronomy presents a similar case. Despite the diversity of materials contained within it, Deuteronomy is clearly a well-structured book whose editors worked carefully to integrate the different literary genres of their sources. They provided editorial transitions at key literary seams, much like a mechanical engineer would use a gusset plate to create the strongest possible joint between the beams and girders of a bridge and the bridge's columns. One of the primary devices for making such transitions was, in fact, the chiasm.

A case in point is the connection between Deuteronomy's narrative introduction in chapters 1–11 and its legal corpus in chapters 12–26. As exhibit 2 (on the next page) demonstrates, the editors crafted a superscription introducing the legal corpus (in 12:1) that elegantly repeats in chiasmic order the four key elements from the very end of the narrative introduction in chapter 11: (A) possess; (B) the land that the Lord is giving; (C) the admonition to take care to observe; and (D) the meta-reference to the laws and rules.

This kind of chiasm represents the handiwork of a skilled editor, or redactor, seeking to weave together the warp and woof of diverse literary genres to create an integrated composition that goes beyond the sum of its parts to make a new theological statement about the history and the terms of Israel's covenant with God. The well-trained scribe is both a creative theologian and a skilled editor who worked within a literary tradition.

Exhibit 2: The Chiastic Bridge between Deuteronomy 11 and 12

| | |
|--|----|
| ³¹ For you are about to cross the Jordan to enter and <u>possess</u> (לרשת) A | |
| <u>the land that the Lord your God is giving to you</u> | |
| (את־הארץ אשר־יהוה אלהיכם נתן לכם). | B |
| When you have occupied it and are settled in it, | |
| ³² <u>take care to observe</u> (ושמרתם לעשות) all the | C |
| <u>laws and rules</u> (כל־החקים ואת־המשפטים) that I have set before | D |
| you this day (Deut 11:31–32). | |
| ¹ These are the <u>laws and rules</u> (החקים והמשפטים) | D' |
| that you must carefully observe (תשמרון לעשות) | C' |
| in <u>the land that the Lord, God of your fathers, is giving to you</u> | B' |
| (בארץ אשר נתן יהוה אלהי אבותיך לך) | |
| <u>to possess</u> (לרשתה), as long as you live on the land (Deut 12:1). | A' |

Case Study 3:**Deuteronomy's Renewal and Transformation of Israelite Religion (Deuteronomy 12)**

The third case study examines Deut 12 as a whole and provides another example of chiasm used in editorial attempts to unify diverse materials. The text retains the full history of the various attempts to come to terms with and justify the religious innovations Deuteronomy introduces in this chapter.¹⁰ The text mandates two major reforms of Israelite religion, technically described as cultic centralization and cultic purification. First, it prohibits all sacrifice at the local altars prevalent throughout the countryside and requires the complete destruction of all such altars. The chapter stipulates repeatedly that all sacrifice should instead take place exclusively at a single site: “the place that Yahweh shall choose,” Deuteronomy’s circumlocution for Jerusalem and its temple. Second, although prohibiting in the strongest possible terms the local *sacrifice* of domestic animals for purposes of worship, it grants permission for local secular *slaughter* of these animals for food. With that concession, the chapter forges, for the first time in Israelite religion, a distinction between the cultic sacrifice of animals at an altar and their secular slaughter, not at an altar.

Deuteronomy 12 is generally regarded by historical-critical scholars as composite and characterized by redundancy:

Exhibit 3: Thematic Structure of the Four Centralization Laws in Deuteronomy 12¹¹

| Centralization Formula | Law no. | Unit | Addressee | Theme |
|------------------------|---------|----------|-----------|--|
| Deut 12:5 | 1 | 12:2–7 | plural | Cultic unity against Canaanite plurality of altars |
| Deut 12:11 | 2 | 12:8–12 | plural | Condition for inauguration of centralization |
| Deut 12:14 | 3 | 12:13–19 | singular | Requirement for centralization |
| Deut 12:15 | " | | singular | Concession for secular slaughter |
| Deut 12:21 | 4 | 12:20–28 | singular | Condition for inauguration of secular slaughter |
| Deut 12:26 | " | | singular | Blood protocol |

Exhibit 3 summarizes the conventional division of the chapter into four originally independent laws, each concerned with cultic centralization (vv. 2–7, 8–12, 13–19, 20–28). These laws are followed by a concluding paragraph concerned with cultic purity (vv. 29–31).¹² The formulaic command for the centralization of sacrifice occurs six different times, with some slight variations (Deut 12:5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26). The concession for secular slaughter recurs twice (Deut 12:15, 21). The accompanying stipulation that the blood, in cases of secular slaughter, should not be consumed but rather “poured out upon the earth like water” also recurs twice (Deut 12:16, 23–24). The rationale for centralization is in each case different, and there is no obvious attempt to integrate the various repetitions into a coherent whole in substantive legal terms. Grammatical anomalies increase the sense that the chapter is disjointed. The second person addressee of the laws shifts without explanation from primarily second person plural (Deut 12:1–12) to singular (Deut 12:13–21), although neither section is entirely internally consistent.

The editors responsible for the final form of the legal corpus were well aware of this diversity of materials and took steps to provide transitions. Exhibit 4 shows how the previously mentioned superscription provides the key to the editors’ organization of the four centralization laws. Geographical location and historical duration become criteria for legal adherence. The laws that follow, the superscription affirms, apply *geographically* in the promised land of Canaan and are *historically* valid while Israel inhabits that land: “These are the statutes and the laws that you shall take

care to observe in the land that Yahweh, the God of thine ancestors, has given thee to possess—all the days that you live upon the earth” (Deut 12:1).¹³ Within this superscription a shift occurs in the grammatical number of the addressee: from second person plural at the beginning and end to second person singular in the land donation formula in the middle.¹⁴ This number shift in the superscription represents a further editorial device to prepare the reader for the number change in the laws that follow.

Exhibit 4: Redactional Framework of Deuteronomy 12

| Law no. | Unit | Number of Addressee | Theme |
|---------|---------------|---------------------|--|
| | Deut 12:1 | singular/ plural | Superscription: <i>Geography and Time</i> |
| 1 | Deut 12:2–7 | plural | Cultic purification and centralization |
| 2 | Deut 12:8–12 | plural | <i>Temporal condition</i> for centralization |
| 3 | Deut 12:13–19 | singular | Centralization and secular slaughter |
| 4 | Deut 12:20–28 | singular | <i>Geographical condition</i> for slaughter |
| 5 | Deut 12:29–31 | singular | Conclusion: Cultic purification |

In the final redaction of this chapter, the laws are arranged in a chiasmic structure (AB::C::B'A').¹⁵ Laws 1 and 5 each address issues of cultic purification and polemicize against syncretism with Canaanite practices. Laws 2 and 4 each present the conditions, whether historical or geographic, for the inception of centralization and secular slaughter. Thereby doubly framed and functioning as the focus of the chapter is law 3, which commands centralization and local secular slaughter. Law 5, which makes no reference to cult centralization, was most likely added by a late editor. Nonetheless, as shown in exhibit 5 (on the next page), by means of the fifth law’s focus on cultic purity (Deut 12:29–31), the editor establishes multiple points of contact with law 1 (Deut 12:2–7) and thereby provides the chapter with an elegant chiasmic frame.¹⁶

As a result of such editorial design, the chapter appears simultaneously composite, redacted from five originally independent paragraphs, and cohesive, with the five paragraphs integrated into an ordered structure:

Exhibit 5: Chiastic Frame of Deuteronomy 12

| | | | |
|------|--------------------------------|---|----|
| (3) | ואשריהם תשרפון באש | You shall burn their sacred posts by fire | A |
| (4) | לא־תעשון כן ליהוה אלהיכם | You shall not do thus for Yahweh your God | B |
| (5) | תדרשו | You shall seek | C |
| (30) | תדרש | Lest thou seek | C' |
| (31) | לא־תעשה כן ליהוה אלהיך | Thou shall not do thus for Yahweh thy God | B' |
| (31) | את־בניהם ואת־בנותיהם ישרפו באש | They burn their sons and daughters by fire | A' |

This double nature of the chapter has engendered a double approach to its scholarly interpretation. The dominant approach in source-critical scholarship is to attempt, by means of diachronic analysis, to isolate its earliest stratum, deemed variously Deuteronomistic or pre-Deuteronomistic, and then to assign the other paragraphs to successive, later editors. The most recent monograph, for example, finds two pre-exilic, one early exilic, and one late exilic stratum.¹⁷ Such confident precision raises more questions than it answers, since the criteria for distinguishing two pre-exilic Deuteronomistic strata from one another, when each is Josianic and presupposes centralization—yet neither of which is Deuteronomistic—are never made clear, either linguistically or legal-historically. The problem with many such approaches is that, while properly emphasizing the composite nature of the chapter, they overlook both the evidence for the secondary imposition of a chiastic editorial structure and the difficulties that such deliberate redactional reworking pose for reconstructing literary history in the first place.¹⁸

Conversely, a number of scholars have taken the opposite approach. Denying that the repetitions in the chapter are signs of redundancy and composite origin, these scholars reject diachronic analysis altogether. They strive for synchronic solutions, using this chiastic structure to argue for the unity of the text and explaining the repetitions away as deliberate rhetorical emphasis.¹⁹ However, almost all proponents of this synchronic approach fail to do justice to the degree of philological difficulty in the chapter. They restrict the difficulty to mere repetition alone, as if that problem did not interlock with the number change of the addressee. Rhetorical emphasis might account for the former problem, but not the latter, let alone both together. Moreover, proponents of

this synchronic method frequently commit a logical error. They move from the claim of rhetorical or literary structure to that of *compositional* coherence, without taking into account that such structures may, with equal justification, represent secondary editorial attempts to impose coherence upon originally composite material.

Even if a chiasm can legitimately be identified in a text, it does not follow automatically that the whole text represents the original composition of a single author.²⁰ After all, that an editor has obscured textual seams *does not mean that there are no seams*, no matter how adroitly the disparate material may have been integrated through the use of redactional bridges.²¹ The very structures, in other words, that suggest compositional unity to some scholars may actually lead to the opposite conclusion once the full degree of philological complexity of a text is recognized. Each approach, both the diachronic and the synchronic, contributes to the discussion, but neither is in itself sufficient to account for the text. A shift in perspective is necessary.

As I demonstrated in *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, the key to the composition of Deut 12 is the way it engages and transforms prior Israelite literary history.²² Deut 12 is exegetical: not in the sense of a passive explication of the meaning of a text but rather, more profoundly, in using textual interpretation in order to sanction a major transformation of legal, cultic, and literary history by means of literary reworking—and by ascribing the departure from convention to the authoritative tradition.

Deuteronomy 12 does not simply represent “centralization law,” as if that were some immediate positive legal requirement intended directly to act upon society. Instead, what is at stake is something broader, both theoretical and practical: not simply the innovation of centralization but also its careful justification and defense in light of previous Israelite literary history.²³ This hermeneutical issue helps to explain the problematic structure of much of the chapter. Deuteronomy 12, to a large extent, represents an anthology of repeated attempts not simply to command but also to justify the innovation of centralization. The editors were conservative and retained the multiple previous attempts to explain centralization without obscuring the differences between them or eliminating the previous layers of tradition, much as a Supreme Court ruling will retain judicial dissents. This approach helps account for the chapter’s redundancy and provides a new perspective for understanding its literary structure and hermeneutical dynamics.

Case Study 4:
Reimagining the Nature of Divine Justice
(Deuteronomy 7:9–10)

The final case study to be presented explores Deut 7:9–10, a text in which the chiasm points to the intentional literary and theological structure of the unit. Most European scholars have failed to recognize this structure, as they divide the passage up into separate literary layers.²⁴ Examination of this case equally points to textual coherence as a complex idea, since the text is the product of a skilled scribe commenting upon and reacting to an earlier layer of tradition. Deut 7:9–10 thus confirms the power of chiasm to allow us to recover the remarkable ability of ancient Israelite scribes and editors to overturn established notions of divine justice and to imagine new possibilities that focus on individual responsibility.

The Decalogue provides the point of departure for examining this passage.²⁵ The second commandment prohibits the worship of deities other than God and offers the following rationale for the prohibition:

Exhibit 6: Second Commandment of the Decalogue (Exodus 20:5b–6 = Deuteronomy 5:9b–10)

לֹא־תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לֵהֶם וְלֹא תַעֲבֹדֵם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵל קַנָּא פֶקֶד עֵוֹן אָבֹת עַל־בָּנִים עַל־שְׁלִשִׁים
 וְעַל־רִבְעִים לְשָׁנָא׃⁶ וְעָשָׂה חֶסֶד לְאֲלֹפִים לְאַהֲבִי וּלְשֹׂמְרֵי מִצְוֹתַי׃

[For I, Yahweh, your God,²⁶ am an impassioned God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.]

The Hebrew participles translated “those who love” (לְאַהֲבִי) and “those who reject” (לְשֹׂמְרֵי) are not simply emotional but legal terms. Reflecting the terminology of ancient Near Eastern state treaties, “love” designates political loyalty to the suzerain while “reject” denotes acts of treason.²⁷ Israelite authors took over this secular treaty terminology, together with the concept of a binding legal tie, in order to conceptualize the nation’s relationship with its God as a covenant.²⁸ These ancient Near Eastern treaties were understood as being made in perpetuity. They were therefore binding not only upon those immediately signatory to them but also upon succeeding generations. The punishment for violating the treaty, therefore, applied not just to those who originally swore their agreement to it, but also to their progeny: that is, to their children and their grandchildren. That principle underlies God’s threat

in the Decalogue that he will visit his rage upon the third and fourth generation of those guilty of breaking the covenant.²⁹

The Decalogue thus formulates a doctrine of the transgenerational consequences of sin. Although it is my parent who wrongs God, I and my children and my grandchildren are punished for the parent's wrongdoing, independent of any particular wrongdoing on our part. The text is remarkably silent about whether the actual sinner is punished for his or her own offense or whether the expected punishment might be completely displaced onto the progeny.³⁰ Here there emerges a fundamental ethical and theological problem: Is it not *odious* for God to punish innocent persons, merely for being the progeny of sinners?

A remarkable transformation of this Decalogue doctrine can be found just two chapters later within the legal corpus of Deuteronomy, as shown in exhibit 7. The text presents itself as an address by Moses to the nation of Israel, given on the eve of the nation's entry into the promised land of Canaan, forty years after God originally delivered the law to the people at Mount Sinai (Deut 1:1–3). According to the editorial superscription in the biblical text, Moses here explicates the laws that God had earlier proclaimed (Deut 1:5) and exhorts the nation to obedience. In this new literary setting, Moses, while reviewing the past, ostensibly quotes the Decalogue (Deut 5:9–10 = Exod 20:5–6) and then preaches to the nation concerning it. Moses thus expounds upon divine justice.

Exhibit 7: Mosaic Homily on Divine Justice (Deuteronomy 7:9–10)

וַיִּדְעֶתָ כִּי־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים הָאֵל הַנֶּאֱמָן שָׁמַר הַבְּרִית וְהַחֲסֵד לְאַהֲבָיו וּלְשִׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתָיו
לְאַלְפָּה דֹר: וּמִשְׁלָם לְשִׁנְאָיו אֶל־פָּנָיו לְהַאֲבִידוֹ לֹא יֵאָחֵז לְשִׁנְאוֹ אֶל־פָּנָיו וְשִׁלָּם־לוֹ:

[Know, therefore, that only Yahweh your God is God, the steadfast God who keeps his gracious covenant to the thousandth generation of those who love him and keep his commandments, but who requites those who reject him—to their face, by destroying them. He does not delay with anyone who rejects him—to his face he requites him.]

The vocabulary of this passage makes it clear that the Mosaic speaker alludes specifically to the Decalogue, which he has previously quoted (Deut 5). This reuse of the Decalogue is marked by a chiasmic citation.³¹ The first person sequence of the Decalogue—(A) “those who reject me” (לְשִׁנְאָי) and (B) “those who love me and keep my commandments” (לְאַהֲבָיו וּלְשִׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתָיו; Deut 5:9–10)—is inverted. In the new context in Deut 7, it is recast as a third person report and the order of the elements is reversed: (B’) “those who love him and keep his commandments” (לְאַהֲבָיו וּלְשִׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתָיו) and (A’) “those who reject him” (לְשִׁנְאָיו [Qere]).

The Mosaic speaker purports to provide a homiletic paraphrase of the formula for divine justice in the Decalogue. But a closer look reveals that the homily so fundamentally transforms the original as to revoke it. The speaker has strategically deleted references to the transgenerational consequences of sin and instead asserts the *immediate* punishment of the sinner. By implication, divine punishment for sin is restricted to the sinner alone. In contrast to the Decalogue, the progeny, who are *here strikingly unmentioned*, are not explicitly visited with divine punishment.

Exhibit 8: Legal Reworking in Support of Individual Responsibility (Deuteronomy 7:10)

| | | | |
|----|--|-------------------------|---|
| A | who requites | וְיָשָׁם | ← |
| B | <u>those who reject him</u> —to <i>their</i> face, | לְשֹׂנְאָיו אֶל-פָּנָיו | ← |
| X | by <i>destroying</i> them. | לְתַעֲבִידוֹ | ← |
| X | He <i>does not</i> delay | לֹא יִאָּחֵר | ← |
| B' | with <u>anyone who rejects him</u> —to <i>his</i> face | לְשֹׂנְאוֹ אֶל-פָּנָיו | ← |
| A' | he requites him. | יִשָּׁם-לוֹ | ← |

In form, this passage demonstrates two types of chiasm. In addition to the chiastic citation of the Decalogue already noted, Deut 7:10 is structured as a chiasm. In the diagram of this verse in exhibit 8, the underlining shows how a key term from the originally problematic text is cited: the retribution due “those who reject him,” which alludes to “those who reject me” in the Decalogue. Once cited, however, the same term receives a new continuation: the new teaching of individual responsibility (as the *italicized* text shows). The double annotation stipulates that God requites the sinner, literally, “to his face” (אֶל-פָּנָיו).³² As the medieval Jewish commentator Rashi (1040–1105 CE) accurately saw, the phrase means “in his lifetime” (בְּחַיָּיו).³³ The annotations redefine divine punishment and restrict it so that it no longer extends across generations.³⁴ The paraphrase of the source thus abrogates the source, which now propounds the doctrine of individual responsibility. The chiastic pattern of the textual reworking, as shown in the diagram (ABX::XB'A'), frames and thus highlights Deuteronomy’s ethical innovation (marked by X): the introduction of the notion that God “does not delay” (לֹא יִאָּחֵר) retributive justice, that is, that punishment no longer occurs transgenerationally. The doctrinal innovation is accomplished by means of textual reformulation.

The doctrine of individual retribution is not presented in Deut 7 as a departure from the *status quo*. Instead, the new teaching is presented as consistent with the very doctrine that it rejects: as an authoritatively

taught “re-citation” of the original *theologoumenon* or “divine proclamation.” The author of this text marshals the very words of the formula for transgenerational punishment against itself. Its key terms are redeployed so as to abrogate transgenerational punishment and mandate individual retribution instead. The evidence of Deut 7 thus requires a reassessment of the standard conception of the literary chiasm. The standard debate about whether it should be seen primarily in synchronic terms, as a compositional device, or rather in diachronic terms, as an editorial device, does not do justice to its use here. In this case, it subsumes characteristics associated with both editing and composition. Critical is the insight that the use of the device, while marking exegetical reinterpretation of a lemma, does not constitute a secondary redactional layer. The writer of this text reworks and reinterprets older law so as to make an original statement. In doing so, that writer emerges as both author and editor.³⁵

Conclusions

The primary goal of this essay has been to demonstrate the richness and range of uses of the chiasm as a scribal device in antiquity. As the case studies above show, chiasm could serve to provide narrative suspense and plot complexity, and as a way for editors to integrate law and narrative. The texts presented also exemplify how editors used the device to integrate a range of material from originally independent or diverse backgrounds, including texts that do not appear to agree with one another and that express divergent viewpoints, to provide bridges and transitions for the reader, while still preserving the diversity of perspectives and viewpoints. Finally, the examples demonstrate how editors could rework traditions and earlier texts to make powerful new theological statements about the nature of divine justice.

It is thus too reductive to see the chiasm simply as a marker of compositional unity or of alleged antiquity. It could equally result from redactional layering or exegetical reworking. Nor should chiasm be regarded merely in aesthetic or formal terms as marking elegance. It can equally point to sites of profound religious creativity and mark the transformation of tradition with the infusion of new insight. In other words, the chiasm was more than simply a technical scribal device. In the skilled hands of the editors of ancient Israelite literature, the device was also an agent of the theological imagination, of literary and religious creativity, and of cultural change.

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Notes

1. In my previous work, I have identified a range of devices, in addition to chiasm, that are prevalent in the literature of the ancient Near East. These include:

1. Seidel's Law, in which the author cites an earlier text by reversing the elements of that source text. As such, the quotation is marked chiastically, with the original text AB often cited as B'A'.
2. Repetitive resumption (*Wiederaufnahme*), in which the composer brackets a digression or interpolation by framing it with a repetition, much as a flashback in a film is often correspondingly framed, introduced by a fade-out and concluded with a fade-in. In the case of the repetitive resumption, one or two clauses from the material preceding the interruption are repeated after it to mark the resumption of the original text. As such, there is a sequence of original material ABC, then the contextually disruptive X, followed by the repetition, C', after which the original sequence, DEF, resumes: ABC::X::C'DEF. The repetition in question need not be verbatim. More often it is approximate and may abridge the earlier unit. In addition, the repetition may reverse the elements of the original, in conformity with Seidel's law.
3. Lemmatic citation and reformulation, in which an author selectively quotes words and phrases from an earlier text in order to transform the meaning of the source text to suit the author's purposes.
4. Textual voicing, which includes pseudepigraphy, in which the author attributes authorship of the text to an earlier, authoritative figure, such as Moses. Other examples of textual voicing include theonymy, in which the author attributes the text directly to God, and the use of an omniscient narrator.

For additional discussion of these literary techniques, see Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 17–20, 34–38, 47–48, 97.

2. For an invaluable study of potential errors in the identification of chiastic structures, see David P. Wright, "The Fallacies of Chiasmus: A Critique of Structures Proposed for the Covenant Collection (Exodus 20:23–23:19)," *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische*

und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte 10 (2004): 143–68. In a later reconsideration, Wright conceded the use of symmetrical structures as a compositional tool by ancient scribes in defined circumstances: David P. Wright, “Chiasmus in the Covenant Code Reconsidered: The Final Apodictic Laws,” in “*Gerechtigkeit und Recht zu üben*” (Gen 18,19): *Studien zur altorientalischen und biblischen Rechtsgeschichte, zur Religionsgeschichte Israels und zur Religionssoziologie. Festschrift für Eckart Otto zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. Reinhard Achenbach and Martin Arneth, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte 13; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000), 171–81.

3. Jean-Pierre Sonnet examines this concept of God repenting in “God’s Repentance and ‘False Starts’ in Biblical History (Genesis 6–9; Exodus 32–34; 1 Samuel 15 and 2 Samuel 7),” in *Congress Volume: Ljubljana 2007* (ed. André Lemaire; Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 133; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 469–94. Sonnet’s future volume devotes a chapter to the narrative poetics of God’s changing his mind in the flood story; see Jean-Pierre Sonnet, *Dramatis Persona: God as a Narrative Character in the Hebrew Bible* (forthcoming).

4. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. It is worth noting that translations of these passages may make it difficult to identify similarities in their respective content. For example, the New Jewish Publication Society translation of בְּהֵמָה in Gen 6:7 as “beasts” obscures the important allusion to the identical Hebrew word in Gen 1:24, where NJPS had translated it as “cattle.” In the narrative implementation of the divine announcement (Gen 6:7) that appears in 7:23, however, the word is correctly translated as “cattle.” See the NJPS reprint in A. Berlin and M. Z. Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (2d ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

5. The imagery inherent in the Hebrew verb is specifically that of erasure, in the first instance, textual (Num 5:23; Exod 32:32), but also more general wiping (2 Kgs 21:13). For further discussion of the verb, see U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (trans. Israel Abrahams; 2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961–64), 1:304–5. This motif of God’s re-beginning from a *tabula rasa*, an enforced *ex nihilo* in response to human iniquity, is frequent in the Bible. It recurs in the debates between Moses and God following the episodes of the golden calf (Exod 32:10) and the spies (Num 14:11–12) and in the conception of the devastation of the autochthonous peoples of Canaan in order to create a new moral community bound by God’s law (Lev 18:24–30; 20:22–26). So characteristic is this motif of God’s ominous duality as destroyer and creator that the early midrash retrojects it into the prehistory of creation, positing a succession of other worlds as having been created and destroyed by God before he was, finally, content with this one: see *Genesis Rabbah* 3:7 in the edition of J. Theodor and Ch. Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1965, 2d printing), 1:23.

6. It is important to note that the two texts analyzed here are likely from different sources: Gen 1 derives from the Priestly source (P), and Gen 6:7 from a non-Priestly source (non-P). Nevertheless, the parallels in language between the two texts are striking. In describing the animals to be placed on the ark in Gen 7:2–3, non-P is interested only in “cattle” [בְּהֵמָה] and “birds” [עוֹף]. Yet “creeping things” [רֶמֶשׂ], a term characteristic of both P’s creation account and its flood narrative, appears in the non-P catalogs of creatures to be destroyed in 6:7 and 7:23. Moreover, the order of the creature terms in 6:7 and 7:23 is consistent with P’s compositional practice. When all three terms appear together, “cattle” and “creeping things” are generally kept together, while “birds” can appear either before or after the other two terms. There are two exceptions to this principle: (1) in Gen 7:21, רֶמֶשׂ appears at the head of the list of animals and is used to refer to creaturely life in general,

while “beasts” [חיה] takes the usual place of רמש, following בהמה in the list; and (2) in Lev 11:46, רמש appears after בהמה and עוף, respectively. In this case, however, רמש refers specifically to aquatic life [נפש החיה הרמשת במים], whereas in other P verses in which cattle and creeping things appear together, רמש is either unmodified, or it is modified by a term for “land” [ארץ or אדמה] (cf. Gen 1:21, in which aquatic life is paired with birds in P’s order of creation). (Note: The focus of this analysis is the P source; therefore, it does not take into account Lev 20:25, a verse from the Holiness source that does not follow the same ordering system as that used by P.)

Scholars have long noted the presence of P-like language in Gen 6:7 and have offered a variety of theories of redaction or textual dependence to resolve the problem. For example, David Carr sees the redactor’s hand in the animal lists of 6:7aβ and 7:23aβ, inserting vocabulary from P into a non-P text in order to broaden non-P’s original focus on the destruction of humanity (in 6:7aα and 7:23aα) to include animals as well. David M. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 57. On the other hand, J. L. Ska explains the P-like terminology in 6:7 and 7:23 by arguing that the non-P flood material does not comprise a complete, independent account, but rather was composed as a supplement to the P narrative. In other words, in the flood narrative, non-P is post-priestly and dependent on P. See Jean-Louis Ska, “The Story of the Flood: A Priestly Writer and Some Later Editorial Fragments,” in *Exegesis of the Pentateuch: Exegetical Studies and Basic Questions* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 66; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 1–22. A systematic analysis of the arguments about these non-P animal lists is beyond the scope of this essay, whose focus is Gen 7:8–9. Nevertheless, the symmetry between the P and non-P animal terminology in Gen 6–9 does suggest that the chiasmic relationship between P’s account of the creation of life in Gen 1:20–26 and the animal lists in Gen 6:7 and 7:23 is not coincidental.

7. The citation from Gen 1:24 is, to be sure, not comprehensive but preserves in fixed order the only two substantives without the additional modifier, “of every kind.”

8. For a fuller investigation, see Bernard M. Levinson, “A Post-Priestly Harmonization in the Flood Narrative,” in *The Post-Priestly Pentateuch: New Perspectives on Its Redactional Development and Theological Profiles* (ed. Federico Giuntoli and Konrad Schmid; Forschungen zum Alten Testament 101; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 113–23.

9. Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, *Inu Anum šīrum: Literary Structures in the Non-Juridical Sections of Codex Hammurabi* (Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund 15; Philadelphia: University Museum, 1994).

10. For a valuable analysis of the redactional development of Deut 12, see Simeon Chavel, “The Literary Development of Deuteronomy 12: Between Religious Ideal and Social Reality,” in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research* (ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch Schwartz; Forschungen zum Alten Testament 78; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 303–26.

11. This table is based in part on one provided by Norbert Lohfink, “Opfer und Säkularisierung im Deuteronomium,” in *Studien zu Opfer und Kult im Alten Testament* (ed. Adrian Schenker; Forschungen zum Alten Testament 3 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1992), 26.

12. See, for example, Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 89; and A. D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy* (New Century Bible Commentary; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1979), 222.

13. This is my translation of the Hebrew, intentionally using an older English style in order to show the distinction between the singular (thee, thine) and the plural (you) form of the second person pronoun, which has been lost in modern English. On the geographical restriction of the superscription, see Norbert Lohfink, *Studien zum Deuteronomium und zur deuteronomistischen Literatur II* (Stuttgarter biblische Aufsatzbände 12; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991), 229–56; repr. from Norbert Lohfink, “Die *ḥuqqîm ûmišpāṭîm* im Buch Deuteronomium und ihre Neubegrenzung durch Dtn 12,1,” *Biblica* 70 (1989): 1–29. See also Norbert Lohfink, “Dtn 12,1 und Gen 15,18: Das dem Samen Abrahams geschenkte Land als der Geltungsbereich der deuteronomischen Gesetze”; and Norbert Lohfink, “Zum rabbinischen Verständnis von Dtn 12,1,” both reprinted in the same volume (pp. 257–85, 287–92).

14. Lohfink, “Dtn 12,1 und Gen 15,18,” 259, 265, establishes both the coherence of the superscription on juridical grounds and its text-critical originality as the *lectio difficilior* in contrast to the Septuagint, which levels the plural throughout the verse. This frequent number change (*Numeruswechsel*) in the Hebrew text of Deuteronomy, which occurs both in the legal corpus and in the narrative frame, still awaits satisfactory explanation. For more detailed studies, see Norbert Lohfink, *Das Hauptgebot: Eine Untersuchung literarischer Einleitungsfragen zu Dtn 5–11* (Analecta Biblica 20; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963), 239–57; Christopher T. Begg, “The Significance of the *Numeruswechsel* in Deuteronomy—the ‘Prehistory’ of the Question,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 55 (1979): 116–24; Christopher T. Begg, “Contributions to the Elucidation of the Composition of Deuteronomy with Special Attention to the Significance of the *Numeruswechsel*” (PhD diss., University of Louvain, 1987); and Yoshihide Suzuki, “The ‘*Numeruswechsel*’ in Deuteronomy” (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1982).

15. See the fine analysis by Georg Braulik, *Die deuteronomischen Gesetze und der Dekalog: Studien zum Aufbau von Deuteronomium 12–26* (Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 145; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991), 23–30.

16. Note the additional parallel between “where the nations worshipped their gods” (Deut 12:2) and “how did these nations worship their gods” (Deut 12:30).

17. As a prime example of this approach, and providing extensive further bibliography, see Eleonore Reuter, *Kultzentralisation: Entstehung und Theologie von Dtn 12* (BBB 87; Frankfurt: Anton Hain, 1993), 109–14.

18. Despite all such attempts, there is no direct access to a hypothetically reconstructed earliest centralization law: even the law conventionally deemed the earliest, Deut 12:13–19, has already been reworked in light of the final stage of the redaction. Norbert Lohfink, *Lectures on Deuteronomy 12–14* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1983), 101, 105. Professor Lohfink kindly made available to me these transcribed lectures, originally given at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, which contain a wealth of research. See also Norbert Lohfink, “Zur deuteronomischen Zentralisationsformel,” *Biblica* 65 (1984): 297–328; reprinted in and cited according to Lohfink, *Studien zum Deuteronomium und zur deuteronomistischen Literatur II*, 164.

19. Several analyses of Deuteronomy reason from literary design to single authorship without considering an alternative interpretation of the evidence. Stressing chiastic structures as well as syllable counting as signs of compositional unity, see Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1–21:9* (rev. ed.; WBC 6A; Waco, TX: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 240, 242, 263. For an example of chiastic analysis carried out without addressing

philological issues, such as grammatical number change, which is then used to defend a claim of compositional unity, see J. G. McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy* (JSOTSup 33; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 67. For a critical analysis, see Bernard M. Levinson, "McConville's *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*," *Jewish quarterly review* 80, no. 3/4 (January–April 1990): 396–404. On the synchronic approaches of Harold M. Wiener, Calum M. Carmichael, Stephen A. Kaufman, and J. G. McConville, see Bernard M. Levinson, "Calum M. Carmichael's Approach to the Laws of Deuteronomy," *Harvard Theological Review* 83, no. 3 (July 1990): 227–57; and Bernard M. Levinson, *The Hermeneutics of Innovation: The Impact of Centralization upon the Structure, Sequence, and Reformulation of Legal Material in Deuteronomy* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1991), 14–60.

20. See the due cautions of James Kugel, "On the Bible and Literary Criticism," *Proof-texts* 1, no. 3 (September 1981): 217–36.

21. See the interesting discussion of "the disappearing redactor" by John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 56–58.

22. Levinson, *Deuteronomy*, 23–52.

23. Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (2d ed.; London: SCM, 1987), broke important ground in arguing that Deut 12:8–12 represents a later exegetical harmonization between noncentralization law (Exod 20:24) and centralization law (Deut 12:4–7). In contrast to his model, however, the claim here is that the very initial formulation of the centralization law is already exegetical and intertextual. Moreover, he does not indicate why he considers Deut 12:4–7 to represent the earliest formulation of centralization.

24. For a recent analysis, see Timo Veijola, *Das fünfte Buch Mose, Deuteronomium: Kapitel 1,1–16,17* (Das Alte Testament Deutsch 8.1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 206–8. See also the earlier work by Reinhard Achenbach, *Israel zwischen Verheißung und Gebot: Literarkritische Untersuchungen zu Deuteronomium 5–11* (Europäische Hochschulschriften 422; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1991), 227.

25. This point of departure should be seen more in heuristic than in historical terms. It is difficult to place the Decalogue in its present form at the beginning of the history of Israelite religion or to consider it ancient. This difficulty besets the otherwise excellent exegetical treatment by Moshe Weinfeld, "The Decalogue: Its Significance, Uniqueness, and Place in Israel's Tradition," in *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives* (ed. Edwin B. Firmage, Bernard G. Weiss, and John W. Welch; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 3–47. His approach, which regards the Decalogue as ancient and Mosaic in origin, should be supplemented by the evidence for a late, Deuteronomistic redaction of the Sinai pericope. See, for example, Reinhard G. Kratz, "Der Dekalog im Exodusbuch," *VT* 44 (1994): 205–38; Erich Zenger, "Wie und wozu die Tora zum Sinai kam: Literarische und theologische Beobachtungen zu Exodus 19–34," in *Studies in the Book of Exodus: Redaction-Reception-Interpretation* (ed. Marc Vervenne; BETL 126; Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1996), 265–88; idem, "Der Stand der Dekalogforschung," in *Recht und Ethik im Alten Testament* (ed. Bernard M. Levinson and Eckart Otto, with assistance from Walter Dietrich; Altes Testament und Moderne 13; Münster/London: LIT Verlag, 2004), 57–65; and Matthias Köckert, "Wie kam das Gesetz an den Sinai?" in *Vergegenwärtigung des Alten Testaments: Beiträge zur biblischen Hermeneutik für Rudolf Smend zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. Christoph Bultmann, Walter

Dietrich, and Christoph Levin; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 13–27. For a different approach, see Christoph Levin, “Der Dekalog am Sinai,” in idem, *Fortschreibungen: Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (BZAW 316; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 60–80.

26. The Israelite god is referred to by two main names in the Bible: Yahweh and God.

27. William L. Moran, “The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy,” *CBQ* 25 (1963): 77–87; repr. in William L. Moran, *The Most Magic Word: Essays on Babylonian and Biblical Literature* (ed. Ronald S. Hendel, CBQMS 35 [Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 2002], 170–81. See also Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972; repr., Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 81–91; and Udo Rüterswörden, “Die Liebe zu Gott im Deuteronomium,” in *Die deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerke: Redaktions- und religionsgeschichtliche Perspektiven zur ‘Deuteronomismus’-Diskussion in Tora und Vorderen Propheten* (ed. Markus Witte et al.; BZAW 365; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 229–38.

28. The importance of the Near Eastern treaty model for covenantal theology has long been recognized. For a useful overview, see Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969). Despite the Exodus narrative’s ancient setting at the beginning of the nation’s history, the key theological idea of the covenant actually represents a late development, which was then read back into Israel’s origins. See Lothar Peritt, *Bundestheologie im Alten Testament* (WMANT 36; Neukirchen Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969). For an attempt, in part, to rehabilitate and rethink the covenant in light of the theological issues raised by Peritt’s dating, see Ernest W. Nicholson, *God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986). See also Eckart Otto, “Die Ursprünge der Bundestheologie im Alten Testament und im Alten Orient,” *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 4 (1998): 1–84. For a recent overview of the issues, see *Covenant as Context: Essays in Honour of E. W. Nicholson* (ed. A. D. H. Mayes and R. B. Salter; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

29. Note the thorough study by Meir Weiss, “Some Problems in the Biblical Doctrine of Retribution,” *Tarbiz* 31 (1961–62): 236–63; 32 (1962–63): 1–18 (Hebrew); repr. in *Likkutei Tarbiz: A Biblical Studies Reader* (ed. Moshe Weinfeld; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1979), 71–98, 99–116 (Hebrew). His argument, however, that “third and fourth” simply means “a large number of generations,” and is thus equivalent to “the thousandth generation,” does not take into account the parallels to the Neo-Assyrian treaties.

30. Arguing that the delay in exacting punishment was intended as an expression of divine mercy towards the penitent wrongdoer, see Yochanan Muffs, *Love & Joy: Law, Language and Religion in Ancient Israel* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 19. His hypothesis, however, begs the question of whether in each case the sinner is in fact penitent and deserving of such divine mercy. In that way, his argument becomes circular.

31. The principle of inverted citation is named after its discoverer: Moshe Seidel, “Parallels between Isaiah and Psalms,” *Sinai* 38 (1955–56): 150; reprinted in Moshe Seidel, *Hiqrei Miqra* (Jerusalem: Rav Kook Institute, 1978), 1–97 (Hebrew). Seidel’s claims are often insufficiently controlled by criteria for establishing the direction of dependence. More controlled uses include those of Shemaryahu Talmon, “The Textual Study of the Bible—a New Outlook,” in *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text* (ed. Frank Moore Cross and Shemaryahu Talmon; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 362–63; Pancratius C. Beentjes, “Inverted Quotations in the Bible: A Neglected Stylistic Pattern,” *Biblica* 63 (1982):

506–23; and Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 35 and 219nn11–12. On this and related editorial markers, see Levinson, *Deuteronomy*, 17–20.

32. Contrary to several modern translations, the phrase cannot mean “immediately” or “instantly.” There is no evidence in the Bible for instantaneous divine retribution for wrongdoing. Thus missing the point are the translations offered by Theophile Meek (“immediately”); see “Deuteronomy” in *The Complete Bible: An American Translation* (ed. J. M. Powis Smith et al.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), 165; and by the new Jewish Publication Society Version (“instantly”); see *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988), 286. The *Tanakh* translation must derive from Arnold B. Ehrlich, *Mikra ki-Pheschuto* (3 vols.; Berlin: M. Poppelauer, 1899–1901), 1:323.

33. Rashi frequently embeds classical rabbinic exegesis, particularly *midrash halakha*, in his commentary on the Pentateuch. In this case, his annotation directly reflects the Aramaic Targum Onkelos. The latter does not strictly translate the lemma of Deut 7:10 but rather amplifies it midrashically, to argue that God “requires the good deeds of *those who reject him in their lifetime* (בְּחַיֵּיהֶם), so as to cause them to perish.” Ironically, the correct insight into the literal meaning of the specific phrase in the lemma—the recognition that “to his face” means “in his life”—actually comes in the service of a midrashic transformation of the verse. The verse is reinterpreted to forestall the inevitable question of theodicy raised by the verse in its literal meaning: How is it, if God truly rewards the righteous and punishes the guilty, that the experience of life suggests the contrary: that the wicked seem to prosper in the world while the righteous suffer? The midrashic solution to the problem is to extend the analysis into the afterlife. The wicked receive reward for their good deeds only in this life, whereas they are requited for their iniquity by being denied a share in the world to come. The righteous, conversely, suffer only in this life for any iniquities they may have committed, whereas they are rewarded for their good deeds with the assurance of a place in the world to come. That extension of the time span of the verse into a putative afterlife, however, completely contradicts the radical claim for divine justice within history made by Deut 7:10. These issues are overlooked in the untenable claim concerning the Targum: “The Aramaic paraphrase is a reasonable interpretation of the verse’s *peshat* [literal sense].” Israel Drazin, *Targum Onkelos to Deuteronomy: An English Translation of the Text with Analysis and Commentary (Based on A. Sperber’s Edition)* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1982), 115. In its rendering of Deut 7:10, Onkelos corresponds closely to the Palestinian Targumic tradition, which has a well-known proclivity for extensive haggadic expansions. See the rendering of Deut 7:10 in Michael L. Klein, *The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch According to Their Extant Sources* (2 vols.; AnBib 76; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 1:213, 2:171. For the social and theological context of these additions, see Avigdor Shinan, *The Aggadah in the Aramaic Targums to the Pentateuch* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Makor, 1979), 2:301 (Hebrew). The best edition of Rashi’s Commentary on the Pentateuch, citing his classical sources (here noting the correspondence with Targum Onkelos) is Charles Ber [Hayim Dov] Chavel, ed., *Perushe Rashi ‘al ha-Torah* (3d ed.; Jerusalem: Rav Kook Institute, 1985–86), 532 (Hebrew). The latter does not address the exegetical issues discussed here. For the standard English translation, see Morris Rosenbaum and Abraham Maurice Silberman, trans., *Pentateuch with Targum Onkelos, Haphtaroth, and Rashi’s Commentary* (5 vols.; London: Shapiro Valentine, 1929–34; repr., Jerusalem: Silberman, 1973), 5:42.

34. A member of the Spanish school of medieval rabbinic exegesis, Abraham ibn Ezra (1089–1164 CE), rejected Rashi's midrashic approach. Ibn Ezra recognized that the issue in Deut 7:10 is not an opposition between this world and the afterlife but between individual responsibility and vicarious punishment. He correctly, if quietly, saw that the verse contradicts the Decalogue doctrine by restricting judgment to the agent "himself" (אָנְשׁוֹ). See Abraham ibn Ezra, *Commentary on the Torah* (ed. A. Weiser; 3 vols.; Jerusalem: Rav Kook Institute, 1977), 3:238 (Hebrew). Ironically, ibn Ezra's rendering is almost identical to that of the modern New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Making allowance for the NRSV's commitment to gender-neutral language, its correct translation ("in their own person") precisely corresponds to that earlier proposed by ibn Ezra.

35. For an expanded study of the reworking and reinterpretation of the Decalogue's doctrine of transgenerational punishment in a variety of texts, see Bernard M. Levinson, *Legal Revision and Religious Renewal in Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Chiasmus in the Text of Isaiah

MT Isaiah versus the Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a)

Donald W. Parry

Introduction to 1QIsa^a

The Isaiah scrolls are significant finds, signaling one of the most remarkable archaeological discoveries of the twentieth century. The Qumran caves, located near the northwestern area of the Dead Sea, yielded twenty-one copies of the book of Isaiah—two from cave 1, eighteen from cave 4, and one from cave 5. An additional copy (making a total of twenty-two copies) of Isaiah was discovered south of Qumran in a cave at Wadi Murabbaʿat. Scholars have labeled these scrolls as follows: 1QIsa^a, 1QIsa^b (1Q8), 4QIsa^{a-r} (4Q55–4Q69b), and 5QIsa (5Q3). All twenty-two copies of Isaiah are written in Hebrew. Most of these scrolls are severely damaged and fragmented, owing to long-term exposure to the elements.

1QIsa^a, or the Great Isaiah Scroll, is perhaps the best-known biblical scroll found at Qumran. It consists of seventeen pieces of sheepskin sewn together into a single scroll and shows signs of being well used before it was stored away.¹ The scroll comprises fifty-four columns of text that vary in width and average about twenty-nine lines of text per column. Measuring almost twenty-four feet in length and about ten inches in height, 1QIsa^a is the longest of the Qumran biblical scrolls. Through paleographic analysis of the Hebrew script, scholars date the scroll to about 125 BCE. In contrast, the other Isaiah texts from Qumran, as fragmented and incomplete manuscripts, may slightly distort understandings of Isaiah's textual history.

1QIsa^a presents a view of what biblical manuscripts looked like at the end of the Second Temple era, before the stabilization of the Hebrew text after the first century CE. Unlike MT, with its consonantal and vocalization framework and system of notes, accents, and versification, 1QIsa^a features handwritten manuscripts without vocalization or accents. Additionally, 1QIsa^a contains interlinear or marginal corrections, scribal marks and notations, a different paragraphing system, and special morphological and orthographic features.

1QIsa^a, which predates by approximately one thousand years the medieval copies of MT, expands understandings of the textual history of the Bible; as such, it is an important text for both academic and popular audiences. It helps to fill gaps of knowledge with regard to scribal conventions and styles, orthography, paleography, scribal interjections, textual divergences, and other aspects of biblical scrolls from the late Second Temple era.

Its paragraphing system and intra-textual divisions are unlike those of MT. 1QIsa^a represents a significant find because it includes all sixty-six chapters of Isaiah, except for minor lacunae, enabling scholars to conduct a complete study of this text. In contrast, the other Isaiah texts from Qumran, as fragmented and incomplete manuscripts, may slightly distort understandings of Isaiah's textual history.

The scroll has a number of scribal interventions, where the copyist or a subsequent scribe corrected readings or entered notations between the lines and in the margins. In addition, 1QIsa^a has a large number of variant readings when compared to MT, most of them minor. Many of these divergences deal with orthography, and taken as a whole, 1QIsa^a displays a fuller orthography than MT, meaning the scroll has more consonants in certain words. Some of the scroll's textual variants result from accidental errors that occurred during the transmission of the text by one or more generations of copyists. These include haplography, dittography, graphic similarity, misdivision of words, interchange of letters, transposition of texts, and so forth. These errors also occur among other biblical scrolls and manuscripts during the last two centuries before the Common Era, and perhaps earlier, although a paucity of textual examples from earlier periods prevents a thorough investigation.

The scribe(s) who copied the Isaiah scroll from a master copy (*Vorlage*) had a free or liberal approach to the text, characterized by exegetical or editorial pluses, morphological smoothing and updating, harmonizations, phonetic variants, and modernizations of terms. There is also evidence that a well-intended scribe simplified the text for an

audience that no longer understood classical Hebrew forms. His editorial tendencies resulted in a popularization of certain terms, some from Aramaic,² that reflected the language of Palestine in his time period. It is because of these modernizations that some scholars have concluded that 1QIsa^a was a nonofficial, popular, or vulgar text.

Notwithstanding 1QIsa^a's variant readings, it shares many textual affinities with the proto-Masoretic text. The scroll also has more than two dozen readings where it agrees with the Septuagint (LXX) versus MT. Of all the Qumran Isaiah scrolls, 1QIsa^a displays more textual agreements with the LXX, but this may be due to the fact that both 1QIsa^a and LXX date to approximately the same period and both demonstrate a free rendering, in some of their readings, of their *Vorlagen*.

Furthermore, the Isaiah scrolls have greatly impacted our understanding of the textual history of the Bible, and in recent decades, Bible translation committees have incorporated a number of these readings into their translations.³ For instance, *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*, published by the Jewish Publication Society, occasionally utilizes variant readings from 1QIsa^a in its English translation or refers to them in footnotes. One such example occurs in Isa 21:8: MT reads *lion* (אַרִּיָּה); 1QIsa^a has *the watcher* (or, *the seer*) (הִרְאֵה), "and the watcher cried, My lord, I stand continually upon the watchtower all day, and I am stationed at my post all night." Because *lion* and *the watcher* in the Hebrew language are graphically similar, a copyist likely made a simple error when he copied this word.

Another example noted in *Tanakh* is located in Isa 33:8, where MT reads *cities* (עָרִים) versus 1QIsa^a's *witnesses* (עֵדִים), again an example of graphic similarity. The reading of 1QIsa^a corresponds well with the parallelism, "A covenant has been renounced, witnesses rejected." Isaiah 14:4 sets forth a third example, one accepted by a number of modern translations, including *Tanakh*, the *New International Version*, and the *New English Bible*. In this verse 1QIsa^a reads *mrhbbh*, meaning "oppression." This fits the parallelistic structure, "How is oppression ended! How is the taskmaster vanished." *Tanakh* notes at the bottom of the page, "The traditional reading [of MT] *madhebah* is of unknown meaning."

Methodology

The following items constitute, in the briefest of terms, my methodology for preparing the lemmas and listing the textual variants.

1. *Paleography*. The opening task is to determine the correct readings of the Qumran Isaiah texts. This is conducted by closely examining

the leather scrolls themselves, when possible, as well as high-resolution photographs and images. When I examined 1QIsa^a on three different occasions, I had particular concerns about the scroll's shadows, creases, wrinkles, folds, darkened areas, flaked-off leather, holes in the leather, and the like; such items may or may not appear in the photographs. In addition to examining 1QIsa^a, I accessed high-resolution images of the same manuscript from the collection of first generation negatives held by the Ancient Biblical Manuscripts Center (ABMC), Claremont, California, including the PAM series and those belonging to John Trever.

2. *Transcriptional Text*. Based on the efforts to determine the correct paleography of the Qumran Isaiah scrolls, I produced transcriptions of the Hebrew words; in doing so, I consulted the Parry Qimron edition of the Great Isaiah Scroll and DJD 32.

3. *Word-Word Correspondences*. Determining word-word correspondences among the Qumran Isaiah scrolls and MT, and then lemmatizing the words, proved to be a complex and prolonged task; this is because many supposed textual variants are no more than orthographic deviations. Divergences consisting of the letters 'ālep, hê, wāw, and yôd especially mark orthographic deviations, but not always.

The word-word correspondences are structured as follows: first the Isaianic chapter and verse; then a MT reading followed by witnesses that affirm MT; then follows a vertical separator stroke (= |); then a textual variant of one or more of the Qumran witnesses; and the entry closes with a solid, midline circle (= •). My approach in the lemma line is to place MT first, followed by other Hebrew witnesses, then the versions. This was a methodological decision and was not designed to suggest that MT has the primary, primitive, or correct reading.

4. *Reconstructed Texts*. This paper does not include divergences from Qumran readings that have been fully reconstructed (i.e., a reading fully enclosed in brackets); but it does include partial reconstructions.

5. *Parallel Registers in the Bible*. This paper includes the readings from blocks of texts that are parallel to Isaiah, most notably Isa 2:2–4 // Mic 4:1–3 and Isa 36–38 // 2 Kgs 18–20.

6. *MT Ketib-Qere System*. This paper examines the *ketib-qere* system of Masoretic type texts of Isaiah in light of 1QIsa^a and other Qumran witnesses of Isaiah; therefore, both MT^{ket} and MT^{qere} are set forth in the lemma lines in association with Qumran entries. Based on my study published in 2010,⁴ it is my position that the majority of *ketib-qere* variants of the book of Isaiah are not material variants that reflect a different *Vorlage* or textual tradition; rather they are analogical readings,

divergences that reveal different orthographic systems, or examples of archaic, dialectical, or phonological textual updating. In fact, beyond the *qere perpetuum* readings and three examples of euphemisms (13:16; 36:12 bis), variations between *ketib-qere* are, for the most part, from the grouping 'ālep, hê, wāw, and/or yôd.

7. *Linguistic Analysis*. This endeavor constitutes another complex set of tasks because the effort requires various determinations, when appropriate, with regard to orthography, lexicon, morphology, syntax, grammar, etc. Here the lexicons proved to be helpful, as well as multiple publications (see individual entries plus the bibliography).

8. *Hapax Legomena*. Biblical Hebrew scholars in the modern era utilize the Greek expression *hapax legomenon* (“once said”) to identify unique words in the Hebrew Bible. Of the approximately 1,200–1,500 *hapax legomena* in the HB (the number varies according to scholarly approaches),⁵ about nine hundred are decipherable, because they possess known and established roots. Approximately four hundred, however, are difficult to interpret. In this paper I deal with examples of *hapax legomena* when they exist as deviations in MT Isaiah and the Qumran Isaiah scrolls that attest them (i.e., 1QIsa^a, 1QIsa^b, 4QIsa^a, 4QIsa^b, 4QIsa^c, 4QIsa^d, 4QIsa^e, and 4QIsa^f). In 2015, I conducted a methodological examination of *hapax legomena* in Isaiah’s text, which includes an analysis of the Qumran Isaiah Scrolls (published in the Peter Flint memorial volume).⁶

Chiasmus in Isaiah’s Text

We will now examine several examples of chiasms in Isaiah’s text. These examples were selected randomly; other examples could be cited. I will place textual variants in brackets. In this section I will examine only the textual variants that present possible deviations that impact the structure or clarity of one or more of the particular chiastic elements.

Isaiah 2:3–5

A Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD [1QIsa^a omits “to the mountain of the LORD”]

B to the house of the God of Jacob;

C that he [“they” יִירֵנוּ 1QIsa^a] may teach us of his ways, and that we may walk in his paths; because the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (2:3)

D Thus he will judge among the nations, and he will settle the case for many people.

E And they will hammer their swords into plowshares,

E and their spears into pruning hooks.

D And nation will not lift up a sword against nation,

C nor will they learn war again. (2:4)

B O house of Jacob,

A Come, and let us walk in the light of the LORD (2:5)

2:3 אֶל־הַר־יְהוָה MT 4QIsa^c ([יהוה] אל הר Mic 4:2 LXX Tg. Syr. Vulg. | > 1QIsa^a • וְיִרְנוּ MT 4QIsa^c (MT Mic 4:2) LXX Tg. Syr. Vulg. | 1QIsa^a וירנו (LXX Mic 4:2) •

אֶל־הַר־יְהוָה—The expression “to the mountain of the Lord” (אֶל־הַר־יְהוָה) was omitted in 1QIsa^a by means of haplography, triggered by the prepositions אֶל . . . אֶל The expression, which has the support of three Hebrew witnesses—MT 4QIsa^c Micah 4:2—as well the versions (LXX Tg. Syr. Vulg.), is essential to the chiasmic structure owing to the fact that “of the Lord” corresponds with the same expression in the final line.

וְיִרְנוּ—MT, with the support of 4QIsa^c (MT Mic 4:2) LXX Tg. Syr. Vulg., has a singular verb (via ירה√) “and he will teach us,” versus the plural reading of 1QIsa^a (וירנו via ירה√) “and they will teach us.” Brownlee posits, as a possibility, that the plural reading of 1QIsa^a (וירנו) was impacted by the Qumran Community’s belief that “they [the priests] may teach us of His ways.” For this position, Brownlee draws support from 4QpIsa^a 11:3–4 and 1QS ix, 7 (see Mic 4:2).⁷ For a second point of view (and more likely), Kutscher postulates that the Qumran “scribe misplaced the *wāw* by mistake.”⁸ The pronoun “they” in the expression “they will teach us” lacks an antecedent and signifies an error and does not provide support to the chiasmic structure.

2:4 הָהוּכִיָּה MT 4QIsa^c LXX Tg. Syr. Vulg. | 1QIsa^a • לְעַמִּים MT LXX Syr. Vulg. | 1QIsa^a בֵּין לְעַמִּים (p.m.) Mic 4:3 •

הָהוּכִיָּה—The odd reading of הוּכִיָּה in 1QIsa^a may be explained as follows: the scribe wrote the first two characters of הָהוּכִיָּה at the end of line 11 (col. 2); then he perceived that writing the whole word would extend too far beyond the vertical ruling, so he inscribed הָהוּכִיָּה at the beginning of the next line (line 12). For three other examples of this phenomenon in 1QIsa^a, see 8:2 (col. 7, lines 19–20), 49:2 (col. 40, line 29), and 49:11 (col. 41, lines 10–11). See also Tov’s study.⁹

לְעַמִּים—The p.m. of 1QIsa^a (הוּכִיָּה בֵּין) represents a rare reading, attested once in the HB (Gen 31:37; cf. Job 9:33); but the preposition has been deleted and the *lāmed* added interlinearly, conforming to MT and

the corresponding passage Mic 4:3 (וְהוֹכִיחַ לְגוֹיִם). Initially the copyist of 1QIsa^a had written בִּין, impacted by בִּין located three words earlier, an obvious error. With regard to the ordering of גוֹיִם and עַמִּים, Mic 4:3 deviates from MT and 1QIsa^a by placing עַמִּים first followed by גוֹיִם.

Isaiah 6:7

- A and will be turned aside
 B your iniquity,
 B and your sin [וְחַטֹּאתֶיךָ “sins” 1QIsa^a]
 A will be atoned (תִּכָּפֵּר)

6:7 וְחַטֹּאתֶיךָ MT | וְחַטֹּאתֶיךָ 1QIsa^a LXX •

וְחַטֹּאתֶיךָ—MT Isa 6:7b of MT comprises a chiasmic structure with two singular nouns, each with an attached second masculine singular pronominal suffix, and two third person verbs: וְחַטֹּאתֶיךָ תִּכָּפֵּר (“and will be turned aside your iniquity and your sin will be atoned”). 1QIsa^a has a plural noun וְחַטֹּאתֶיךָ (“and your sins”) that lacks correspondence with the singular noun (“iniquity”) in the chiasmus; perhaps the copyist inadvertently assimilated the plural from שְׂפָתֶיךָ (“your lips”), a word that is located in the first bicolon of verse 7. But compare LXX, which also attests the plural “sins.”

Isaiah 6:10

- A Make fat [“make desolate” 1QIsa^a] the heart of this people,
 B and make heavy their ears,
 C and shut their eyes;
 C lest they see with their eyes,
 B and hear [plural verb, 1QIsa^a] with their ears,
 A and understand and [“with,” 1QIsa^a] their heart

6:10 הַשְׁמֵן MT LXX | הַשְׁמֵן 1QIsa^a • יִשְׁמְעוּ MT 4QIsa^f Syr.(vid) Vulg. | שְׁמְעוּ 1QIsa^a LXX Tg. Vulg.^{mss} • וְלִבָּבוּ MT s / | בִּלְבָבוּ 1QIsa^a | וּבִלְבָבוּ 4QIsa^f MT^{mss} | καὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ LXX | וּבִלְבָבוֹן Tg. •

הַשְׁמֵן—Some critics approach the reading in 1QIsa^a (הַשְׁמֵן, a *hip ‘il* verb via √שִׁמַּם “to be desolate, be appalled”) versus MT (הַשְׁמֵן, a *hip ‘il* verb via √שָׁמַן “to make fat”) as a *vario lectio*.¹⁰ Kutscher, for one, suggests “the scribe found it difficult to understand the verb שָׁמַן in conjunction with לֵב, whereas שִׁמַּם, which is found over a 100 times, was more intelligible to him.”¹¹ Evans (following Brownlee¹²) sees the scroll’s reading as a “deliberate scribal alteration,”¹³ reading הַשְׁמֵן as a *hip ‘il* imperative from √שִׁמַּם “make desolate/make appalled.” Thus Evans translates: “Make the

heart of his people appalled (at evil).” Evans summarizes that “The effect of these variants [in Isa 6:9–10] is to redirect the entire thrust of the Isaianic passage. The passage no longer proclaims a word of judgment aimed at promoting and intensifying spiritual obduracy; rather, its purpose is to warn and aid the elect [i.e., the Qumran community] in protecting themselves from evil.”¹⁴

With regard to the elements of the chiastic structure, one could argue for either MT or 1QIsa^a’s reading. But there is another possibility that explains the deviation in 1QIsa^a: perhaps the copyist of 1QIsa^a made a simple error by failing to copy the final *nûn*. It is a fact that the copyist occasionally utilized a medial *mêm* in the final position, but in the majority of cases he wrote a final *mêm*.

יִשְׁמְעוּ—Now I will address the second deviation of consequence in this text. Verse 10 consists of a chiasmus that frames the following anatomical parts—*heart, ears, eyes, eyes, ears, and heart*. A verb accompanies each of the six body parts. The first three verbs are *hip ‘il* imperatives and the next three are *qal* imperfects. In MT, all six verbs are put forward as singular verbs. However, a copyist of 1QIsa^a made a mistake by writing one of the verbs as a plural, “and hear” (יִשְׁמְעוּ). At some point during the transmission of the text of Isaiah, the original read יִשְׁמַע וְיִלְכְּבוּ (see discussion immediately below), but a copyist created an error by means of a dittogram, יִשְׁמְעוּ וְיִלְכְּבוּ. A subsequent copyist either omitted the *wāw* conjunction via haplography or he corrected his manuscript according to another manuscript tradition.

וְיִלְכְּבוּ—The Hebrew witnesses provide three different readings: וְיִלְכְּבוּ (MT), יִלְכְּבוּ (1QIsa^a), and וְיִלְכְּבוּ (4QIsa^f). 4QIsa^f’s reading, with both the conjunctive *wāw* and the preposition *bêt*, corresponds to the pattern of the other comparable elements in the chiastic structure, namely בְּעֵינָיו וּבְאָזְנוֹ, thus reading “lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart.” The preposition *bêt* of 1QIsa^a, too, correlates with the *bêt* of בְּעֵינָיו וּבְאָזְנוֹ. These correspondences may indicate primary readings; or, alternatively, a harmonization with the surrounding text. See also the discussion immediately above.

Isaiah 11:4

- A he will smite [*hip ‘il* verb] the earth
 B with the rod of his mouth,
 B and with the breath of his lips
 A will he slay [*hip ‘il* verb] the wicked [*hop ‘al* verb “the wicked will be killed” 1QIsa^a].

11:4 > MT | יומת רשע | 1QIsa^a • יָמִית MT LXX | יומת | 1QIsa^a | יָמוּת 4QIsa^c •

>—1QIsa^a has יומת רשע, encircled with deletion dots. MT lacks the reading. The scribe assimilated these two words from the same expression that is found three words later.

יָמִית—Isaiah 11:4b features a chiastic passage, for which MT presents two corresponding *hip 'il* imperfect verbs: “but he will smite [וְהָקֵה] the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips will he slay [יָמִית] the wicked.” For the fourth line of the structure, 1QIsa^a (יומת) has a *hop 'al* imperfect third masculine singular, “[the wicked] will be killed”; as does 4QIsa^c with its *qal* imperfect third masculine singular, “[the wicked] will die.” The deviations of 1QIsa^a and 4QIsa^c may have arisen owing to scribal carelessness or to the graphic similarity of the *qal*, *hip 'il*, and *hop 'al* forms. MT’s verb supports the chiastic elements of the verse.

Isaiah 11:8

A And the nursing babe will delight

B on the hole of the adder,

B and on the den of the viper [“dens of the vipers” 1QIsa^a]

A the weaned child will put his hand.

11:8 מאורת MT 4QIsa^c | מאורות 1QIsa^a | κοῖται LXX • צָפְעוֹנִי MT Tg. Syr. Vulg. | צפֿעֹנִים 1QIsa^a 4QIsa^c LXX • הֶדְהָה MT 1QIsa^a 4QIsa^b | יהדה 4QIsa^c •

צָפְעוֹנִי—In this chiastic structure, MT has the singular מאורת צָפְעוֹנִי (“den of the viper”) versus the plural of 1QIsa^a צפֿעֹנִים (“dens of the vipers”). MT’s singular provides a better correspondence to the expression “hole of the adder.” The structure, therefore, reads: “And the nursing babe will delight on the hole of the adder, and on the den of the viper the weaned child will put his hand.” Compare also the deviations at 59:5 צָפְעוֹנִי MT 1QIsa^b | צפֿעֹנִים 1QIsa^a LXX. The mechanism that serves to explain the deviations is unknown.

הֶדְהָה—Already in 1912, Gray provided three reasons why the reading הֶדְהָה is “doubtful.” His first is that “הדה would be the only occurrence in the poem of a pf. tense, and this remains suspicious.”¹⁵ Roberts, too, prefers the imperfect verb (יהדה) of 4QIsa^c versus the perfect (MT, 1QIsa^a, 4QIsa^b).¹⁶ One could argue in favor of MT, 1QIsa^a, and 4QIsa^b; however, a copyist of 4QIsa^c may have added the *yôd* to יהדה, possibly influenced by the previous word (ידו), which also begins with *yôd*. But despite Gray’s objection, הֶדְהָה corresponds well with וְשִׁעֲשַׁע, making the morphological values of the two A lines correspond.

Isaiah 13:16

A will be plundered

B their houses

B and their wives

A will be violated ["they will be lain with" 1QIsa^a]

13:16 תִּשְׁגְּלֶנָּה MT^{ket} 4QIsa^a ([תשג]ל[נה]) Syr. Vulg. | תִּשְׁכַּבְּנָה MT^{qere} 1QIsa^a Tg.(vid) | ἔξουσιν LXX •

The chiasmus features two *nip'al* imperfect plural verbs (lines A), two masculine plural pronominal suffixes ("their"), and two plural nouns ("houses" and "wives") (lines B).

תִּשְׁגְּלֶנָּה—MT^{ket} and 4QIsa^b read the verb שגל (תִּשְׁגְּלֶנָּה) "they will be violated". 4QIsa^a also apparently reads [תשג]ל[נה]. MT^{qere} and 1QIsa^a read the verb שכב (תִּשְׁכַּבְּנָה, "they will be lain with"); MT^{qere} and 1QIsa^a present a euphemistic reading because lie down does not necessarily imply force, versus שגל. According to b. Megillah 25b: "Our rabbis taught: wherever an indelicate expression is written in the Torah, we substitute a more polite one in reading. <Thus for> תִּשְׁגְּלֶנָּה, 'he shall enjoy (?) her,' <we read> יִשְׁגְּלֶנָּה, 'he shall lie with her.'"¹⁷ The same MT^{ket}/MT^{qere} is found in Deut 28:30; Jer 3:2; Zech 14:2. For a discussion of תִּשְׁגְּלֶנָּה/תִּשְׁכַּבְּנָה in light of other euphemistic expressions, see Ginsburg.¹⁸ The primary reading is likely שגל ("to be violated"), which accords with *plunder* (i.e., to take something by force) in the chiastic structure.

Isaiah 14:25

A will be turned aside from them ["from you" 1QIsa^a]B his yoke,B and his burdenA from his shoulder ["your shoulder" 1QIsa^a] will be turned aside.

14:25 מְעַלְיָהֶם MT LXX | מעליכמה 1QIsa^a • שְׂכָמוֹ MT | שכמכה 1QIsa^a •

מְעַלְיָהֶם . . . שְׂכָמוֹ—Isa 14:25b forms a chiasmus: "will be turned aside from them his yoke, and his burden from his shoulder will be turned aside." Note that the verbs וְסָר and וְסָר (both סור) frame the chiasmus, with עֹלוֹ ("his yoke") and נִסְכָּלוֹ ("his burden") serving as pivotal units. One would expect the pronominal suffixes of the words מְעַלְיָהֶם and שְׂכָמוֹ, belonging to MT, to harmonize, but they do not. But compare several versions (LXX^{mss} Tg. Syr. Vulg.), which read plural suffix שכמם, agreeing with מְעַלְיָהֶם.¹⁹ 1QIsa^a deviates with its second person plural suffix (מעליכמה "from you") and its second person singular suffix (שכמכה "your

shoulder”). The scroll may have been impacted by שִׁכְמְךָ and צוֹאֲרֶךְ (both second m. sg. suffixes), two words belonging to a similar reading in 10:27, “his burden will be turned aside from your shoulder and his yoke from upon your neck” (יִסּוֹר סְבִלּוֹ מֵעַל שִׁכְמְךָ וְעָלּוּ מֵעַל צוֹאֲרֶךְ).

Isaiah 29:14

A and shall perish

B the wisdom of their wise,

B and the understanding [“understandings” 1QIsa^a] of those who understand

A shall be hid.

29:14 וְכִינָת MT LXX(vid) | 1QIsa^a וְכִינָת •

וְכִינָת—MT has the singular, “and the understanding of.” 1QIsa^a records the plural וְכִינָת, “and the understandings of,” but the plural lacks alignment with singular verb (תִּסְתַּחֲרֶה). MT’s reading works well as it is, preferred by Wildberger.²⁰ Furthermore, 1QIsa^a’s plural כִּינָת does not accord with the singular חִכְמָת in the chiasmus.

Isaiah 34:5–8

A For my sword is saturated [“will appear” 1QIsa^a] in the heavens, behold, it descends upon Edom, and upon the people promised for destruction, for judgment. (34:5)

B The LORD’s sword is filled with blood, it is gorged with fat;

C from the blood of lambs and goats, from the fat of the kidneys of rams;

D because the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah,

D and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. (34:6)

C And wild oxen will fall with them, and the bulls with the mighty bulls,

B and their land will be soaked with blood, and their soil will be made rich with fat. (34:7)

A For it is a day of the LORD’s vengeance, a year of recompense to uphold the cause of Zion. (34:8)

34:5 הִינָתָה MT LXX | 1QIsa^a תִּרְאָה •

הִינָתָה—MT presents the *lectio difficilior* (רִוְהַ “to be saturated, to drink”), versus 1QIsa^a’s תִּרְאָה (רִאֲהַ “to see”), *nip’al*, translated as “For my sword will appear.” With regard to the scroll’s reading, Kutscher proposes that the scribe did not know the verb רִוְהַ.²¹ But if the scribe did not know רִוְהַ, why did he correctly use it two verses later (see v. 7)? It is remotely possible that the scribe borrowed language from another passage (i.e., Jer 14:13; Ezek 33:3, 6), where חֶרֶב (“sword”) and רִאֲהַ (“to see”) are collocated. However, one should also consider that Targum’s reading

of תִּתְגַּלִּי (“my sword will be revealed”) is closer in meaning to תִּרְאֶה (“my sword will appear”) than is רִוְתָהּ (“my sword is saturated”). Based on a line in Jer 46:10 (“and the sword will devour, and it will be satiated and made drunk with their blood”) (וְאַכְלָהָ הָרֶב וְשָׂבְעָה וְרוּתָהּ מִדָּמִם), a reading that is similar to the one under discussion, one can argue for the primacy of MT’s reading; we observe also that MT has the support of LXX, Vulg., and Syr.; but contrast Watts, who states that 1QIsa^a and Tg. “may be more nearly correct” than MT.²² So also, Driver, based on the difficulty of the reading of MT as well as the variant reading of the Targum, states emphatically that “the Scroll’s reading can, indeed must, be accepted without hesitation.”²³

The reading here, then is indeterminate, with textual critics making arguments for the acceptance of both readings, “to be saturated” and “to appear.”

Isaiah 40:12

A Who has measured

B in the hollow of his hand

C the waters [“waters of the sea” 1QIsa^a]

C and the heavens

B with the span [“with his span” 1QIsa^a]

A marked off.

40:12 מִיָּם MT LXX | מִי יָם 1QIsa^a • בְּזֶרֶת MT LXX(vid) | 1QIsa^a Syr. •

מִיָּם—The first textual variant pertains to a possible fusion of two words, reading “waters” (מִיָּם MT), or the diatome, “waters of the sea” (מִי יָם 1QIsa^a).²⁴ Tov holds that “the reading of 1QIsa^a is preferable because of the parallel hemistich (‘and gauged the *skies* with a span.’”²⁵ McKenzie, too, prefers the scroll’s reading.²⁶ Brownlee, with a slight reservation, determines 1QIsa^a to be the original reading,²⁷ contra Orlinsky, who emphatically states that מִי יָם is only an erroneous reading.²⁸ On the grounds that the poet intended assonance to be read (“מִיָּם וּשְׁמִים in MT is surely intentional”), Baltzer holds that MT’s reading is primary.²⁹ Cf. also Isaiah 24:14, where LXX has the equivalent of מִי יָם “the water of the sea” (τὸ ὕδωρ τῆς θαλάσσης). As pertaining to the reading that best supports the chiasmaticity of the lines, the scholars lack agreement, meaning the primary reading is indeterminate.

בְּזֶרֶת—With regard to the second variant, MT attests בְּזֶרֶת (“with the span”) versus 1QIsa^a’s “with his span” (בְּזֶרְתּוֹ). It is unknown whether or not the suffix “his” is original or whether a copyist added

it via assimilation from the corresponding “in the hollow of his hands” (בשעלו). Assimilation is the more likely situation because of the scroll’s copyist’s tendency to harmonize the text. Rosenbloom prefers 1QIsa^a’s reading because “בזרתו is in parallel with בשעלו”³⁰ versus Koole, who rejects the suffix.³¹ Based solely on the two B lines of the chiasmus, “his hand” corresponds with “his span.”

Isaiah 44:21

A Remember these,

B O Jacob and Israel [“O Jacob, Israel” 1QIsa^a]

C for you are my servant,

D I have formed you,

C you are a servant to me,

B O Israel,

A you will not be forgotten [“forgotten”(?) “lifted”(?) “deceived”(?) 1QIsa^a] by me.

44:21 יִשְׂרָאֵל MT 4QIsa^b LXX | יִשְׂרָאֵל 1QIsa^a • יִשְׂרָאֵל MT 1QIsa^a LXX |
יִשְׂרָאֵל 4QIsa^b • תִּנְשָׁנִי MT 4QIsa^b | תִּשְׁאֲנִי 1QIsa^a •

יִשְׂרָאֵל—Both expressions—“Jacob and Israel” (= MT 4QIsa^b LXX) and “Jacob, Israel” (= 1QIsa^a)—work well in this chiasmus.

תִּנְשָׁנִי—The words “you will not be forgotten” (תִּנְשָׁנִי), belonging to both MT and 4QIsa^b, is a *hapax legomenon*, probably via נִשָּׁה (attested six times). The root sense means “to forget” in both Hebrew and Aramaic.³² 1QIsa^a’s תִּשְׁאֲנִי may originate from נִשָּׂא (“to lift, carry”) or נִשָּׂא (“to deceive”), although it is possible that 1QIsa^a’s scribe intended נִשָּׁה, “to forget.” North is partial to נִשָּׂא (“to deceive”), and translates, “you must not play false with me, Israel.”³³ Not only does MT’s reading make sense, but “you will not be forgotten” forms a textbook example of a chiasmus because “not be forgotten” parallels “remember.”

Isaiah 51:7

A Do not fear

B the reproach of a man

B and of their revilings [“those who revile them”(?) 1QIsa^a]

A do not be dismayed.

51:7 (וּמִמְגִּדֵּפֶתֶם) 1QIsa^a 1QIsa^b וּמִגְדִּפֹתֶם MT | (וּמִגְדִּפֹתֶם) •

וּמִגְדִּפֹתֶם—MT reads “their revilings” (וּמִגְדִּפֹתֶם), a non-absolute *hapax legomenon* from גִּדְּפוּהָ, preceded by the preposition מִן. 1QIsa^b attests “those who revile them” (וּמִמְגִּדֵּפֶתֶם), with the double *mêm*, which suggests

the reading of the *pi 'el* ptc. מְגִדָּה (e.g., Num 15:30; Ps 44:17), also prefaced by the preposition מִן. 1QIsa^a apparently first read ומגדפותם (= MT) but a subsequent hand added a second *mēm*, thus reading ומגדפותם (= 1QIsa^b). Additionally, Barthélemy points out that it is “likely that the repetition of the *mem* in [the two Qumran scrolls] was an attempt to assimilate the rare form of MT to a more common form.”³⁴ Either reading is possible (MT or the scrolls), although the grammatically structured chiasmus seems to favor MT’s noun (גְּדוּפָה): “Do not fear the reproach [noun] of man, and of their revilings [noun] do not be dismayed.”

Isaiah 53:7

A yet he opens not his mouth:

B he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter [“to slaughter” 1QIsa^a],

B and [omit “and” 1QIsa^a] as a ewe before her shearers is dumb,

A so he opens [1QIsa^a has a perfect verb] not his mouth.

53:7 לְטָבַח MT | לְטָבוּחַ 1QIsa^a 1QIsa^b • וְקָרְחָל MT 1QIsa^b (וְכָרְחָל) LXX | כָּרַחַל 1QIsa^a • פָּתַח MT | פָּתַח 1QIsa^a •

לְטָבַח—The verb $\sqrt{\text{טבח}}$ does not appear in MT Isaiah, but the masculine singular noun טָבַח occurs four times (34:2, 6; 53:7; 65:12). For three out of those four occurrences, 1QIsa^a sets forth a deviation. In Isaiah 53:7, MT has a masculine singular noun (“slaughter”) versus the *qal* infinitive construct (“to slaughter”) of both 1QIsa^a and 1QIsa^b (cf., Jer 11:19, לְטָבוּחַ, יוֹבֵל כְּכֶבֶשׂ אֶלּוֹף יוֹבֵל לְטָבוּחַ). The deviation is not consequential to the chiasmic structure.

יָפְתָה—With regard to the verbs of the two “A” lines, MT’s imperfect verb (יָפְתָה) corresponds with the same imperfect in the first line of the chiasmus, versus 1QIsa^a, which has a perfect verb in line four. 1QIsa^a likely is in error.

Isaiah 55:8–9

A For my thoughts are not your thoughts,

B neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

C For [“as” 1QIsa^a] the heavens are higher

C than the earth,

B so are my ways higher than your ways,

A and my thoughts than your thoughts.

55:8 מִחְשַׁבֹּתַי מִחְשַׁבֹּתֶיךָ MT 1QIsa^a LXX (αἱ βουλαὶ μου ὥσπερ αἱ βουλαὶ ὑμῶν) | מִחְשַׁבֹּתַי מִחְשַׁבֹּתֶיךָ 1QIsa^b •

מִהַשְׁבוֹתֵי מִהַשְׁבוֹתֵיָּךְ—Both MT and 1QIsa^a present a chiasmus of pronominal suffixes: *my, your, your, my*, thus reading: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.” Contrast this with 1QIsa^b’s reading of מִהַשְׁבוֹתֵי לָכֵן מִהַשְׁבוֹתֵי, which presents an a b a’ b’ ordering of the suffixes: *your, my, your, my*: “For your thoughts are not my thoughts, nor are your ways my ways.” Compare also v. 9: “so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

55:9 גָּבוֹהָ¹ MT 1QIsa^b | כְּגֹבֶהָ 1QIsa^a | ὥς ἀπέχει LXX •

גָּבוֹהָ¹—For the first attestation of גָּבוֹהָ in MT, 1QIsa^a attests כְּגֹבֶהָ, with the preposition *kāp*, which serves as a comparative. Kutscher supports MT,³⁵ but some earlier critics prefer to read כְּגֹבֶהָ כִּי (“avec les versions et Ps. 103,11”).³⁶ The expression in Ps 103:11 (עַל-הָאָרֶץ שָׁמַיִם כְּגֹבֶהָ כִּי) is similar to the opening words of 55:9. For the preposition belonging to 1QIsa^a and LXX, see the comments at 29:9.

With the plus of the preposition *kāp* in line three, 1QIsa^a has either facilitated the text (i.e., made the comparative explicit) or has experienced dittography, כִּי־כְגֹבֶהָ. Note also that the preposition *kāp* is lacking in the fifth line of the chiasmus, where “higher” appears the second time.

Isaiah 56:9–12

A Every beast [“All beasts” 1QIsa^a] of the field, come to eat, every beast [“and all beasts” 1QIsa^a] in the forest. (56:9)

B His watchmen are all blind, they are all without knowledge,

C they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark,

D panting in their sleep [“they are seers” 1QIsa^a], they are lying down,

D loving to slumber [“to utter prophesy” 1QIsa^a] (56:10)

C The dogs have a mighty appetite, they never have enough,

B and they are [“the” 1QIsa^a] shepherds that have no understanding, they all have turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all. (56:11)

A Come, let me [“us” 1QIsa^a] take wine, and let us fill ourselves with strong drink. (56:12a)

56:9 חַיֹּת שְׂדֵה . . . חַיֹּת | (חַיֹּת שְׂדֵה . . . חַיִּיתוּ) MT 1QIsa^b | חַיֹּת שְׂדֵה . . . חַיִּיתוּ 1QIsa^a LXX • חַיֹּת שְׂדֵה . . . חַיִּיתוּ MT 1QIsa^b LXX | חַיֹּת שְׂדֵה . . . חַיִּיתוּ 1QIsa^a •

חַיֹּת שְׂדֵה . . . חַיִּיתוּ—MT uses rare forms (“archaic case ending”³⁷ cf. בְּנוֹ בְּעֹר, “the son of Beor,” Num 24:15) in this expression—חַיֹּת (bis) and חַיִּי—versus 1QIsa^a’s facilitated (or modernized) reading (חַיֹּת . . . חַיֹּת). Further, the scroll reads the plural “beasts”; LXX also has the plural.

56:10 צָפוּ MT^{ket} | צָפִיּוּ MT^{qere} 1QIsa^a (צופיו) | ἴδετε LXX • > MT 1QIsa^b |
 1QIsa^a • הָיִים MT 1QIsa^b | חֲזוּיִם 1QIsa^a MT^{mss} LXX (ἐνυπνιαζόμενοι)
 α' σ' Vulg. (*videntes vana*) •

צָפוּ—MT^{ket} is vocalized to read as a *qal* verb (via צָפָה), although MT^{qere} and 1QIsa^a read צָפִיּוּ (“his watchmen”); the difference between צָפוּ and צָפִיּוּ is a *yôd* (fundamentally an orthographic deviation). Note that LXX (ἴδετε) reads the Hebrew as an imperative, = צָפוּ.

לָנוּם . . . הָיִים—These two words from MT 1QIsa^b are from חֲזָה (a *hapax legomenon*, meaning uncertain, perhaps a dog “panting in its sleep,”³⁸ “babbling,” or “drowsing”³⁹) and נוּם (“to slumber”). The verse may be translated as “His watchmen are all blind, they are all without knowledge, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark, they are panting in their sleep, lying down, loving to slumber.” 1QIsa^a renders the two words under discussion similarly—חֲזוּיִם . . . לָנוּם (“seers”). The difference between the deviations may be explained by *hê/hêt* (חֲזוּיִם/חֲזוּיִם) confusion for the first word and an elision of the *âlep* (לָנוּם/לָנוּם) for the second. For MT’s reading of חֲזָה, Kutscher holds this to be the primary reading—a *hapax legomenon*;⁴⁰ and the reading of the scroll is a simplification, reading a popular word for a difficult term. Contrast Kutscher with Döderlein, who proposed reading חֲזוּיִם.⁴¹

Or there may exist here two genuine variant readings. If the two words from the Qumran scroll are from חֲזָה (“to envision, to see”) and נָאם (“to utter a prophecy”; cf. וַיִּנָּאֻם in Jer 23:31), then the verse may be rendered “His watchmen are all blind, they are all without knowledge, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark, they are seers, lying down, loving to utter prophecy.” Lying down (שׁוֹכְבִים) may be a reference to the prophets’ practice of incubation. The rendering of this passage by 1QIsa^a establishes that the watchmen who are blind are none other than the seers who utter prophecies. It is difficult to know whether or not we have in these two words inadvertent scribal errors or textual variants, although scribal errors is the most probable explanation.

56:11 רָעִים MT 1QIsa^b | הָרוּעִים 1QIsa^a | ποιῶντες LXX Tg. Syr. •

רָעִים—The three Hebrew witnesses, MT, 1QIsa^a, and 1QIsa^b, followed by Vulg., attest “shepherds” via רָעָה. With an article attached to shepherds (הָרוּעִים), 1QIsa^a has a minor variant. This article, together with the m. pl. ptc., corresponds (harmonizes?) to the plural noun and article of line one of the bicolon, thus reading “the dogs . . . the shepherds.” Or, as Paul has written, the “initial *heh* of הָרָעִים was omitted in the MT as

the result of haplography.”⁴² LXX Syr. Tg. have a divergent text, reading רעע/ (“to be evil”) in place of the root רעה. Even as “evil” fits the context quite nicely, it is incorrect.

56:12 MT אָקָה . . . וְנִסְבָּאָה | אָקָה (אָקָה) 1QIsa^b | וְנִסְבָּה . . . וְנִקָּה 1QIsa^a •
 וְנִקָּה MT 1QIsa^b | וְיָהּ 1QIsa^a • יוֹם MT 1QIsa^b (יָוֶם) | הַיּוֹם 1QIsa^a • מָחָר MT
 | וּמָחָר 1QIsa^a •

אָקָה—There are three Hebrew deviations, MT אָקָה; 1QIsa^b אָקָה; and 1QIsa^a וְנִקָּה. Some two decades before the discovery of the Qumran scrolls, Kennedy pointed out that in “some old Semitic alphabets,” the similarity of the form of the characters א and נ sometimes caused confusion in the manuscript; therefore, Kennedy proposed that MT’s אָקָה read נִקָּה (which is the reading of 1QIsa^a), “that this may harmonize with the succeeding plural form וְנִסְבָּאָה.”⁴³ Too, Oort emended MT to read וְנִקָּה.⁴⁴ Contrast Kennedy with Abegg, who proposes that “1QIsa^a and MT probably reflect two early exegetical solutions to the harder text of 1QIsa^b. The fact that the scribe of 1QIsa^b normally lengthened first person imperfects argues for the originality of its reading. It is also difficult to imagine how the first plural would have developed from a first singular in this context.”⁴⁵ Barthélemy follows MT, contending that MT is supported by 1QIsa^b, and also that 1QIsa^a’s reading of וְנִקָּה is an assimilation of וְנִסְבָּה (אָקָה), located two words later.⁴⁶

Isaiah 60:1–3

A Arise,

B shine;

C for thy light is come,

D and the glory

E of the LORD

F is risen upon thee.

G For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth,

G and gross darkness the people:

F but shall arise upon thee,

E the LORD

D and his glory shall be seen upon thee,

C and the Gentiles shall come to your light

B and kings to the brightness [“and kings in front of” 1QIsa^a]

A of thy rising.

60:3 לְנִגָּה MT | לנגד 1QIsa^a | τῇ λαμπρότητί σου LXX •

לְנִגָּה—The reading לנגד of 1QIsa^a (“in front of”) may be an error (but cf. Tg. לְקִבֵּיל). The *dālet* is sizable compared to the copyist’s usual bookhand (cf. the *dālet* of וּכְבוֹדוֹ on the same line) and the *dālet*’s thickness and unusual shape suggests that it was written over another letter. Conceivably, a scribe of 1QIsa^a text miswrote a *dālet* for the *hê*, thus resulting in לנגד (“in front of”). Furthermore, 1QIsa^a’s reading disturbs a classic chiastic structure, where in MT’s לְנִגָּה (“brightness”) corresponds with “shine” in the B and B’ lines.

Conclusion

I have examined textual variants in sixteen chiastic structures in Isaiah’s text. Many of the variants are consequential, consisting of content words, pluses, minuses, and changes; other variants are minor and pertain to conjunctions, the particle ׀, articles, prepositions, paralogic *nûn*, directional *hê*, and the like.

The textual variants in the chiasmus structures may be categorized into three groups:

1. *Scribal errors*. I have identified a number of possible errors conducted by a copyist or copyists of the Great Isaiah Scroll. These include haplography, assimilation or harmonization, dittography, accidental omission of a letter, confusion of the graphic set *hê/hêt* (הֵי/הֵי), elision of the *’ālep*, change from a *hip* ‘*il* to a *hop* ‘*al* verb, plus others.

2. *Euphemism*. Citing Megillah 25b, I referred to the existence of a well-known euphemism in Isa 13:16, wherein MT refers to women being “violated” versus the scroll referring to women being “lain with.”

3. *Indeterminate readings*. Several of the variants are indeterminate to the point that textual critics have opposing views regarding which Hebrew witness provides the primary reading, MT or 1QIsa^a. For example, Isa 34:5 sets forth deviations with regard to the verb that accompanies “sword.” Did the primary reading set forth “my sword is saturated” or “my sword will appear”? For this reading, MT presents the *lectio difficilior* (רִוְהָ “to be saturated, to drink”) and it is likely that a copyist of the 1QIsa^a tradition facilitated the text. A second example is located in Isa 40:12, where the variant “waters” (MT) stands against “waters of the sea” (1QIsa^a). This is most likely an example of textual fusion or a misdivision of the text.

After an examination of textual variants in sixteen chiastic structures, it is evident that ten of the structures present textual variants that

impact the structure or clarity of the chiasmus. They are Isa 2:3–5; 6:7; 6:10; 11:4; 11:8; 13:16; 29:14; 44:21; 53:7; and 60:1–3.

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Notes

1. Torleif Elgvin, "MS 1926/1, MS 1926/3. Uninscribed Fragments from 1QIsa^a and 1QS," in *Gleanings from the Caves: Dead Sea Scrolls and Artefacts from The Schøyen Collection* (ed. Torleif Elgvin; London: Bloomsbury; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2016), 311–12, describes the sewing repairs to 1QIsa^a, which took place in antiquity. He also provides the latest information, together with photographs, on the uninscribed fragments from 1QIsa^a, which belong to the Schøyen collection ("MS 1926/1, MS 1926/3," 309–11).

2. For Aramaic influences in 1QIsa^a, E. Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a)* (STDJ 6; Leiden: Brill, 1974), 24, claims, "Our scribe, whose mother tongue seems to have been Aramaic, and who was undoubtedly familiar with the Aramaic literature of his day, now and again inadvertently grafted Aramaic forms upon the Hebrew text." Elisha Qimron, *Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 116, is more restrained, "Aramaic influences exist, but not to the extent assumed by Kutscher."

3. For an investigation of the utilization of biblical Qumran texts in modern translations, consult Harold P. Scanlin, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Modern Translations of the Old Testament* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1993); Jean Duhaime, "Les manuscrits de Qumrân dans trois traductions du livre d'Isaïe," in *Traduire la Bible hébraïque: de la Septante to the Nouvelle Bible Segond* (ed. R. David and M. Jinbachian; Sciences Bibliques 15; Montréal: Médiaspaul, 2005), 319–49; and Paul Peters, "Varianten des Jesajarolle in der revidierten Lutherbibel," *Lutheran Rundblick* 22 (1974): 98–116.

4. Donald W. Parry, "1QIsa^a and Ketib-Qere Readings of the Masoretic Type Texts," in *Qumran Cave 1 Revisited: Texts from Cave 1 Sixty Years after Their Discovery: Proceedings of the Sixth Meeting of the IOQS in Ljubljana* (ed. Daniel K. Falk et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 17–32.

5. The numbers are difficult to determine. Greenspahn, for instance, calculates: "The Hebrew Bible contains about 300 absolute *hapax legomena* and over 1,200 non-absolute *hapax legomena*, the present number depending on how you define the term." Frederick E. Greenspahn, "Words That Occur in the Bible Only Once—How Hard Are They to Translate?" *BRev* 1 (1985): 30.

6. Donald W. Parry, "Text-Critical Study of *Hapax Legomena* in MT Isaiah and the Qumran Isaiah Scrolls," in *Reading the Bible in Ancient Traditions and Modern Editions:*

Studies in Memory of Peter W. Flint (ed. Andrew B. Perrin, Kyung S. Baek, and Daniel K. Falk; Atlanta: SBL Press; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 307–30.

7. William H. Brownlee, *The Meaning of the Qumran Scrolls for the Bible: With Special Attention to the Book of Isaiah* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 157n3.

8. Kutscher, *Language and Linguistic Background*, 286.

9. Emanuel Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert* (STDJ 54; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 107–8.

10. See, for example, Brownlee, *Meaning of the Qumran Scrolls*, 187–88; Joseph R. Rosenbloom, *The Dead Sea Isaiah Scroll—a Literary Analysis: A Comparison with the Masoretic Text and the Biblia Hebraica* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 13–14; Craig A. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6:9–10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation* (JSOTSup 64; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 54–56.

11. Kutscher, *Language and Linguistic Background*, 292.

12. Brownlee, *Meaning of the Qumran Scrolls*, 186–87.

13. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 55.

14. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 56. See Craig A. Evans, “The Text of Isaiah 6:9–10,” *ZAW* 94 (1982): 416. In this article, Evans examines several traditions (1QIsa^a, the LXX, the Targum the Peshitta, the Old Latin, and the Vulgate) but concludes that 1QIsa^a “represents the most unusual textual modification.”

15. George B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah (I–XXXIX)* (ICC 18; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 221.

16. See Jimmy J. M. Roberts, *First Isaiah, A Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 178.

17. Cited in Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (3d ed. rev. and enl.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 63.

18. Christian D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Ktav, 1966), 346.

19. Thus Sheldon H. Blank, *Introductions and Critical Notes to Portions of Isaiah* (Jerusalem: Hebrew Union College, 1945), 3, emends the text to read שָׁכַם.

20. Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39* (Continental Commentary; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 87.

21. Kutscher, *Language and Linguistic Background*, 285.

22. John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66* (WBC 25; Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 5.

23. Godfrey R. Driver, “Isaiah I–XXXIX: Textual and Linguistic Problems,” *JSS* 13 (1968): 55.

24. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 234–36, presents this example in 40:12 and other examples of word division variants in the HB.

25. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 235.

26. John L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah* (ed. William F. Albright and David N. Freedman; AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 20; see also Pierre E. Bonnard, *Le Second Isaïe: Son Disciple et Leurs Éditeurs. Isaïe 40–66* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1972), 95.

27. Brownlee, *Meaning of the Qumran Scrolls*, 219–20.

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29. Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40–55* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 60.

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31. Jan L. Koole, *Isaiah, Part 3*, vol. 1, *Isaiah 40–48* (Historical Commentary on the Old Testament; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1997), 88.
32. See Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002), 778–79.
33. North, *Second Isaiah*, 45, 142.
34. Dominique Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project* (trans. Sarah Lind; Textual Criticism and the Translator 3; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 399.
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“With strong hand and with outstretched arm” (Deuteronomy 4:34); “With outstretched hand and with strong arm” (Jeremiah 21:5)

Chiasmus in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah

David Rolph Seely

The title of this paper presents an example of a textual interplay between Deuteronomy and Jeremiah in which Jeremiah quotes a well-known formula from Deuteronomy “with strong hand and with outstretched arm” (Deut 4:34) in an inverted form “With outstretched hand and with strong arm” (Jer 21:5). Images of the “strong hand” and “outstretched arm” are found in various Egyptian and Mesopotamian textual traditions as well as iconography.¹ These images appear separately in various biblical sources but appear as a combination first in Deuteronomy (4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8) and then later in deuteronomistic literature (1 Kgs 8:42; Jer 32:21; Ezek 20:33, 34; Ps 136:12).² In the Bible this formula always refers to the might and power of the LORD to deliver Israel from bondage in Egypt.

Jeremiah quotes this formula “strong hand and with outstretched arm” but reverses the two qualifying adjectives creating “outstretched hand and strong arm.” This phrase is unknown elsewhere in the Old Testament. The title of this paper juxtaposing these two formulas thus creates an artificial chiasmus bridging two books consisting of:

A *strong hand,*

B *outstretched arm,* (Deut 4:34)

B' *outstretched hand,*

A' *strong arm.* (Jer 21:5)

The reversal of the elements of a quote from another source is a phenomenon called Seidel's Law and is well attested in the Hebrew Bible as an indicator that the author and/or editor is citing older material.³ The

reversal of these adjectives in Jeremiah also draws attention to the fact that the meaning of this formula/phrase as it is used in Jeremiah is the reverse of the usual meaning when it appears in its usual contextual formula. The usual contextual meaning is divine deliverance of Israel from her enemies. See, for example: “the Lord your God freed you from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm” (Deut 5:15). But in the passage in Jeremiah, the image depicts the Lord using his divine might to *fight against* his rebellious people: “And I myself shall fight against you with outstretched hand and strong arm” (Jer 21:5).

Jeremiah and Deuteronomy

The author and/or editor(s) of Jeremiah regularly allocate language, themes, and theology from Deuteronomy. British scholar S. R. Driver, among the other scholarly commentators on Deuteronomy, noted that “Jeremiah exhibits marks of [Deuteronomy] on nearly every page.”⁴ It is not surprising that Jeremiah uses language and theology from Deuteronomy. Though there is certainly older material contained in Deuteronomy, the final production of the book as we have it today appears to have been done in the seventh century BCE, during or after the time of Josiah—at the time of Jeremiah.⁵ This is of interest to Latter-day Saints since this is also the time period of Lehi and Nephi and the origins of the Book of Mormon.

Consider these specific examples of similarities between Deuteronomy and Jeremiah:⁶

- The prophecy of a “prophet like Moses” is integrated throughout the book of Jeremiah, especially in the elements of the call of Jeremiah (Deut 18:15–18; Jer 1:4–12).
- Jeremiah cites and alters Deuteronomic legal materials regarding divorce and remarriage (Deut 24:1–4; Jer 3:1) and the remission of debt/slavery (Deut 15:12–18; Jer 34:14).
- Jeremiah constantly condemns “going after other gods” just as in Deuteronomy (Deut 6:14; 8:19; 11:28; 13:7 [13:6 Eng]; Jer 7:6, 9; 11:10; 13:10; 16:11).
- The image of the “circumcised heart” found in Deuteronomy is repeated in Jeremiah (Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4).
- Many of the curses in Deut 28 are cited or alluded to in Jeremiah (Deut 28:18 in Jer 5:17; Deut 28:48 in Jer 28:14; etc.).⁷

Seventh-Century Judahite Rhetorical Tradition

Scholars have noted that in addition to Jeremiah allocating texts, themes, and theology from Deuteronomy, these two books also share common rhetorical features. One of the pioneers of the study of ancient Hebrew rhetoric is Jack Lundbom, who has written extensively on rhetorical features in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. His initial work, *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric*, was his doctoral thesis presented in 1973. This was followed by numerous articles culminating in his massive three-volume commentary in the Anchor Bible Series on Jeremiah, and then his more recent commentary on Deuteronomy. Many of Lundbom's scholarly articles have been collected in *Biblical Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism*, wherein he noted the common use of two rhetorical features—inclusio and chiasmus—in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah.⁸

This study will attempt to review some of the usages of inclusio and especially chiasmus in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. Following this review we will identify four specific usages of chiasmus that are relatively distinctive in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah as possible indicators of the seventh-century Judahite rhetorical tradition. Finally, we will identify some examples of these four distinctive features of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon, and we will suggest some areas of future research in Book of Mormon studies that may reflect this rhetorical tradition.

Inclusio in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah

There are two significant rhetorical features that are found throughout the Bible and, in particular, in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah: inclusio and chiasmus. Both of these features are based on repetition.

Inclusio is a rhetorical figure that delimits a textual unit by the repetition of words, phrases, verses, or a series of verses at the beginning and at the end of a unit of text. This simple diagram demonstrates how the figure of inclusio is used to demarcate a section of text—either prose or poetry: ABCDEFGA.

Lundbom gives a simple definition of inclusio as a “key-word balance at the beginning and end of a discourse unit, where the balance usually—but not always—is a repetition.”⁹ This feature is also referred to by biblical scholars as “bracketing” or “enveloping.” The device of inclusio is a well-known rhetorical device that is often studied in regards to the authorship and/or editing and literary structures of biblical books. While this convention has been noted through the years by various

commentators, Lundbom is the first to comprehensively study inclusio in the books of Deuteronomy and Jeremiah.¹⁰

Let us look at two examples from each book. The first example of inclusio is from Deut 1:1–5. The opening passage serves as a superscription to the book of Deuteronomy and consists of a keyword chiasmic structure that delimits the introduction to the book. Below is an abbreviated version of Deut 1:1–5, putting in bold the keywords that will be repeated in the inclusio in 4:44–49:¹¹

Deuteronomy 1:1–5

1:1 These are the words that **Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan . . . in the Arabah . . .**

1:3 **Moses . . . struck down Sihon king of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon and Og king of the Bashan . . .**

1:5 **beyond the Jordan**, in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to make plain **this law**, saying:

The following is an abbreviated version of Deuteronomy 4:44–49 with the words in bold that were repeated to form the inclusio:

4:44 and **this is the law . . .**

4:45 . . . **Moses spoke to** the children of **Israel**

4:46 **Beyond the Jordan . . . Sihon king of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon**, whom **Moses . . . struck down . . .**

4:47 **Og king of Bashan . . . beyond the Jordan . . .**

4:49 **the Arabah.**

The passage in Deut 4:44–46 repeats the words and themes of the opening verses in 1:1–5, thus closing and demarcating the introductory unit of Deut 1–4. This inclusio also introduces the following unit in Deut 5–28 where Moses recites the law.¹²

The second example of inclusio is from Deut 1:1 and 28:69:

Deuteronomy 1:1 **These are the words** that Moses spoke to all **Israel** beyond the **Jordan . . . In the land of Moab**

28:69 [Eng 29:1] **These are the words** of the covenant that Yahweh commanded Moses to cut with the children of **Israel in the land of Moab**

This inclusio brackets or envelopes the unit from Deut 1:1 to the end of the recitation of the law in Deut 28 and binds together the whole of the law code of Deuteronomy. Many scholars believe this indicates an early or first edited edition of Deuteronomy that was later expanded by adding chapters 29–34.¹³

Two examples from Jeremiah also show how inclusio delimits a literary unit in this book. The first example links the first lines of poetry in chapter 1 with the last lines of a poem in chapter 20 and connects the poignant language of Jeremiah called from the womb to be a prophet and then lamenting the day that he ever came forth from the womb.¹⁴

Jeremiah 1:5 and 20:18

1:5 Before I formed you in the belly I knew you
and before **you came forth**
from the womb, I consecrated you

20:18 Why **from the womb** did **I come forth** to see trouble and sorrow
and have my days end in shame?

The second example of inclusio from Jeremiah shows how a simple repetition delimits the whole of the Book of Jeremiah from 1:1 to 51:64, since chapter 52, which duplicates 2 Kgs 24:18–25:30, is usually understood as an appendix.

Jeremiah 1:1 and 51:64

1:1 **The words of Jeremiah**
51:64 Thus far **the words of Jeremiah**

Chiasmus in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah

Chiasmus is a literary device used in prose and poetry in which there is an inversion of an order of words, phrases, or themes. As noted above, like inclusio, chiasmus relies on repetition—only in a reverse order. The following simple diagram shows how chiasmus can also be a figure delimiting a unit of text featuring repetition of texts and/or themes through inversion: ABCDCBA.

When used in poetry, Lundbom notes, “Chiasms vary the monotony of repetition and parallelism, the two dominant characteristics of Hebrew poetry.”¹⁵

Too often we may think of biblical chiasmus as a quaint antiquated literary figure, but in fact it is a figure that is often used in our own rhetorical tradition. See, for example, the following familiar aphorisms that demonstrate the basic rudimentary element of chiasmus as the simple inversion of words and/or thoughts.

One should eat to live, not live to eat. —*Cicero*

I wasted time, and now time doth waste me. —*Shakespeare*, Richard II

All for one, and one for all. —*Dumas, motto of the Three Musketeers*

Let us preach what we practice—let us practice what we preach. —*Winston Churchill*

Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country. —*John F. Kennedy*

Do I love you because you're beautiful? Or are you beautiful because I love you?
—*Oscar Hammerstein*

I meant what I said, and I said what I meant. —*Dr. Seuss, Horton Hatches the Egg*

Chiasmus is also present in well-known and oft-cited scripture passages:

But many that are first shall be last and the last shall be first. (Matt 7:6)

For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matt 23:23)

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! (Isa 5:20)

John Welch is a pioneer in the academic study of chiasmus. Beginning with his edited collection of scholarly papers in *Chiasmus in Antiquity* in 1981,¹⁶ there have been many studies of chiasmus in biblical studies.¹⁷ Several online venues have attempted to collect all of the proposed chiasms in the books of the Bible. In response to this burgeoning identification of chiasmus in the Bible, some scholars have noted that caution must be exercised in identifying chiasmus.¹⁸ Examples of chiasmus can be found throughout the Bible in texts from all genres and periods. A review of the statistics generated by these venues may be able to give some kind of an idea of how commonly chiasmus may occur in a biblical book. Chiasmusresources.com notes 161 occurrences of chiasmus in Deuteronomy and 225 in Jeremiah.¹⁹

Chiasmus can occur at several levels in the Bible. The simplest form of chiasmus is called “syntactic” or “grammatical” and consists of the syntactic reversal of word order within bicola. For example the word order Verb—Prepositional Phrase is inverted as Prepositional Phrase—Verb. Usually these are synonymous. Below are a few examples of synonymous parallelisms from the Book of Jeremiah.

The first example, taken from Jer 4:5a, is diagramed. This is a synonymous parallelism with an inversion of the word order—thus a syntactic chiasmus:

Jeremiah 4:5a

A **Declare** (Verb)

B **in** Judah (Prepositional Phrase)

B' and **in** Jerusalem (Prepositional Phrase)

A' **proclaim** (Verb)

Other similar examples include the following:²⁰

5:6a: Therefore it will slay them
a lion from the forest,
and a wolf from the desert
will destroy them.

20:6: You shall go into captivity,
and Babylon you shall enter.

51:38: Together like lions they shall roar,
they shall growl like lion's whelps.

Occasionally the chiasmus is antithetical:

4:22c: Wise are they for evil,
and for good they do not know.

12:13a: They have sown wheat,
and thorn they have reaped.

Similar examples can be found in Deuteronomy:²¹

32:18: The Rock that begot you, you neglected,
and you forgot the God who bore you in travail.

33:9c: Indeed they kept your word,
and your covenant they observed.

It should be noted that because Hebrew rules of grammar are much more flexible in word order than English, most of these examples where the words appear in inverted order in Hebrew disappear in English translations.

There is also a form of chiasmus called "keyword" or "thematic" chiasmus that occurs in a verse or larger unit. This is where the reversal of the keywords and/or themes manifest in passages larger than bicola.

These commonly occur within one or two biblical verses or within a stanza of a poem.

A simple keyword chiasmus can be seen in the Song of Moses in Deut 32:

Deuteronomy 32:43

- A Praise, O heavens, **his people**,
- B For **he will avenge** the blood of his children,
- B' and **take vengeance** on his adversaries;
- A' and cleanse the land **for his people**. (NRSV)

A similar example can be found in Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 20:14

- A **Cursed** be the day
- B **on which I was born!**
- B' The day **when my mother bore me**,
- A' **let it not be blessed**. (NRSV)

Chiasmus also occurs in larger structures—in chapters and groups of chapters and, some argue, in the structure of the books themselves. Let us look at some examples of larger chiasmus. We have already determined that Deut 1:1–5 opens with an example of inclusio. Here we can see that it is also a chiasmus.

Deuteronomy 1:1–5

- A 1 These are the words that **Moses spoke to all Israel**
- B **beyond the Jordan**—in the wilderness
-
- B' 5 **Beyond the Jordan** in the land of Moab,
- A' **Moses undertook to expound** this law as follows: (NRSV)

On a larger level, David Dorsey, in his book *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, has identified a chiasmus based on themes and keywords that forms the structure of Deut 4–11. He calls these Deuteronomy chapters “Exhortations to obey Yahweh”.²²

- A **Lessons from Yahweh’s awesome acts at Mount Sinai** (4:1–40): enticed, and now, blessings and curses, awesome signs, saw, love for Yahweh
- B **Lessons from giving of first tablets** (4:41–5:33): first time, respect
- C **Don’t forget; lessons from Yahweh’s past and future care** (6:1–25): testing, houses, vineyards, have eaten and are satisfied, don’t forget

D CENTER: **Completely destroy the Canaanites** (7:1–26)

C' **Don't forget; lessons from Yahweh's past and future care** (6:1–2; 8:1):
testing, houses, vineyards, have eaten and are satisfied, don't forget

B' **Lessons from giving of first tablets** (9:1–10:11): first time, respect

A' **Lessons from Yahweh's awesome acts in Egypt and wilderness** (10:2–11:32):
enticed, and now, blessings and curses, awesome signs, saw, love for Yahweh

Similarly, Dorsey identifies a large chiasmus in Jer 1–12 that he calls
“Jeremiah's call and introductory message of condemnation”:²³

Introduction: **Jeremiah's Call: Dialogue between God and Jeremiah** (1:1–19)

A **Condemnation of Judah: marital unfaithfulness** (2:1–3:5): Exodus, good
land, ancestors, cry out, gods and towns, time of trouble

B **Condemnation of Israel for idolatry** (3:6–4:2): idolatry, nations

C **Disaster from the north** (4:3–6:30): from the north, gather together
and flee, Dan, horses, “peace, peace”

D CENTER: **Temple message: Call to Repentance** (7:1–8:3)

C' **Disaster from the north** (8:4–9:25): from the north, gather together
and flee, Dan, horses, “peace, peace”

B' **Condemnation of house of Israel for idolatry** (10:1–25): idolatry, nations

A' **Condemnation to Judah: covenantal unfaithfulness** (11:1–17): Exodus,
good land, ancestors, cry out, gods and towns, time of trouble

Conclusion: **Jeremiah's Complaint: Dialogue between God and Jeremiah**
(11:18–12:17)

Four Kinds of Distinctive Chiasmus in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah

Various scholars have identified four distinctive forms of chiasmus in Deuteronomy that may have provided a rhetorical prototype for Jeremiah. This does not necessarily mean that these forms of chiasmus are unique to Deuteronomy and Jeremiah but that they are suggestive of Deuteronomy providing a prototype for similar figures in Jeremiah. It could be argued that these four distinctive forms of chiasmus are representative of seventh-century Judahite rhetorical tradition. The four distinctive forms are:

1. Chiasmus of Speaker
2. Chiasmus in the Position of Completing a Unit of Text
3. Chiasmus Where Particles Create Semi-chiasmus in the Middle Two Cola of Four Cola Units

4. Chiasmus Where Rhetorical Questions Occur in the Middle of the Structure

1. Chiasmus of Speaker: A distinctive form of chiasmus in Deuteronomy is the chiasmus of speaker. This means that the inversion in the chiasmus is not with the themes or the keywords of the passage, but rather with the speakers.

Deuteronomy 1:20–31 illustrates a chiasmus of speakers. This type of chiasmus was first noted by Lohfink in 1960 and later discussed by Moran.²⁴ Lundbom describes this chiastic structure as follows: “In Deut. 1:20–31, Moses narrates in the first person, introducing the *direct address* of each of the participants in the discussion—including himself—in chiastic fashion.”²⁵

Deuteronomy 1:20–31

1:20–21 A **Moses**

1:22 B **People**

1:23–24 C **Moses**

1:25 D **Spies** “It is a good land that the Lord your God is giving to us.”

1:26 C' **Moses**

1:27–28 B' **People**

1:29–31 A' **Moses**

The same rhetorical figure of chiasmus of speaker is found in Jer 8:18–21.²⁶ In this passage Jeremiah speaks first (v. 8) and then he speaks on behalf of the people (v. 19ab). In the center of the chiasmus, Yahweh speaks (v. 19c), then Jeremiah speaks again on behalf of the people (v. 20), and finally Jeremiah concludes (v. 21).²⁷

Jeremiah 8:18–21

A **Jeremiah** 18: My joy is gone, grief is upon me, my heart is sick.

B **Jeremiah for the People** 19ab: Hark, the cry of my poor people from far and wide in the land: “Is the Lord not in Zion? Is her King not in her?”

C **YHWH** 19c: “Why have they provoked me to anger with their images, with their foreign idols?”

B' **Jeremiah for the People** 20: “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”

A' **Jeremiah** 21: For the hurt of my poor people I am hurt, I mourn, and dismay has taken hold of me. (NRSV)

Another example of chiasmus of speaker is found in Jer 5:1–8 where the chiasmus alternates between the words of Yahweh to the search party and Jeremiah, of Jeremiah to Yahweh, and then of Jeremiah to himself. It begins and ends with the words of Yahweh to the search party (vv. 1–2 // 7–8). The second and fourth speaker is Jeremiah speaking to Yahweh (vv. 3 // 5c–6) and in the center Jeremiah speaks to himself (4–5b).²⁸

2. Chiasmus in the Position of Completing a Unit of Text: A second distinctive type of chiasmus is where the chiasmus is placed in the position of completing a unit of text. This type of chiasmus is most frequently used to complete poetry—usually occurring at the end of a poem or a stanza. The following is an example of a key-word chiasmus completing the Song of Moses:

Deuteronomy 32:43²⁹

- A Give **his people** ringing acclaim, O nations,
- B For the blood of his servants **he will avenge**,
- B' yes, **he will return vengeance** to his adversaries,
- A' And atone for his land, **his people**.

Other examples include Deut 32:9 and Deut 32:18 where chiastic structures complete poetic stanzas.³⁰

Deuteronomy 32:9

- A Indeed **the Lord's portion**
- B was **his people**,
- B' **Jacob**
- A' **his allotted share**.

Deuteronomy 32:18

- A The Rock **that begot you**
- B **you neglected**;
- B' **And you forgot** the God
- A' **who gave you birth**.

Comparable examples appear in Jeremiah where a chiasmus ends a stanza of a poem:

Jeremiah 4:9c

- A And **they shall be appalled**
- B **The priests**
- B' And **the prophets**
- A' **Shall be astounded**

Jeremiah 6:21b

A **And they shall stumble** against them

B **fathers and sons** together

B' **neighbor and friend**

A' **shall perish**

3. Chiasmus Where Particles Create Semi-chiasms in the Middle Two Cola of Four-Cola Units: A third distinctive form of chiasmus found in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah is where Hebrew particles are found in the middle two cola of a four-cola unit. See the following examples:³¹

Deuteronomy 32:27

Had I not feared provocation by the enemy

lest their adversaries should judge amiss

lest they should say, "Our hand is triumphant

Yahweh has not wrought all this."

Lundbom argues that this construction in Deuteronomy may have provided Jeremiah with a prototype.³² The following are examples of chiasmus with Hebrew particles in the two-center cola:

Jeremiah 9:21 [9:22 Engl]

The dead bodies of men shall fall

like dung on the open field

like sheaves after the reaper

And none shall gather them.

Jeremiah 13:16a

Give glory to Yahweh your God

before it grows dark

before your feet stumble

on the mountains at twilight.

4. Chiasmus Where Rhetorical Questions Occur in the Middle of the Structure: Deuteronomy and Jeremiah are both known for their hortatory or their homiletical styles. Moses and Jeremiah are preachers. Moses, in his prose speeches in Deuteronomy, and Jeremiah, in his poetic speeches, often dramatize their messages with rhetorical speeches or questions coming from the mouth of God. Examples of the usage of rhetorical questions in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah include:

Deuteronomy 4:7–8

- 7 For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him?
 8 And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today? (NRSV)

Deuteronomy 32:6

Is not he your father, who created you,
 who made you and established you? (NRSV)

Jeremiah 2:31–32

- 31 Have I been a wilderness to Israel,
 or a land of thick darkness?
 Why then do my people say, “We are free,
 we will come to you no more”?
 32 Can a girl forget her ornaments,
 or a bride her attire?
 Yet my people have forgotten me,
 days without number. (NRSV)

One of the conventions shared by both books is to place the rhetorical questions in the center of a chiasm. See for example the passage in Deut 4:1–14:³³

- A (4:1) **hear the statutes and decrees which I am teaching you to observe**
 B (4:2) you shall **not add** to what I command you **nor subtract** from it
 C (4:3) **You have seen with your own eyes**
 D (4:4) you, who clung to the LORD, **are all alive today**
 E (4:5–6) **Look**
 F (4:7) **For what other great nation** has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him?
 F' (4:8) **8 And what other great nation** has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?
 E' (4:9) Do not forget the things which **you yourselves have seen**
 D' (4:10) they may learn to fear me **as long as they live**
 C' (4:11–12) **saw no form**
 B' (4:13) he **wrote** on two tablets of stone
 A' (4:14) **to teach you the statutes and decrees which you are to observe**

See also the rhetorical questions in the center of Jer 8:18–21, in a chiasmus that we have already discussed as an example of speaker chiasmus above:

- A My joy is gone, grief is upon me, my heart is sick (18)
 B Hark a cry, “Is Yahweh not in Zion? Is her king not in her?” (19)
 C CENTER Why then have they provoked me to anger with their images
 and with their foreign idols? (20)
 B’ The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved
 A’ I mourn, dismay has taken hold of me (21)

Rhetorical Studies and the Book of Mormon

The observations about the four distinctive rhetorical features in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah may be useful to Book of Mormon studies. Noel Reynolds noted: “The growing understanding of and appreciation for Hebrew rhetoric of the 7th century BCE, suggests strongly that we should look at the writings of Nephi who was born and educated in 7th century Jerusalem, and who opens his narrative telling us that ‘I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father’ (1 Nephi 1:1), to see if the insights of rhetorical criticism might provide us with new insights.”³⁴ Deuteronomy is well-attested in the Book of Mormon, and prophecies of Jeremiah were contained on the Brass Plates (1 Nephi 5:13). John Welch has identified several examples of possible legal evidence in the Book of Mormon from Jeremiah.³⁵

Beginning with the work of John Welch, Book of Mormon scholars have noted and discussed chiasmus in their analyses of the Book of Mormon.³⁶ In 1992, Donald Parry produced a version of the Book of Mormon text that was reformatted to show parallelistic patterns in the Book of Mormon in which he identified numerous possible examples of chiasmus.³⁷ More recently, Book of Mormon scholars have begun to notice the importance of the rhetorical device of *inclusio* as well.³⁸ Just as the study of chiasmus has led to many insights in the Book of Mormon there is much work to be done in the study of *inclusio* in the Book of Mormon. Latter-day Saint readers of the Book of Mormon have long noted the repetition of important themes throughout the Small Plates and the Book of Mormon as a whole. For example, the keywords and themes of a passage in 1 Nephi 1:20 which states, “But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all whom he hath chosen,” have been noted to appear throughout 1 Nephi (1:14; 8:8; 21:10, 13) and 2 Nephi (2:8, 12, 26; 9:8, 19; 11:5; 19:17; 24:1), indicating a major theme of

Nephi's work. And yet, I am not aware of a study that identifies these as possible examples of inclusio. There are many similar examples of repetition that may be functioning as inclusios to be explored.

The four types of distinctive chiasmus in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah as integral parts of the rhetorical tradition of the seventh century in Judah may be useful in further study of the Book of Mormon. Examples of all four distinctive uses of chiasmus can be found in the Book of Mormon.

1. Chiasmus of Speaker: While I have not yet located an example of a chiasmus of speaker in the Book of Mormon, we can point to a similar example involving the reversal of the subjects in the text. In Nephi's interpretation of the block of Isaiah chapters that he has inserted into his record in 2 Nephi 12–24 that equal Isa 2–14, he gives a long historical discussion of how these Isaiah passages may help illuminate the history of the Jews, the Lehiters, and the Gentiles. Nephi presents this discussion in a chiastic form—that also turns out to coincide with the historical order of the visit of the Savior to the three peoples and their acceptance of the Book of Mormon:³⁹

2 Nephi 25–31

A 25:9–30 **Jews:** Messiah goes to Jews and is rejected

B 26:1–18 **Lehites/Nephites:** Christ visits the Nephites and is accepted then later rejected

C 26:19–30:14 **Gentiles:** pride of the Gentiles

C' 31:1–2: **Gentiles:** Gentiles accept the Book of Mormon and Christ

B' 31:3: **Lehites/Lamanites:** Lamanites accept the Book of Mormon and Christ

A' 31:4–8 **Jews:** Jews accept the Book of Mormon and Christ

2. Chiasmus in the Position of Completing a Unit of Text: Numerous examples of chiasms can be found in completing a stanza or a unit of text in the Book of Mormon.⁴⁰ See, for example, the chiasmus that bridges the modern divisions in 1 Nephi chapters 1 and 2:

1 Nephi 1:20

1:20: A and they also **sought** his **life**, that they might **take it away**.

B But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over those whom he hath chosen, **because** of their **faith**, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance.

2:1: C For behold, it came to pass that the Lord **spake unto my father**, yea, *even in a dream*.

C' and **said unto him**: Blessed art thou, Lehi, because of the things
which thou hast done;

B' and **because** thou hast been **faithful** and declared unto this people
the things which I commanded thee, behold

A' **they seek to take away thy life.**

Incidentally, this chiasmus contains Nephi's introduction of the theme of tender mercies that will be repeated throughout 1 and 2 Nephi. The next occurrence in 1 Nephi of the phrase "tender mercies" also occurs in the center of a chiasmus in 1 Nephi 8:8 that ends the first unit of Lehi's vision of the tree of life:

1 Nephi 8:8

A I began to **pray unto the Lord**

B that he would have **mercy** on me,

B' according to the multitude of his **tender mercies**

A' And it came to pass that after I had **prayed unto the Lord**

A simple chiasm also ends Alma's sermon in Alma 5.

Alma 5:62

A **I speak** by way of command unto you

B **that belong to the church**

B' and unto **those who do not belong to the church**

A' **I speak** by way of invitation.

3. Chiasmus Where Particles Create Semi-chiasmus in the Middle Two Cola of Four-Cola Units: Examples where a semi-chiasmus occurs in the middle two cola of a four-cola unit may be much harder to spot in an English translation than in the Hebrew biblical text. Nevertheless, there are some examples in the Book of Mormon. Some Book of Mormon examples tend to modify the second particle with a conjunction.

2 Nephi 3:1

A **Thou wast born**

B **in** the wilderness of mine afflictions;

B' **yea, in** the days of my greatest sorrow

A' **did thy mother bear thee.**

Mosiah 29:20

A But behold, **he did deliver them**

B **because** they did humble themselves before him;

B' **and because** they cried mightily unto him

A' **he did deliver them out** of bondage

Alma 34:36

A because the Lord hath said **he dwelleth not**

B **in** unholy temples,

B' **but in** the hearts of the righteous

A' **doth he dwell.**

4. Chiasmus Where Rhetorical Questions Occur in the Middle of the Structure: The Book of Mormon, like the books of Deuteronomy and Jeremiah, is a hortatory work. All three books are full of preaching both to contemporary audiences as well as to future audiences. And the preaching in all three books is full of rhetorical questions. Book of Mormon commentators have long noted and discussed the usage of rhetorical questions in the Book of Mormon.⁴¹ A few examples of rhetorical questions from the Small Plates are given below. However, these rhetorical questions have not been identified as occurring within a chiasmus structure.

1 Nephi 15:12: Behold, I say unto you, that the house of Israel was compared unto an olive tree, by the Spirit of the Lord which was in our father; and behold are we not broken off from the house of Israel, and are we not a branch of the house of Israel?

2 Nephi 31:6: And now, I would ask of you, my beloved brethren, wherein the Lamb of God did fulfil all righteousness in being baptized by water?

2 Nephi 31:7: Know ye not that he was holy?

Jacob 5:48: And because the branches have overcome the roots thereof, behold they grew faster than the strength of the roots, taking strength unto themselves. Behold, I say, is not this the cause that the trees of thy vineyard have become corrupted?

A study of the use and function of rhetorical questions in the Book of Mormon may be productive in terms of coming to a better understanding of the rhetorical features in the Book of Mormon.

In regards to the convention of putting rhetorical questions in the middle of a chiasmus, there is an example of this in 1 Nephi 15:

1 Nephi 15:7–12⁴²

- A 7 And they said: Behold, we cannot understand the words which **our father** hath spoken
- B concerning the natural branches of **the olive-tree**, and also concerning the Gentiles. 8 And I said unto them: Have ye inquired of the Lord?
- C 9 And they said unto me: We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing **known unto us**.
- D 10 *Behold, I said unto them: How is it that ye do not **keep the commandments of the Lord**?*
- E *How is it that ye will perish, because of **the hardness of your hearts**?*
- F 11 *Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?—*
- E' If ye will not **harden your hearts**, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive,
- D' with diligence in **keeping my commandments**,
- C' surely these things shall be made **known unto you**.
- B' Behold, I say unto you, that the house of Israel was compared unto an **olive-tree**,
- A' by the Spirit of the Lord which was in **our father**;

Likewise, three rhetorical questions are placed in the center of a chiasmus in verse 4 in 2 Nephi 29:3–6.⁴³

- A 3 And because my words shall hiss forth—many of the Gentiles shall say: **A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible.**
- B 4 But thus saith the Lord God: **O fools**, they shall have a Bible;
- C and it shall proceed forth from the Jews, **mine** ancient covenant **people**.
- D **And what thank they the Jews** for the Bible which they receive from them?
- E *Yea, **what do the Gentiles mean**?*
- F ***Do they remember** the travails, and the labors, and the pains of **the Jews**, and their diligence unto me,*
- G *in bringing forth salvation unto the **Gentiles**?*
- G' 5 *O ye **Gentiles**,*
- F' ***have ye remembered the Jews**, mine ancient covenant people?*
- E' Nay; but **ye have cursed them**, and **have hated them**, and have not sought to recover them.
- D' But behold, **I will return all these things upon your own heads**;

C' for I the Lord have not forgotten **my people**.

B' 6 **Thou fool**, that shall say:

A' **A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible**. Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews?

This paper has included a review of the use and function of inclusio and chiasmus in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah and has shown that these literary patterns are prominent and, in some cases, distinctive features of a seventh-century Judahite rhetorical tradition. Similarly, the discovery of these same literary features in the Book of Mormon can sharpen our reading and study of this ancient book coming from the same period and rhetorical tradition.

In closing, we can remember the words of Bernard Levinson as he speaks of “the pleasures of chiasmus.” Professor Levinson reminds us that the “recognition of the structure of the chiasm provides an intellectual (and potentially spiritual) gain for the reader and a sense of pleasure.”⁴⁴

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Notes

1. Brent A. Strawn, “‘With a Strong Hand and an Outstretched Arm’: On the Meaning(s) of the Exodus Traditions(s),” in *Iconographic Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: An Introduction to Its Method and Practice* (ed. Izaak J. de Hulster, Brent A. Strawn, and Ryan P. Bonfiglio; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 103–16.

2. Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 329.

3. Bernard Levinson has, more than any other modern scholar, brought the function of Seidel's Law into focus and he uses it in his work to recreate how authors and editors appropriate older texts in their work. The principle of Seidel's Law says, “Repetition may reverse the elements of the original. . . . According to this principle, citation within the Hebrew Bible frequently reverses the elements of the source text.” See

Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 18–19. Another prominent biblical scholar Marc Brettler explains Seidel's Law thusly: "In the Bible, such reversal [Seidel's Law] indicates that a later source is citing an earlier one—it functions like quotations marks in English." Marc Brettler, *How to Read the Bible* (3d ed.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2005), 178.

Book of Mormon scholars have noted occurrences of Seidel's Law in the Book of Mormon. See David E. Bokovoy and John A. Tvedtnes, "Seidel's Law," in *Testaments: Links between the Book of Mormon and the Hebrew Bible* (Tooele, UT: Heritage Press, 2003), 56–60.

4. S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896), xlvii. For a comprehensive study of the usage of Deuteronomy in Jeremiah, see Nathan Mastnjak, *Deuteronomy and the Emergence of Textual Authority in Jeremiah* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

5. See Moshe Weinfeld, "Introduction," in *Deuteronomy 1–11* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1–84; Jack R. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 6–25.

6. A more complete list and discussion of these similarities can be found in Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 37–43.

7. A more complete list of the curses can be found in Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 41–42.

8. See Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric* (2d ed.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997); Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20* (AB 21A; New York: Doubleday, 1999); Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36* (AB 21B; New York: Doubleday, 2004); Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52* (New York: Doubleday, 2004); Jack R. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*; and Jack R. Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2013). Lundbom's collection of essays in *Biblical Rhetoric and Rhetorical Studies* was reviewed by Noel B. Reynolds, "The Return of Rhetorical Analysis to Bible Studies," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 17 (2016): 91–98.

9. Jack R. Lundbom, "The Inclusio and Other Framing Devices in Deuteronomy I–XXVIII," *VT* 46 (July 1996): 300.

10. Lundbom identifies and discusses inclusio in Deuteronomy in "Inclusio and Other Framing Devices," 296–315 and throughout his commentary. Likewise, he discusses inclusio in Jeremiah in *Jeremiah: A Study*, 36–81, and throughout his commentary.

11. Adapted from Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 155, 260–61.

12. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 260–61.

13. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 799.

14. Following Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study*, 42.

15. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 864. Lundbom here is following James Muilenburg, "A Study in Hebrew Rhetoric: Repetition and Style," in *VTSup* (Congress Volume; Copenhagen, 1953), 1:97–111; and James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88, no. 1 (1969): 10.

16. John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structure, Analysis, Exegesis* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981).

17. See John W. Welch and Daniel B. McKinlay, *Chiasmus Bibliography* (Provo, Utah: Research Press, 1999). See also the bibliography at the end of this volume.

18. See David P. Wright, "The Fallacies of Chiasmus: A Critique of Structure Proposed for the Covenant Collection (Exodus 20:23–23:19)," *Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 10 (2004): 143–68.

19. See "Hebrew Bible," Chiasmus Resources, <https://chiasmusresources.org/hebrew-bible#7>.
20. Taken from Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study*, 84–87.
21. Following Lundbom's literal translations in his commentary *Deuteronomy*, 850, 914.
22. Simplified from David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis–Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 87.
23. Simplified from Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 238.
24. Norbert Lohfink "Darstellungskunst und Theologie in Dtn 1, 6–3, 29," *Biblica* 41, no. 2 (1960): 122; W. L. Moran, "Deuteronomy," in *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (ed. Reginald C. Fuller; London: Nelson, 1969), 261; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 166.
25. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study*, 83.
26. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 529.
27. Following Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 373. See also the discussion in Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study*, 111–14.
28. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study*, 100–104.
29. Following Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 864.
30. Following Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 864.
31. All of these examples are from Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study*, 88–89.
32. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study*, 89.
33. From "Literary Structure (Chiasm, Chiasmus) of Book of Deuteronomy: Chiasitic Structure and Concentric Structure and Parallel of Each Pericope," http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/05_Deuteronomy_pericope_e.html.
34. Noel B. Reynolds, "Chiastic Structuring of Large Texts: Second Nephi as a Case Study," unpublished, 2016, 6–7, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/1679>.
35. For examples of Deuteronomy in the Book of Mormon, see Ellis Rasmussen, "Deuteronomy," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (ed. Daniel H. Ludlow; 4 vols.; New York: Macmillan 1992): 378–79. Welch points out parallels to legal trials in the Book of Mormon to Jeremiah's trial in Jer 26 in John W. Welch, *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press; the Neal A. Maxwell Institute of Religious Scholarship, 2008), 78, 87–88, 197, 223, 303.
36. John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," in Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 198–210. For a convenient and up-to-date bibliography on chiasmus, see the bibliography in Chiasmus Resources, <https://chiasmusresources.org/chiasmus-bibliography>.
37. Donald W. Parry, *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted According to Parallelistic Patterns* (Provo, UT: F.A.R.M.S., 1992).
38. Noel B. Reynolds, "The Gospel According to Mormon," *SJT* 68, no. 2 (2015): 218–34; Noel B. Reynolds, "Chiastic Structuring of Large Texts: Second Nephi as a Case Study," in *To Seek the Law of the Lord: Essays in Honor of John W. Welch* (ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson and Daniel C. Peterson; Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation, 2017), 333–349; Matthew L. Bowen, "Nephi's Good Inclusio," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 17 (2016): 181–95.
39. David Rolph Seely, "Nephi's Use of Isaiah 2–14 in 2 Nephi 12–30," in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon* (ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch; Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1998), 159–60.
40. These examples are from Parry, *Book of Mormon Reformatted*, 2, 13, 209.

41. Rhetorical questions in the Book of Mormon have been noted and studied in a preliminary way by Ben Spackman, “Negative Questions in the Book of Mormon,” Update No. 179 in *FARMS Insights* 26/200, 2–3. Spackman notes that the occurrence of negative rhetorical questions in the Book of Mormon may be Hebraism. See also James T. Duke, *The Literary Masterpiece Called the Book of Mormon* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2004), 219–21.

42. First noted by Parry, *Book of Mormon Reformatted*, 26.

43. Modified from Parry, *Book of Mormon Reformatted*, 108.

44. Bernard Levinson, abstract submitted for the conference entitled “The Pleasures and Perils of Chiasmus: Some Case Studies from Exodus and Deuteronomy,” Chiasmus Jubilee (Provo, UT: 2017).

Narrating Homicide Chiastically

John W. Welch

The truth be known, murder is an ugly, awful subject. Even when packaged in beautifully crafted literature, first-degree homicide is to be universally assailed as vile, horrible, and most terrible. Murder is disruptive to the very fabric of human life. It instills in the community anxieties, horror, fear, chaos, vengeance, and blood feuds. It throws the normal boundaries of human powers in the world into personal turmoil, into metaphysical uncertainty, and into cosmic imbalance.

The groundbreaking legal historian F. W. Maitland once famously said, “But if some fairy gave me the power of seeing a scene of one and the same kind in every age of history of every race, the kind of scene that I would choose would be a trial for murder, because I think that it would give me so many hints as to a multitude of matters of the first importance.”¹ And I would agree, but with one elaboration: I would add, “And show me a homicide narrative in a sacred text and we can know more about the laws, social beliefs, and ultimate values of its adherents than by any other way.”

Many homicide laws and stories are found in scripture. In a recent volume of the *Jewish Law Association Studies*, which contains the papers from a meeting in Antwerp on Jewish law and narrative, I discuss twenty-three homicide narratives in the Bible and seventeen in the Book of Mormon.² Those forty stories are factually entangled and legally complicated. Much has been written about the laws of homicide and refuge in the Hebrew Bible³ and also about the process of extracting legal material from biblical narratives.⁴ As Assnat Bartor has recently

stated, in biblical texts “the narrative and the laws are not only combined together—at times they are actually merged.”⁵

Among the findings of interest in that article is the observation that chiasmus is used both in the law codes and also in the legal narratives regarding homicide. Chiasmus does not appear in all such texts, but it is significantly used in several homicide accounts. While many scholars have analyzed legal aspects of these homicide narratives in isolation, no one has tackled the challenge of synthesizing and then analyzing all of these scriptural homicide narratives generically, reading them closely in order to generate a composite understanding of all their common legal rubrics and also their rhetorical and narrative strategies. That is the effort I undertook in the *JLAS* article. At the end of that study, I mention the fact that some of these homicide texts make use of chiasmus, calling for further examination of what that fact might tell us. This is the question I now take up: What might chiastic analysis contribute to our understanding of homicide texts? This paper will analyze the use of chiasmus in eight homicide laws or narratives and then discuss why, and to what effects or purposes, these homicide texts use chiasmus.

Chiasmus in Statements of Homicide Law

The Noachide Law of Homicide (Genesis 9:6)

In Gen 9:6, the A-B-C-C-B-A structure of the law of homicide, as it was given in connection with the covenant that God made with Noah, is clear:

A He who spills (*shofekh*)

B blood (*dam*)

C of the human (*ha'adam*)

C' by [or on account of] the human (*ba'adam*)

B' his blood (*damo*)

A' will be spilled (*yishafekh*)

In his commentary on Genesis, Robert Alter notes that this chiastic arrangement suggests (1) “a system of retributive justice,” (2) “an emphatic play on [the three key words]: spills, blood, human; by (or on account of) human, his blood, spilled,” and (3) “[a formal] mirroring [of] the idea of measure for measure.”⁶ Additionally, chiasmus functions here in several other ways. For example, (4) the chiastic doubling of these elements emphatically doubles down on the seriousness of homicide; (5) the

carefully controlled reverse structuring of chiastic elements establishes that the controlled legal response to a homicide should echo precisely and reciprocally the same fate on the culprit that he caused and perpetrated on the victim; and finally (6) the chiastic balancing of these elements may also convey the inherently presumptive evenhandedness and fairness of punishments that appropriately fit the crime. Indeed, from the earliest depictions of divine justice in Egyptian funerary texts down to the modern portrayal of justice, justice is seen as a scale, anciently balancing the heaviness and hardness of the human heart against the lightness and purity of a feather, or in modern times, the blindfolded justice who lets the strengths and weaknesses of the case tilt one way or the other.

The Case of the Blasphemer (Leviticus 24:13–23)

In Lev 24:13–23, many scholars have found one of the most famous instances of chiasmus in the Bible. Like Gen 9, it too pertains to talionic justice.

- A And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,
 - B Bring forth him that has cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him . . . stone him.
 - C And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying,
 - D Who curses his God shall bear his sin . . . the stranger, the same as he that is born in the land.
 - E He that kills any man shall surely be put to death.
 - F He that kills a beast shall make it good; beast for beast.
 - G If a man causes a blemish in his neighbor, . . . so shall it be done to him;
 - H Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth:
 - G' As he has caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again.
 - F' And he that kills a beast, he shall restore it:
 - E' And he that kills a man shall be put to death.
 - D' You shall have one manner of law for the stranger, the same as for one of your own country.
 - C' And Moses spoke to the children of Israel,
 - B' That they who had heard him should bring forth him that had cursed out of the camp, and stone him with stones.
 - A' And the children of Israel did as the Lord commanded Moses.

My configuration above, which runs A to H and back to A, is close to Nils Lund's, Jacob Milgrom's, and Bernard Jackson's.⁷ I do, however, welcome the argument Timothy Willis has advanced that lines D and D' should each be separated into two lines, strengthening the overall result by adding to the length of this structure.⁸ Willis also contends that the use of chiasmus in this passage—even if occasionally and probably purposefully imbalanced—is quite “undeniable,” and both Willis and Jackson skillfully argue that chiasmus is useful in several ways in this difficult case.

Although the case out of which this text arose did not involve a homicide but a blasphemous offense against God, the general rule regarding homicide is mentioned in E and E', framing the beginning and ending of the central block of talionic formulations that stand at the heart of this text.

As it does in Genesis 9, chiasmus again—but here more fully—serves the purpose of focused clarification, emphatically highlighting “the legal principle that lies at the core of” the decision in this case—the talionic principle, eye for eye, tooth for tooth.⁹

Bernard Jackson has shown that *ka'asher* is a crucial word here. It has a qualitative meaning: “just as that” he has done, so “in the same way as that” shall be done to him. This expression appears only twice in this text—in G and G' (24:19–20), and thus the chiasmic structure draws the qualitative importance of this legal guideline doubly to attention.

At the same time, the three appearances in H of the quantitative *tachat* formula at the very center of this structure (a blemish *tachat* a blemish, an eye *tachat* an eye, one tooth *tachat* one tooth) are thus chiasmically “enveloped” by the two *ka'asher* appearances in G and G', and thereby chiasmus communicates the judicial unification of these two traditional expressions or legal rubrics.¹⁰ As Bernard Levinson has also shown,¹¹ chiasmus can be used for tying together two legal traditions, and that is what it does here.

Additionally, Willis points out that the comparatively strong use of the intensive infinitive in E (“shall *surely* be put to death”) serves to propel or “push the reader forward toward the center of the chiasmus,” where the case's rationale is explained.¹²

Modern readers find it unsettling that a person, especially a non-covenant-making resident alien, should be executed for blaspheming or cursing God. As Willis points out, the chiasmic structure in this judicial narrative “places the [most ordinary applications of] the talionic principle at the center, but it then proceeds [outward] from that principle in steps of ever-increasing import.”¹³ Thus, chiasmus serves a gradational

function here: the loss of one eye, or of a tooth, or a broken bone (in H), is not as severe as being marred, maimed, or rendered ritually defiled (G).¹⁴ And that is not as severe as killing livestock (belonging to someone else, F), which is not as severe as homicide (E), which in turn is not as severe as blasphemy (D), which is most important and what this case was all about. This escalating chiastic ordering sustains the conclusion of Ze'ev Falk that "idolatry and other forms of insurrection against the suzerainty of God were the most serious of crimes"¹⁵ under biblical law. Thus, as Milgrom has argued, the Holiness Code is particularly concerned that even a resident alien (*gēr*) is capable of polluting the "holy land of promise" by such blasphemy. This is the legal holding established in this case.¹⁶

Finally, Willis sees the comparatively simple verb form in E' ("shall be put to death" instead of "shall surely be put to death" in E) as serving to resolve the case in a simple, settled summation.¹⁷ In this way, the chiasmic structure gives this legal account a sense of completion and finality. Paul Gaechter called chiasmus a "closed form,"¹⁸ and with this characteristic in mind, we can equally say, this case is closed.

The Law of Homicide (Numbers 35)

In Num 35, we discover yet another example of chiasmus. This entire chapter is rightly seen as a unit, discussing not only the laws of homicide but also how a slayer may find asylum in a Levitical city of refuge:

- A Establishment of six Levitical cities of refuge, in the land of inheritance (1–8)
- B Protection from the avenger comes by standing before the congregation in judgment (9–15)
- C Incriminating Factors: The slayer used dangerous implements—iron weapons, thrown stone, or hand weapon of wood (16–18)
- D Execution of the penalty: Avenger himself must do the slaying when he meets the slayer (19)
- E Standard for determining state of mind: If hate, lying in wait, or enmity, the slayer is guilty (20–21)
- D' Execution of the penalty: Avenger shall slay him when he meets the slayer (21)
- C' Mitigating Factors: The slayer acted suddenly, no enmity, no lying in wait, not desiring (22–23)
- B' The congregation shall judge, shall deliver protection (24–25)
- A' Remain in a city of refuge until death of high priest, throughout generations (26–29)

Chiasmus is particularly used here to contrast and distinguish unprotected killings from those killings that can be protected by the city of refuge.¹⁹ In addition, this entire chapter can be seen as chiasmic, with chiasmus serving a number of further functions.

For example, the centering function of chiasmus (in E) helps to clearly state the essence of this law. The only issue, which the assembly in the city of refuge really needs to decide, is whether the slayer has or has not acted out of a preexisting hate or animosity toward the victim by preplanning or deceptively lying in wait. If he has not, the normal penalty of death does not apply to his case.

But if the killer has not fled to the city of refuge and an avenger inadvertently meets him, the avenger is to slay the killer and shall carry out the execution himself (D). This requirement is stated twice, to be doubly clear. The meeting must be by happenstance, and the avenger must act alone and cannot be assisted by a gang on the prowl in a blood feud. One of the natural functions of chiasmus is to give a sense of order. The form of this law aims to enhance and insure feelings of orderliness, patience, and peace in the aftermath of a killing, as opposed to chaos, haste, revenge, and feuding.

Once at the city of refuge, the standards to be applied in the case of the Avenger v. Killer are given in the C sections. The contrastive powers of chiasmus plainly establish, on the one hand, the presence of physical implements that presumptively point to the guilt of the killer, and on the other hand, the absence of certain hostile states of mind that would tend to exculpate the killer. As Bernard Jackson observes, "Thus by the use of a literary device, the draftsman has sought to preserve the traditional binary oppositional structure, while at the same time offering a more comprehensive and explicit account of the range of possible situations."²⁰

The synthetic function of chiasmic parallelism then brings into play respective roles and duties to make this system work. To encourage the accused to seek refuge and assure them, Numbers 35 promises certain protections from the avenger. However, to claim those protections the suspect, for his part, must willingly submit to the jurisdiction and judgment of the men of the congregation (B). And the members of the assembly, for their part, must undertake the duty of judging righteously according to these stated rules and protecting the exculpated killer (B'), provided he stays inside the city of refuge (A).

Chiasmus in Homicide Narratives

Keeping the statements of law discussed above in mind, we now turn to homicide narratives. As can be expected, Israelite narrators or Jewish audiences would have likely been very aware of the traditional legal rules and procedures regarding homicide. The powerful effectiveness of chiasmus in these general laws, setting forth the expectations of what should happen in a case of homicide, would most likely have preconditioned listeners to pick up on the subtle, but even sometimes not so subtle, uses of chiasmus in telling stories about homicides and drawing morals from these memorable accounts.

It is interesting that certain elements that figure prominently in what we would call the law codes do not appear at all in the twenty-three biblical homicide narratives. For example, cities of refuge play no role in these stories. (Of course, in most cases, the slayer is not even remotely entitled to seeking refuge.) And whereas the law codes focus on objective evidentiary tests and subjective inquiries into the state of mind *of the slayer*, the narratives focus quite incisively on the blameworthiness *of the victim* and, in addition, on the consequent operation of the hand of God in bringing about the slaying of the wicked.

Consider the following five narratives, all of which make use of chiasmus. Chiasmus serves many of the same purposes in these stories that we have identified above in the law codes. In addition, the use of chiasmus in these stories may tend to align these otherwise disturbing accounts with underlying senses of human law and justice, as well as divine order and righteousness.

Narrative 1. Abimelech's Killing of Seventy of His Brothers (Judges 9:56–57)

- A So repaid God
- B the wickedness of Abimelech
- C done to his father to murder seventy of his brothers
- B' and all of the wickedness of the men of Shechem
- A' brought God on the head of them

In Abimelech's fratricide (Judg 9), Abimelech killed all but one of his seventy-one brothers, butchering them "upon one stone" (9:5, 18), and then went on a rampage trying to make himself king. He eventually died after a woman threw a piece of a millstone off a tower and cracked

Abimelech's skull. We are not told if she threw this stone "awares" or "unawares" (as Num 35 might have asked), but neither would one assume that she had the skill to hit Abimelech squarely on the head. Abimelech was then killed, at his own request, by his shield bearer, so that no one could say that he had been killed by a woman (9:53–54).

This is more, of course, than just poetic justice, stone for stone. This is a narrative example of the principle of divine retributive justice, in which the doer of wickedness "suffers in return the same evil he has inflicted on another."²¹ Abimelech suffered an equivalent talionic punishment at the hand of God, as "God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech" back unto him (9:56). God's intervention was needed to stop Abimelech's campaign, which threatened to unravel the entire nation, and as a result, no one ever wonders why the woman who dropped the broken piece of millstone was not accused of homicide.

The five-line chiastic resolution at the end of this episode is characteristic of most clever chiasms. It brings to light a new realization, based on a turnabout, following a rhetorical rule of reciprocity. As Robert Hariman has observed, "the symmetrical logic of the verbal [chiastic] figure is mapping some cosmic order."²² Even something as mundane as the chiasm "he who fails to prepare, prepares to fail" communicates an incontrovertible truth of natural consequences of cosmic proportions. Terribly unsettling cases such as Abimelech's, which deal with atrocious homicides, can be somewhat domesticated by a chiastic resolution of its discord. In Hariman's words, "the [chiastic] device is obviously intended to please: witness the neat arrangement, the formal precision, the deft turn, . . . the satisfying resolution of an argument or other complex relationships"²³ that chiasmus brings to our rhetorical table.

Narrative 2. The Case of Phinehas (Numbers 25)

Phinehas, a grandson of Aaron the High Priest, spontaneously took the law into his own hand and killed Zimri, the son of a Simeonite prince, and his consort Cozbi, the daughter of a Midianite chief, who in plain sight had defiantly come into the camp together and apparently committed sacrilege, being together after such relationships had been forbidden. God had commanded the people to abate this apostasy and hang the heads of offending people up before the Lord. This account in Num 25 is structured chiastically:

- A the people commit whoredoms and idolatry in the matter of Baal-Pe'or, and Moses commands that everyone who had committed these crimes be killed. (1-5)
- B the flagrant appearance together of an Israelite man and a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and all the people. (6)
- C the bold action of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, piercing the offending man of Israel and the Midianite woman with his javelin. (7-8)
- D the plague was averted for most, but only after twenty-four thousand had died of the plague. (8-9)
- C' the zealous action of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, turned back the wrath of the Lord from the children of Israel. (10-11)
- B' Moses is told to pronounce a covenant of peace with the people (12-13), and the names of Zimri and Cozbi are given. (14-15)
- A' a mandate given to vex the Midianites (twice) because of their guile in the matter of Pe'or (mentioned twice). (16-18)

What does chiasmus contribute legally to this narrative? The text centers on a positive view of Phinehas's preservation of the people of Israel, whose condition was in serious difficulty, with twenty-four thousand having already died of the plague. By positioning at its center the fact that the plague ceased, the chiastic arrangement recognizes God's ratification of Phinehas's exceptional conduct.

By framing this central point with particular facts of legal significance, the narrative also justifies Phinehas in this extraordinary homicide. An unusual state of emergency clearly faced the entire nation, implicitly invoking the rare biblical principle that it is better for one man to perish than that the entire people be destroyed. Phinehas acted suddenly and spontaneously, a mitigating legal factor mentioned in the law codes in Exod 21 and Num 35. Phinehas had not been lying in wait to entrap or deceive Zimri and Cozbi, whose guilt was open and conspicuously obvious to all. Their defiant conduct went consciously contrary to Moses's public command and explicit warning at the beginning of the narrative. In the end, the case concludes with Moses pronouncing a covenant of peace between God and the people and doubly commanding them to vex the Midianites.

In this homicide case, chiasmus serves as a figure of thought, "a powerful engine for organizing, inflecting and generating ideas."²⁴ Decisions in hard legal cases, especially homicides, call for strong articulations that persuade and communicate details that might otherwise elude notice.

Narrative 3. The Killing of Gedaliah by Ishmael (Jeremiah 40–42)

- A Johanan warns Gedaliah about Ishmael; but Gedaliah ignores this warning (40:13–16)
- B Ishmael's murderous deeds, even killing Gedaliah; he starts to flee to Ammon (41:1–10)
- B' Ishmael is about to be captured and killed, yet manages to flee to Ammon (41:11–16)
- A' Johanan rescues people and they ask Jeremiah: “tell us which way we ought to go” and what to do; but they ignore his prophetic advice (42:2–3).

In the rarely discussed killing of Gedaliah by Ishmael (Jer 40–42), Ishmael, an agent of an Ammonite king, secretly killed Gedaliah, the Babylonian-appointed governor of Jerusalem. At the same time, Ishmael also killed all of the Jews in Gedaliah's palace—suspecting them of collaboration with the Babylonians—as well as seventy unsuspecting Jewish pilgrims who happened to be there, in the wrong place at the wrong time. But he spared ten of those Jews, who apparently reported to Johanan what Ishmael had done, and Johanan comes and rescues the people. They ask Jeremiah where they should go, but when the prophet says that they should not go to Egypt, they ignore his advice, just as Gedaliah had ignored Johanan (Jer 40:13–41:2; see also 2 Kgs 25:25).

The scriptures are all about life and death decisions, spiritual if not physical. The key to this narrative is realizing that, in the beginning, Gedaliah's foolish ignoring of Johanan's warning resulted not only in his own death but in the deaths of many other people. In the end and in the same way, the rescued people foolishly ignore the words of Jeremiah. Just as many innocent people died at the hand of Ishmael, many unsuspecting people may well die as these rescued people still have not learned to heed the word of the Lord. Rather than allowing readers to turn their anger and condemnation toward the murderous Ishmael, this chiasmic narrative shows people how they should turn their horror about Ishmael's slaughter inward toward themselves, in not heeding prophetic directions.

Narrative 4. The Slaying of Holofernes

In the apocryphal book of Judith, a virtuous and wealthy widow named Judith, acting on her own initiative, managed to endear herself to Holofernes, the Assyrian commander who was besieging Jerusalem. (This story is hard to situate historically. It may be set at a time following

the Assyrian conquest, or shortly after Lehi and his family had fled from Jerusalem after being warned by the Lord of the coming attack by the Babylonians, or the story may be drawn from a composite of folkloristic recollections.) In any event, Judith managed to behead a drunk Holofernes in his own tent, at night, and with his own sword. Toni Craven, whose work is followed quite widely, has identified several chiasmic features in this narrative,²⁵ essentially dividing this famous story into two halves, both of which are chiasmic.

The Warning of Holofernes and Failure of Achior's Diplomatic Attempt (Jdt 1:1–7:32)

- A The Assyrian campaign against disobedient vassal nations; the people surrender (1:1–3:10)
- B Israel hears and is terrified greatly; Joakim orders war preparations (4:1–15)
- C Ammonite king Achior warns Holofernes, who mocks and expels Achior (5:1–6:11)
- C' Achior is received into Bethulia; he talks with the people of Israel (6:12–21)
- B' Holofernes orders war preparations; Israel sees and is terrified greatly (7:1–5)
- A' The campaign against Bethulia; the people want to surrender (7:6–32)

The Slaying of Holofernes (Jdt 8:1–16:25)

- A Introduction of Judith (8:1–8)
- B Judith plans to save Israel (8:9–10:8, centering on Judith's prayer in 9:1–14)
- C Judith and her maid leave Bethulia (10:9–10)
- D Judith beheads Holofernes (10:11–13:10a)
- C' Judith and her maid return to Bethulia (13:10b–11)
- B' Judith plans the destruction of Israel's enemy (13:12–16:20)
- A' Conclusion about Judith (16:1–25)

Why might chiasmus have been used in telling this dramatic story? Again, an interpretive key can be found at the centers of these two halves. In the first, it becomes clear that Holofernes was warned by Achior, but gave him no heed, and then mocked and expelled him. Although the Israelites received Achior, from beginning to end of this section, the Israelites were terrified and wanted to capitulate. Thus, the stage is set, with the Israelites not seeking God's help, but most of all with Holofernes setting himself up for his own demise, not unlike Gedaliah.

When Judith announces her plan to save Israel, she is discouraged by the Israelite leaders. She prays and turns her fate over to God, not knowing how her plan will turn out. Judith wiles her way into Holofernes's tent, gets him good and drunk, and beheads him with the same sword that he had planned to use in killing the Israelites. Amazingly, Judith and her servant return to the Israelite camp, carrying the head of Holofernes, without being detected. Dramatically, but also legally, this decapitation is the climax of the entire story, as the chiasmic structure makes abundantly clear.

Narrative 5. The Slaying of Laban (1 Nephi 4:4–27)

Finally, the slaying of Laban in 1 Nephi in the Book of Mormon is also quite a dramatic instance of chiasmus. For the purpose of demonstrating the chiasmic structure, I have arranged this narrative using headings, as follows:

- A *Without the Walls of Jerusalem:* They [my brethren] did follow me up until we came without the walls of Jerusalem, And they [did] hide themselves without the walls (4)
- B *Towards Laban's house:* Went forth towards the house of Laban (5), not knowing beforehand the things I should do (6). Near unto the house of Laban was a drunk man (7): it was Laban (8)
- C *Sword:* I beheld his sword, the hilt was of pure gold and the blade was of precious steel (9)
- D *Spirit:* I was constrained by the Spirit that I should kill Laban (10) And the Spirit said unto me again (11)
- E *Delivered into thy hands:* Slay him for the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands (12)
- F *Perishing:* The Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes; it is better that one man should perish than a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief (13)
- G *The Law and Commandments:* Inasmuch as thy seed shall keep my commandments, they shall prosper in the land of promise (14). I also thought they cannot keep the commandments according to the law of Moses, save they should have the law (15)
- F' *Imperishable:* I also knew that the law was engraven upon the plates of brass (16)
- E' *Delivered into my hands:* And again I knew that the Lord had delivered Laban into my hands (17)

D' *Spirit*: Therefore I did obey the voice of the Spirit (18)

C' *Sword*: I took Laban by the hair of the head and I smote off his head with his own sword (19)

B' *Laban's House—his treasury, his servant, his voice*: I went forth unto the treasury of Laban, servant of Laban, voice of Laban (20) Confused, supposed me to be his master Laban (21, 22), spoke as if Laban (23)

A' *Without the Walls of Jerusalem*: To my elder brethren who were without the walls (24) Zoram did follow me, as I went forth unto my brethren who were without the walls (26–27)

As I have previously argued, any person proposing a text as chiastic has a burden of persuasion that the text is, to some extent, chiastic.²⁶ In addition to the obvious reverse parallelism of key phrases from Old Testament law and legal precedents, and the reverse repetition of words or phrases applying that law to the specific facts of the narrative, let me mention six other chiastic strengths that I see in this text.

First, this text has a clear geographical boundary marker, “without the walls of Jerusalem,” at the beginning of the narrative and again at the end—not quite an inclusio, but a clear enough narrative boundary.

Second, in B and B', Nephi “goes forth” (*lekleka*, perhaps an intertextual allusion to Gen 12:1) to Laban's house and then “goes forth” to Laban's treasury. Laban is named three times in B and seven times in B'. Confusion or mistaken identity also occurs in B and B', probably because of the darkness of the night. All this mitigates the intentionality of Nephi's venture: not knowing beforehand what he should do and not lying in wait for Laban.

Third, the sword (hilt and blade) is in C, and the sword (hair and head) is in C'. The sword reappears in B' but it occurs there in a subsidiary chiasm with sword/garments in v. 19 and garments/sword in v. 21.

Fourth, the Spirit speaks to Nephi three times in D and E, first constraining Nephi to kill Laban and twice saying, “the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands.” This is answered in E' and D', where Nephi uses these same key words (which he must have known from Exod 21:13), “again I knew that the Lord had delivered Laban into my hands, for this cause that I might obtain the records according to his commandments,” and therefore Nephi obeys the voice of the Spirit.

Fifth, near the center of the text is the affirmation that the Lord slays the wicked (as we have seen in Abimelech). In their worldview, Nephi didn't kill Laban, the Lord did.

And finally, a rhetorical question sometimes comes at the center of a chiastic structure, and in some Old Testament narratives we find the killer closely interrogating or cross-examining him- or herself before doing what needed to be done. Here in the center of this text, we find Nephi first remembering the words of the Lord promising that his seed would prosper if they kept the commandments, and second realizing that his posterity must have the law in order to know and keep the commandments. That is the central pivot or tipping point of Nephi's narrative.

I do not suggest that this is a perfect chiasm. The facts come first in this story. But Nephi's story-telling is clearly enhanced by his use of chiasmus.

This elaborately narrated story establishes several fundamental norms at the beginning of the Book of Mormon, including such themes as the importance of having and following the written law, of receiving and hearkening to the spirit of the Lord in all things, and of knowing that God will prepare a way for his people to accomplish the things that he has commanded them to do. But in order to establish those norms memorably and legitimately, the legality of the slaying of Laban needed to be presented by Nephi as effectively as possible. ¹ Nephi 4 does this in many ways. Of the eight main rhetorical strategies I have identified in biblical homicide accounts, Nephi uses seven of them—and chiasmus is one of the main ones.

Purposes Served by Chiasmus in Homicide Texts

Let us consider why Nephi, specifically, or why any writer of legal text, generally, would have used chiasmus. Several reasons can be suggested. They might be catalogued under thirteen headings.

Propelling Logic and Persuasiveness

Chiasmus was a familiar and effective way to narrate a legal story in Nephi's culture. Nephi needed to persuade not only the future readers of his record but, most urgently, his family members. No one else was present when Nephi took Laban by the hair of his head (as Judith likewise did alone to Holofernes), and so there were no witnesses. His brothers had no idea what had happened and even thought that Nephi (in Laban's armor) was actually Laban who had just killed Nephi! While this lack of witnesses means that Nephi could not have been convicted in a court willing to follow the two-witness rule in Deuteronomy, it also

meant that Nephi needed to convince a surprised Laman and Lemuel, as well as a stunned Zoram and others, that he was telling the truth about what happened when he was alone that night in Jerusalem. Chiasmus would help Nephi tell his story formally, articulately, dramatically, and convincingly.

Creating Order

Chiasms segregate a complex body of rather random subjects or words into controllable units with boundaries. Chiastic ordering serves several purposes. It heightens the climactic turning point. Interestingly, as in the case of Judith, that climax is not the killing of Laban, but Nephi's personal deliberation and resolution that the need to make it possible for his posterity to obey the word of the Lord necessitated his killing of Laban. The ordering of the events leading up to and away from that centerpoint (G) gives a sense of divine order—a sense that God was at the center and was the driving force in unfolding these events in order of increasing importance *in* toward the fulfillment of God's will. This is similar to the gradational arrangement in order of increasing importance *out* from the center turning point of Lev 24.

The G element is in the prime position of importance, explaining the grave moral dilemma Nephi faced in the slaying of Laban and the preeminence, in Nephi's mind, of helping his people keep God's commandments.

The point made in F follows G in order of gravity and is key for weighing Nephi's culpability or lack thereof. It was commonly understood that in very limited circumstances, the righteous existence of a whole nation may require one life to be yielded for the survival of all (as happened in the chiastically narrated cases of Phinehas and Judith²⁷).

Element E contains the succeeding pertinent principle. God delivering Laban into Nephi's hands is a crucial key trigger phrase from the law of homicide in Exodus 21:13.²⁸ Thus, the idea that God delivers enemies or adversaries into the hands of the slayer comes up frequently in homicide narratives,²⁹ as it does here.

Necessarily following E in consequence is D. The fact that Nephi heard and thus obeyed the voice of the Spirit of God is twice repeated. Nephi had measured twice and cut once.

The explanation that Laban's own sword had been made available to Nephi (C) and that Laban had previously threatened to use it against the four sons of Lehi is factually similar to the case of Judith using Holofernes's sword. These facts follow D in relevancy and add an

element of talionic order to this account. The balancing effect of talionic retribution is closely akin to the balancing of chiasmus.

The next fact in order of significance is that Nephi was on his way to Laban's house with no plan as to how he was going to work things out with Laban (B). This establishes that Nephi had no preconception or intent to slay Laban.

And finally, a unique but less vital point in this story is that all of the events involving Laban happened within the walls of the holy city of Jerusalem (A). Ironically, Jerusalem had become, in Lehi's day, the main city of refuge, if not the only "place" that the Lord had designated whereunto a slayer who had acted reluctantly, against his will, without preplanning or lying in wait, might find asylum (under Num 35). Apparently, Nephi's story directs us to see some significance in that.

Any killing seriously disrupts the normal order. The chiasitic organization of this account, which emphasizes the hand and will of God at several points in these events, restores world order and brings closure to this case. The chiasitic form contains and packages the Laban story in a closed and ordered literary unit.

Supporting Precedents

Nephi's use of chiasmus emphasizes four legal sources from which the legality of the case derives, and it associates the story with the legal precedents on which its legality is to be judged.

First, parts of the phrase from Exod 21:13, "but God deliver him into his hand," are highlighted three times in Nephi's narrative (in D, E, and E').

Second, the narrative mentions the legal precedent established in legal stories such as those discussed above—"it is better that one soul should perish than an entire nation perish in unbelief" (F).

Third, the fact that Nephi had not been "lying in wait" is also worked into this chiasitic structure. In B and B', the narrative states that Nephi had no idea what he was going to do or how his daring, if not rash, plan was going to work out. According to the mitigating factors listed in the Law of Homicide in Num 35, this is strong evidence that Nephi had not preplanned or premeditated this slaying.

And fourth, also applying the legal rules outlined in Num 35, the fact that Laban's servant was also confused about what was going on (B') proves that he and Nephi had not conspired.

One can almost hear Nephi making his case with these points to the assembly of judges in a city of refuge. All of these various legal justifications or defenses are thus unified here by chiasmus.

Restoring Equilibrium

As we have seen in several cases, chiasmus functions to restore balance, imbue an aura of authority, and contain or control a situation.

Functionally, chiasmus narrows the precedential value of any story by making the case truly one of a kind, and not a story that someone could ever voluntarily reenact. The laws, facts and circumstances of Nephi's case are so precisely set forth and chiastically intertwined that this case cannot be seen as setting any kind of legal precedent.

Chiasmus is unifying. It is aesthetically pleasing and satisfying. In classical ancient art, beauty was more often associated with form than it is among art critics today. Dealing with the ugliness of homicide cries out for a renewed sense of restored elegance in the world.

Processing Circumstances

Law is circumstantial. Crimes don't just come out of nowhere. Circumstances vary as to what leads up to the crime, and what conditions or situations are presented to the perpetrator. The circumstances of each homicide are usually quite unique. Intent, motive, state of mind, anger, suddenness, degree of premeditation, preplanning, lying in wait, weapons or tools used, accident, negligence, group or gang involvement, military context, prior relations, and provocation are all important circumstances that need to be considered before appropriate judgment can be made.

The trial of every homicide case begins and ends with stories trying to explain those circumstances. The accuser or prosecutor constructs a story from the adversary's point of view, hoping to establish culpability. The accused or defendant's advocate presents a different story favoring the perspective of innocence. The decision-maker (whether a judge or jury, a council of elders in a Levitical city of refuge, or some other authorized adjudicator) will then hear the evidence to see which of those two stories, or perhaps some other story, is most credible and compelling. What this means is that the best storyteller generally wins. This packaging of toxic human conduct results in a peaceful outcome. Since chiasmus is a wonderful storytelling tool, one can see why homicide narratives might be enhanced by a dynamic chiastic organizing structure.

Probing Relevancy

The legal concept of relevance is malleable. Anything probative or potentially significant can be admitted into evidence as "relevant" to the

case. This chiasmic narrative manages to weave certain helpful facts into Nephi's factual account, making them relevant.

Chiasmic homicide narratives make it clear that the wickedness of the victim is a relevant fact in the analysis of a case of homicide, especially when the victim had been strongly warned, as were Laban, Gedaliah, and Holofernes. Even though the law codes do not say so, the so-called victims got what they had coming, particularly since they ignored the words of prophets or messengers.

Reinforcing Memory

Working on the subconscious, chiasmus serves to make these particular stories memorable. Society wants to deter, constrain, curtail, and prevent murder whenever possible. These stories, especially as they wedge into consciousness the awful and tragic outcomes suffered by unjustified perpetrators, need to be told, retold, and remembered, in moral instruction and ethical formation.

Chiasmus is clever, even proverbially wise, tapping into the subconscious. Its cleverness is ironically found in some turnabout, allowing people to see things in an arresting way that they hadn't before, but in a way they intuitively accept. Its cleverness is found in attracting minds to cleave unto a new realization or difficult decision. Nephi's slaying of Laban certainly cries out for such a result.

Establishing Intent

Several similarities can be seen between many chiasmic homicide narratives, but especially between the slaying of Holofernes and the slaying of Laban. Both dramatically tell how Nephi and Judith each acted alone. Emphasizing that a vulnerable killer has acted alone, as several homicide narratives do, tends to exculpate the killer. For when one weak person acts successfully against greater odds, this may indicate God's support and approval as in David's killing of Goliath (1 Sam 17:45–50). The same is so when Jael acted alone and on her own initiative in killing Sisera, thus showing God's power (Judg 4:18–21). Judith, also perilously alone, slays Holofernes. Nephi, likewise, acts alone: a youth against impossible chances of success. In all of these stories, these daring individuals acted at enormous personal risk to preserve their people.

When a killer debates with him- or herself, this may affect how the legal terms "deliberately," "premeditated," or "presumptuously" are to be understood by readers. Jotham's parable of the trees (olive, fig, vine,

thorn) offers a basis for deliberation in the case of Abimelech, making his killings all the more deliberate. A poignant dialogue of deliberation is found as David and Abishai hovered over the sleeping Saul (1 Sam 26:7–11), as is elegantly explicated by Klaus-Peter Adam.³⁰ In another case, Abner considers his options by asking, “Is it you, Asahel? Why should I smite you to the ground? How then could I lift up my face to your brother Joab?” (2 Sam 2:20–22). For her part, Judith offered a long prayer of deliberation, justification, and dedication (Jdt 9:1–14) before going forward with her plan to behead Holofernes. Nephi also carefully considers the justifiability of his action at the center of his account, only he had no idea how he was ever to succeed.

There are, however, differences between the cases of Nephi and Judith. Unlike Nephi, Judith did, in fact, lie in wait, intentionally and elaborately planning how she could entrap Holofernes.

Prioritizing Covenants

In legal narratives, if a person acts under a righteous oath he has sworn or a solemn duty he owes to God, that factor brings a motive of sworn loyalty to God and of binding self-deprecation into the narrative. Using a standard oath formula, David says to Abishai, “As the Lord lives, the Lord will smite Saul” (1 Sam 26:10). Judith openly avows, “We know none other god, we trust that he will not despise us” (Jdt 8:20). She prays earnestly to God, stating her motives (9:1–14), and pleads, “Strengthen me, O Lord God of Israel, this day” (13:7). Nephi also swears an oath: “As the Lord liveth, we will not return until we have the plates” (1 Nephi 3:15), and an angel commands him to “go again up to Jerusalem and the Lord will deliver Laban into your hands” (3:29). Trusting in God by turning the matter over to divine forces is another way of understanding how God might then be seen as having, indeed, delivered the victim unto death at the hands of the slayer.

Divine intervention signals the message of the writer. In some cases, God delivers the slayer into the hands of people who will protect him. In Moses’s case, God delivers him and the daughters of Reuel, or Jethro, “out of the hand of the shepherds” (Exod 2:19), which leads to his protection by Jethro. In Judith’s case, the Lord will not allow men of Judah to deliver the city to the hands of the invading enemies (Jdt 8:33), thus sanctioning Judith’s plot. These examples show signs of divine approval.

Sometimes, the Lord delivers the victim into the hands of the slayer. Sisera is delivered to Jael so that she can kill him: “the Lord has given Sisera into your hand” (Judg 4:14), and “on that day God subdued Jabin” (4:23). The

Lord sends an evil spirit to alienate the people from Abimelech, which ultimately leads to his demise (Judg 9:23). It was “of the Lord” that the woman of Timnah seeks occasion against the Philistines (Judg 14:4). For David and his soldier, Abishai says, “God has given your enemy into your hand this day” (1 Sam 26:8) “for the Lord gave you into my hand today” (26:23). But this is not enough to justify the killing of Saul, the Lord’s anointed. Rechab and Baanah say to David, “The Lord has avenged my Lord the king this day on Saul and on his offspring” (2 Sam 4:8), but this did not justify their killing him, son of the Lord’s anointed. Laban is delivered to Nephi as Laban lies on the streets, drunk, and away from any witnesses (1 Nephi 4).

Chiasmus can, therefore, serve the function of drawing attention to these crucial, if not decisive, factors in homicide narratives.

Containing Justification

As stated at the beginning of this paper, homicide is ugly. Nephi’s account of his slaying of Laban cannot be used by any other would-be murderers as a contrivance to justify their conduct. The Book of Mormon in no way condones homicide. Murder heads all twelve of the Nephite law lists found in the Book of Mormon, and murder is the only crime (out of thirty-six various offenses) that appears on all of these law lists.³¹ Nephi, as the leader of his people, as a prophet, and as a recordkeeper, must have been concerned about how to limit and constrain any improper reading of this story. From the fact that he used chiasmus on several other occasions, we know that Nephi was familiar with this literary structure, how it worked, and, semiotically, what it could help communicate. It is plausible, therefore, to conclude that Nephi would have intentionally chosen to use chiasmus as his culturally preferred literary form that could best contain the toxic content of homicide.

Chiasmus not only “provid[es] the basis for cogent alternatives to other text critical interpretations which have called for a drastic fragmentation of certain basic texts,”³² but brings together fractured legal expectations. The chiastic form of Nephi’s narrative alludes to the chiastic form of the well-known law codes that clearly and stringently punish any extralegal taking of life. This form ties the numerous, unusual circumstances leading into and out of the account of this killing.

As many biblical homicide narratives likewise are, Nephi’s narrative is a complex presentation of what lawyers would call a “very close case.” By drawing doubled attention to certain important facts, it is as if these points are being called to the witness stand by Nephi to testify in his defense as the necessary two or three witnesses generally required

under Old Testament law. Twice the point is made that this deed was not preplanned, twice more that God's unusual hand delivered Laban into Nephi's hand, and twice again that Nephi acted against his will. In a sense, this drives the narrative that Nephi found himself involuntarily having to do this deed. The fact that Nephi could not have wanted or desired to do this is demonstrable by the twice-mentioned mortal peril that Nephi placed himself and his brothers in by committing this slaying. And twice in this account, the word "slay" (rather than the more incriminating word "kill") is emphatically used (first in Nephi's deliberation and second in the imperative command by the spirit of the Lord, 4:10, 12). This talionically echoes the earlier double use of the word "slay" (first in Laban's threat and second in Laban sending his servants to "slay" the four brothers, 1 Nephi 3:13, 25).

All these elements are chiastically arranged in such a way as to conform the case to scriptural rubrics, to contain this soul-wrenching bloodshed within bounds that the Lord had set and to allow Nephi himself to put to rest the harrowing night visions that must have continued to revisit his subconscious for the rest of his life.

Although not as well focused or carried out, chiasmic structures are found in other homicide narratives, perhaps for similar reasons, to control and exceptionalize those homicides as well.

Balancing Rights and Values

Narratives about homicides and murder trials expose the balance maintained in a society between such polarities as individual personal rights versus collective societal needs, family loyalties versus social mores, political regimes versus priestly institutions, fate versus human choice, and divine providence versus provable objectivity. Because of its contrastive nature, chiasmus is able to encase and portray such dualities more naturally and authentically than any other literary form.

Homicide narratives seem to assume that killings are necessary in the establishment of any new regime, as has often been practically and politically necessary in the history of civilizations the world over. Cain's killing of Abel first signals the need for law outside Eden (Gen 4). Moses's slaying of the Egyptian shows that his authority begins with blood—a matter of life and death (Exod 2:12). One of David's men killed Saul so that he would not be captured by the Philistines (1 Sam 1:10).

In some cases, killing is necessary to preserve the people of God. Moses saved the life of an Israelite slave by killing an Egyptian (Exod 2:11). Phinehas killed Zimri and Cozbi, and "thus the plague was stayed

from the people of Israel" (Num 25:8). Judith killed Holofernes when the men of Judah unwisely swore an oath to deliver the city (Jdt 8:11). Laban was slain by Nephi in order to preserve Nephi's people (1 Nephi 4).

The factors allowing the "one for many" idea to be invoked also limited the operation of this factor: one life could be required for all, but only where that one was in some sense guilty. Phinehas wanted to prevent apostasy of the entire people, and thus he made an atonement for the sins of the people (Num 25:12), for Zimri and Cozbi were in flagrant violation of the divine order. Judith killed Holofernes to preserve her people from the onslaught of his army (Jdt 13:1–11), and Nephi killed Laban to preserve his people on the principle that it was "better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief" (1 Nephi 4:13).

The basic values of chiasmus are connecting values. Chiasmus connects words, thoughts, events, norms, and social awareness. Robert Hariman notes that embedded in chiasmus is a social character: "It is important to emphasize the social character of the chiasmus, however, to fully understand its significance and limitations. . . . Chiasmus both activates and thwarts desire for meeting in the middle, for melding with another."³³ In much the same way, law strives for this result as well, seeking to achieve social reconciliation without loss of individual integrity.

Hariman continues: "Chiasmus refers the audience to its own cultural capital but not [so far as] to shared experience."³⁴ Likewise the law, especially in difficult cases, must appeal to the shared cultural capital of all the parties to the lawsuit, but cannot require them all to walk away from the proceeding in shared agreement.

"Chiasmus is a linguistic screen, and its mood is that of spectatorship."³⁵ Similarly, the role of the judge requires careful observation to see and consider the facts laid before the court, while at the same time the court must generate a resolution by creating (as chiasmus also creates) the "common ground" on which the binary opposites that are propounded by the plaintiff or defendant, by the avenger or the killer, "can stand together."³⁶

Meting Out Justice

Chiasmus may function cosmically. All is well in the world when peace and order reign in the world, in literature, as well as in the justice system. This is because law and justice seek for what is appropriate, fair, evenhanded, right, even righteous. The homicide laws and many of the homicide narratives are based on this talionic principle.

Laws must allow, but also contain and limit, exceptions or mitigating factors.

In any case, law must not appear to be random or arbitrary. Ultimately, the written outcome of a case must be well-crafted, organized, systematic, and logical. The literary features of chiasmus model most of the positive aspects of justice itself.

Chiasmus is orderly, controlled, and purposeful, helping to restore the personal, social, cosmic, and divine relationships that have been violated and disrupted, especially by hateful killings.

Structuring Closure

Chiasmus can also give a sense of closure and completion, enhancing the moral imperative of a text by reinforcing reiteration, or by conveying a sense of equilibrium or balanced retributive justice.³⁷ The structure of a narrative can also affect the outcome or message of a text: "Structure is 'an indispensable aspect of [any text]; . . . it is one of the factors governing the effect of the work on the reader and in addition it serves to express or accentuate meaning.'"³⁸

Chiasmus gives order to the promulgation of rules that otherwise might appear unprecedented or irregular, as in the Case of the Blasphemer or in the rules of Num 35. It gives regular structure to the unfolding of events that could otherwise seem spontaneous or out of control, as in the cases of Phineas and Ishmael. Chiasmus also heightens the central narrative effect of climactic turning points, as in the cases of the slaying of Holofernes and of Laban.

Murder is disruptive and causes fear, terror, insecurity, rage, revenge, and open-ended uncertainty. When does a blood feud end? Chiasmus tells a homicide story in a way that leaves a sense of completeness. A sense of closure is fostered by ending by coming back to where the story began. As a traditional form of formal literature or speech, chiasmus restores a sense of traditional order—even cosmic order.

In the laws and cases we have examined in this paper, chiasmus emphatically doubles down on the seriousness of its subject, imbues legal texts with an aura of authoritativeness, and clarifies the logical relationships between the parts of the controlling texts. It helps to point and propel legal narrative to its conclusion and establishes a gradational grid that positions certain crimes, such as homicide and blasphemy, above lesser laws. It conveys a sense of justice, fairness, reciprocity, and judicial or divine retribution. It conveniently affords inherent mnemonic capacities, which promote oral presentation in the courtroom, recitation in

legal debates, and reinforcement in public instruction. And ultimately chiasmus gives to a judicial verdict, especially in a homicide case, a much-needed sense of completion, restoration, peace, and finality.

Conclusion

The distance between law and narrative is not as great as people might think, especially in the literary works of the Bible and the Book of Mormon. While laws tend to emphasize objective factors used in establishing facts about what happened and how events developed, the use of chiasmus in homicide narratives gives greater meaning to the unfolding facts and helps to convey human and ethical dimensions about who did things and why actions were undertaken. Knowing both objective facts and subjective intentions is necessary in order to correctly and righteously judge events of the past and to encourage and motivate admirable moral behavior in the future. Chiasmus helps judges, readers, victims, and teachers see beyond the narrowly stated facts of any case to perceive the bigger picture and to discern the key central point on which the case turns.

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Notes

1. Quoted in Fritz Stern, ed., *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 29.
2. John W. Welch, "Narrative Elements in Homicide Accounts," in *Judaism, Law, and Literature* (ed. Michael Baris and Vivian Liska; Jewish Law Association Studies 27; [Liverpool, UK?]: Jewish Law Association, 2017), 206–38.
3. See, for example, Pamela Barmash, "Homicide: Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Law* (ed. Brent A. Strawn; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 396–403; Pamela Barmash, *Homicide in the Biblical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Bernard S. Jackson, "Homicide in the Hebrew Bible: A Review Essay," *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische*

Rechtsgeschichte 12 (2006): 362–74; Jonathan P. Burnside, *God, Justice, and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 253–83; Raymond Westbrook, “Reflections on the Law of Homicide in the Ancient World,” *Maarav* 13, no. 2 (2006): 145–74.

4. Klaus-Peter Adam, Friedrich Avemarie, and Nili Wazana, eds., *Law and Narrative in the Bible and Neighbouring Ancient Cultures* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012); Assnat Bartor, *Reading Law as Narrative: A Study in the Casuistic Laws of the Pentateuch* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010); Jonathan P. Burnside, “Exodus and Asylum: Uncovering the Relationship between Biblical Law and Narrative,” *JSOT* 34, no. 3 (2010): 243–66; Jonathan Burnside, “Flight of the Fugitives: Rethinking the Relationship between Biblical Law (Exodus 21:12–14) and the Davidic Succession Narrative (1 Kings 1–2),” *JBL* 129, no. 3 (2010): 418–31; James K. Bruckner, *Implied Law in the Abraham Narrative: A Literary and Theological Analysis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); Bernard S. Jackson, *Law, Fact, and Narrative Coherence* (Liverpool, UK: Deborah Charles Publications, 1988). While acknowledging that “literature is only incidentally about law” and that narratives may not always accurately portray legal subjects, Barmash makes a strong appeal for the claim that “narrative texts are indispensable for the study of biblical law. The analysis of literary texts is necessary for reconstructing legal practice and the perception of how law operated. Statutes only tell us so much.” Pamela Barmash, “The Narrative Quandary: Cases of Law in Literature,” *VT* 54, no. 1 (2004): 2; Barmash, “Homicide,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Law*, 400–401.

5. Assnat Bartor, “Narrative,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Law*, 126.

6. Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 38 n. 6.

7. Nils Wilhelm Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in Formgeschichte* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 57–58; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2129; Bernard S. Jackson, *Wisdom-Laws: A Study of the Mishpatim of Exodus 21:1–22:16* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 448.

8. Timothy M. Willis, “Blasphemy, Talion, and Chiasmus: The Marriage of Form and Content in Lev 24.13–23,” *Biblica* 90, no. 1 (2009): 70.

9. Willis, “Blasphemy, Talion, and Chiasmus,” 71.

10. Jackson, *Wisdom-Laws*, 206–7. Discussed also in John W. Welch, *Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2008), 338–48, esp. 345 and in connection with the chiastic structure of the meaning of the word “restoration” in Alma 41:13–15.

11. Bernard M. Levinson, “At the Intersection of Scribal Training and Theological Profundity: Chiasm as an Editorial Technique in Primeval History and Deuteronomy,” in this volume.

12. Willis, “Blasphemy, Talion, and Chiasmus,” 72.

13. Willis, “Blasphemy, Talion, and Chiasmus,” 73.

14. Following Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 2131, on understanding *mum* as creating a physical defect that disqualifies the injured person from entering the priestly service, or p. 2135, as causing some serious, permanent physical loss.

15. Zéev W. Falk, *Hebrew Law in Biblical Times: An Introduction* (2d ed.; Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001), 71.

16. Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 2133.

17. Willis, “Blasphemy, Talion, and Chiasmus,” 72.

18. Paul Gaechter, *Die literarische Kunst im Matthäus-Evangelium* (SBS 7; Stuttgart, 1965), 33. Translated as *Literary Art in the Gospel of Matthew* (trans. Lore Schultheiss), available at <https://chiasmusresources.org/literary-art-gospel-matthew>, 33.

19. Jackson, *Wisdom-Laws*, 128.
20. Jackson, *Wisdom-Laws*, 129.
21. T. A. Boogaart, "Stone for Stone: Retribution in the Story of Abimelech and Shechem," *JSOT* 32 (1985): 48–49.
22. Robert Hariman, "What Is Chiasmus? Or, Why the Abyss Stares Back," in *Chiasmus and Culture* (ed. Boris Wiseman and Anthony Paul; New York: Berghahn, 2014), 47.
23. Hariman, "What Is Chiasmus?" 48.
24. Hariman, "What Is Chiasmus?" 49.
25. Toni Craven, *Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith* (SBL Dissertation Series; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 62–63; followed by Michael D. Coogan, ed., *New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 31–36.
26. John W. Welch, "Introduction," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structure, Analysis, Exegesis* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981), 13.
27. Roger David Aus, "The Death of One for All in John 11:45–54 in Light of Judaic Traditions," in *Barabbas and Esther and Other Studies in the Judaic Illumination of Earliest Christianity* (ed. J. Neusner and others, South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 54; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 29–63. See also Nahum Rakover, "The One vs. the Many in Life and Death Situations," *Jewish Law Association Studies VIII* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 129–53.
28. On the words "But if he did not lie in wait for him" and "God delivered him into his hand," see generally, Jackson, *Wisdom-Laws*, 120–30.
29. See below.
30. Klaus-Peter Adam, "A Didactic Case Narrative on Homicide Law: 1 Samuel 26," in *Law and Narrative in the Bible and in Neighboring Ancient Cultures* (ed. Klaus-Peter Adam, Friedrich Avemarie, and Nili Wazana; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 107–13.
31. John W. Welch and J. Gregory Welch, *Charting the Book of Mormon: Visual Aids for Personal Study and Teaching* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999), chart 127.
32. John W. Welch, "Introduction," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 12.
33. Hariman, "What Is Chiasmus?" 61.
34. Hariman, "What Is Chiasmus?" 62.
35. Hariman, "What Is Chiasmus?" 62.
36. Hariman, "What Is Chiasmus?" 52.
37. John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in Biblical Law: An Approach to the Structure of Legal Texts in the Hebrew Bible," *Jewish Law Association Studies* 4, no. 1 (1990): 9–10.
38. S. Bar-Efrat, "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative," *VT* 30, no. 2 (1980): 172; as quoted in Welch, "Chiasmus in Biblical Law," 22.

Chiastic Structuring of Large Texts

2 Nephi as a Case Study

Noel B. Reynolds

In 1967, John W. Welch was serving as a missionary in Germany and noticed a scholar's explanation of chiasmus as a rhetorical structure that recurs in various parts of the Bible. While the penchant for parallelism that characterized Old Testament writers was widely recognized by that time, the discovery that reverse parallelism was also commonly used by New Testament writers was relatively recent and not yet widely accepted. Welch was no ordinary missionary in terms of his scholarly and scriptural preparation, and he immediately saw the possibility that Nephi and his successors may have been familiar with that rhetorical pattern and may have used it in the writings that we know as the Book of Mormon. He went to work immediately and found numerous clear and impressive examples of chiastic structures in the Book of Mormon text. These discoveries fueled Welch's 1970 BYU master's thesis and a long list of subsequent publications that presented additional discoveries and further refinements in his understanding of the phenomenon, addressed both to Book of Mormon readers and to Bible scholars generally.¹

Rhetorical Criticism in Biblical Studies

About three centuries ago, a few European scholars—sometimes without any awareness of the parallel efforts of others—began to notice rhetorical structures featuring repetition and parallelism in the books of the Hebrew Bible. By the nineteenth century, a few had also begun to notice reverse parallelisms (chiasms) as well.² Initially, it was short chiasms where the key terms were close together, as in poetry. But gradually

chiasmus, like parallelism generally, was recognized as an organizational principle that could be used for larger texts—and even for entire books of prose. As a result of this growing body of rhetorical studies and reinterpretations of the books of the Old Testament, it is now widely recognized by biblical scholars that in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE, Hebrew writers shared a highly developed set of rhetorical principles and techniques which distinguish their work dramatically from the ancient rhetorical traditions of Greece and Rome.³

These discoveries constitute a powerful step forward in our ability to understand Hebrew writing strategies and the messages their works promote. In this paper, I will apply the basic principles of Hebrew rhetoric, as it has been promulgated by Bible scholars in recent decades, to a new analysis of 2 Nephi. In so doing, I will rely principally on the discovery that when longer texts are organized chiastically, the ordered elements of that concentrically structured text will consist of subordinate units of text that will themselves be delimited and organized according to some rhetorical principle—and will not necessarily be best understood through a listing of all the repeated words, phrases, or topics that may occur in a chiastic order. In fact, these subordinate units may contain their own subordinate units—thus illustrating the principle of subordinating levels of rhetorical structure in Hebrew writing that some analysts have found extending to as many as eight levels when they include grammatical and philological parallels.⁴

Strong confirmation for this insight about rhetorical levels comes from J. P. Fokkelman in his study of narrative patterns in the Hebrew Bible. While he sees the single story as “the first level at which a text may largely be understood as an entity in itself,” he sees it fitting into higher levels of narrative organization all the way up to the book or even macro-plots that include multiple books and being composed in turn of lower levels of text down to the sentence and even to words and sounds. Reflecting on the universality of this type of organization in the Bible, he concludes that “the Hebrew storytellers must have received excellent literary training, as time and again they demonstrate a strong preconception of form, and consummate mastery of it at all these levels.”⁵

Roland Meynet emphasized the importance of looking for rhetorical organization of longer texts and specifically at the level of an entire book:

In order to step up in the organization of the book, one can say that the most specific contribution of rhetorical analysis is the bringing to light of textual units composed of several pericopes, which I call sequences. Let me add that rhetorical analysis . . . does not seek to solely identify

or extract a sequence or another from the book, but to see how the whole of the book is organized in sequences which cover the entirety of the text. The sequences are then organized in sections and the whole of the sections form the book.⁶

Rhetorical analysis does not expect to find the mathematical precision between parallel elements of long texts that is often demonstrated in short segments of poetry. Rather, the analyst looks for the ways that the author might reasonably have expected readers to see connections and parallels between the sequences or pericopes that constitute the larger text.

Nils Lund almost single-handedly launched the renewed interest in scholarly study of biblical chiasmus that grew so rapidly in the second half of the twentieth century. His 1942 publication of *Chiasmus in the New Testament* established beyond question the extensive role that this rhetorical form had played in the writing of both testaments of the Bible.⁷ But it was left to the rhetorical criticism that emerged later to show how chiasmus fit in as one significant part of a much larger tool chest of Semitic rhetorical patterns that were developed in the eighth and seventh centuries and that were used extensively in most biblical writings from that period. The prominent leader of the form-criticism movement, James Muilenburg, took the occasion of his presidential address at the 1968 meeting of the Society for Biblical Literature to announce that the form-critical approach had reached its limits and to urge scholars to engage the new and broader approach of rhetorical criticism:

What I am interested in, above all, is in understanding the nature of Hebrew literary composition, in exhibiting the structural patterns that are employed for the fashioning of a literary unit, whether in poetry or in prose, and in discerning the many and various devices by which the predications are formulated and ordered into a unified whole. Such an enterprise I should describe as rhetoric and the methodology as rhetorical criticism.⁸

Jack Lundbom led and chronicled the subsequent rise of rhetorical criticism among American biblical scholars, while Roland Meynet has performed a similar role for the parallel, though largely independent, continental movement.⁹

The growing understanding of and appreciation for Hebrew rhetoric of the seventh century BCE suggests strongly that we should look at the writings of Nephi, who was born and educated in seventh-century

Jerusalem, and who opens his narrative telling us that “I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father” (1 Nephi 1:1), to see if the insights of rhetorical criticism might provide us with new insights for Book of Mormon interpretation. In this paper I will make a first attempt to apply the principles of Hebrew rhetoric to an interpretation of the book of 2 Nephi, which to this point has frustrated a number of interpretive efforts, my own included, and about which no consensus in analysis has yet emerged.

There are a few general warnings that scholars of Hebrew rhetoric raise for those who want to develop these new skills. Commentators have noted that the rhetoric we have learned in the western tradition is *hypotactic* in that it is direct, open, and logical. Hebrew rhetoric, in contrast, is *paratactic* in that it tends to be indirect, making important points both through its structure and through words that may have their full meaning provided and adjusted gradually throughout the text.¹⁰

They also point out that different kinds of parallelism and repetition ground most rhetorical constructions. For example, the repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning and end of a rhetorical unit forms an *inclusio*, which marks the boundaries for that unit.¹¹ Parallelism can take many forms and is often reversed, making the rhetorical unit chiasmic. Further, parallelism can occur in the repetition of words, synonyms, concepts, grammar, or even opposites (antithetical parallels). One of the most important guidelines offered is the necessity of locating the boundaries of rhetorical units, boundaries which can be signaled in verbal or structural terms, such as the *inclusio*—which is the device most frequently used in many texts.¹² Finally, Hebrew rhetoric is notable for its extensive resort to multiple rhetorical levels in longer texts. All rhetorical units may be subdivided into second-level rhetorical units with their own structures. And these can be subdivided again and again—going down several levels—all of which can employ any of the usual rhetorical structures. The clearest and most comprehensive explanation of this multiplicity of rhetorical levels is provided by Roland Meynet.¹³

Rhetorical Analysis of the Book of 2 Nephi

All rhetorical writing is designed to persuade, and Nephi’s writings are no exception. While most Old Testament writings have provided modern scholars with bottomless opportunities for speculation about their true purposes, Nephi seems anxious to make his motives perfectly clear. In 1 Nephi he assures his readers that “the fullness of mine intent is that

I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob and be saved" (1 Nephi 6:4). And in 2 Nephi he says the same thing in a different way: "For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children and also our brethren to believe in Christ and to be reconciled to God" (2 Nephi 25:23).¹⁴

In 1980 I published a proposed rhetorical outline of 1 Nephi.¹⁵ While that effort will now require significant revision in light of these new developments in Hebrew rhetoric, I will focus this paper on a proposed rhetorical outline of 2 Nephi. Should this exploratory outline prove persuasive, suggesting that 2 Nephi does seem to be informed by the principles of Hebrew rhetoric, it would then be appropriate to proceed with a comprehensive rhetorical analysis of the entire book at all levels. In this experimental paper, only the central chapter will be analyzed at all four levels.

I will be following the procedure outlined by Muilenburg in his 1968 launch of rhetorical criticism as a sub-field of biblical studies regarding the delimitation of literary units in the text: "The first concern of the rhetorical critic . . . is to define the limits or scope of the literary unit, to recognize precisely where and how it begins and where and how it ends." Further, "the literary unit is . . . an indissoluble whole, an artistic and creative unity, a unique formulation. The delimitation of the passage is essential if we are to learn how its major motif . . . is resolved."¹⁶ He then goes on to explain the second major concern of the rhetorical critic—recognizing the structure of a composition and discerning "the configuration of its component parts." This will require a delineation "of the warp and woof out of which the literary fabric is woven" and identification of "the various rhetorical devices that are employed" for marking (1) "the sequence and movement of the pericope," and (2) "the shifts or breaks in the development of the writer's thought."¹⁷

Following Muilenburg's guidelines, the first task is to establish the boundaries of the principal rhetorical units in 2 Nephi. It may be surprising to some that there has actually been some controversy about the appropriate rhetorical dividing line between 1 and 2 Nephi. I will not give here all my reasons for rejecting the 1994 proposal of Fred Axelgard that the real dividing line is between 2 Nephi chapters 5 and 6, even though his theory has been revived recently by Joseph Spencer.¹⁸ Rather, I will assume herein that Nephi's division of his writings into two books was intended to guide his readers in a straightforward way to see that one major rhetorical structure had ended and that a new structure was beginning. His intentionality in this division is emphasized

by the obvious fact that there is no break in the story between the last verses of 1 Nephi and the opening verses of 2 Nephi. An important principle of rhetorical interpretation is that one must let the author organize the material as he sees fit, without attempting to force it into interpreters' preconceived rhetorical forms or making it convey messages preferred by the interpreters. There is no question that the division into two books as we have it in today's Book of Mormon was present in the original translation, and presumably was taken directly from the very plates engraved by Nephi himself. In my judgment, it would take an extraordinarily powerful argument to undermine that presumption—far more powerful than what has been offered. I take, therefore, the entire book of 2 Nephi as the top level of rhetorical organization to be considered and proceed to divide it into subunits according to cues provided in the text. The hypothesis guiding these divisions is that Nephi, having been educated in seventh-century Jerusalem, may have incorporated the principles of Hebrew rhetoric in vogue in that time and place into his own writing.

The following analysis finds thirteen level-2 text units identified principally by inclusios. Furthermore, these units appear to be organized chiastically at this level. Table 1 lists the boundary markers or reasons for seeing each of these thirteen units as separate principal subunits of the text. Table 2 will then list the key language or other characteristics of each pair of units in the proposed thirteen-element chiasm that structures 2 Nephi. It will be seen that this chiasm focuses the entire text on the gospel promise of salvation through Jesus Christ in this life and in the next.

Table 1

| <i>Label</i> | <i>Text</i> | <i>Rhetorical boundary markers**</i> |
|--------------|-------------------|---|
| A | 2 Nephi 1:1–1:30 | "out of the land of Jerusalem" |
| B | 2 Nephi 1:31–2:4a | Zoram and Jacob "blessed" |
| C | 2 Nephi 2:4b–30 | "know good"/"have chosen the good part" |
| D | 2 Nephi 3:1–4:12 | Lehi "speaks"—to Joseph/all his household |
| E | 2 Nephi 4:13–5:34 | Laman and Lemuel angry/wars and contentions |
| F | 2 Nephi 6–11:1 | words/things "Jacob spake" |
| G | 2 Nephi 11:2–8 | "the words of Isaiah" |
| F* | 2 Nephi 12–24 | Lord's house established/Zion founded |
| E* | 2 Nephi 25:1–6 | "Isaiah spake"/"hath spoken" |
| D* | 2 Nephi 25:7–31:1 | "mine own prophecy"/"my prophesying" |

| | | |
|----|---------------------|--|
| C* | 2 Nephi 31:2–21 | “the doctrine of Christ” |
| B* | 2 Nephi 32:1–8a | “ponder in your hearts” |
| A* | 2 Nephi 32:8b–33:15 | Nephi “must speak”/“commanded to seal” words |

**Note that these phrases are all thematic somewhere in Nephi’s writings.

Table 2

- A Lehi’s final testimony and call *to his family* to repentance.
 - B The Spirit—Jacob redeemed—in the service of God.
 - C Lehi’s explanation of *the way* of salvation based on “the things which [he] had read.”
 - D Lehi’s last blessings (prophecies) *to his people*.
 - E Historical detailed interlude on the founding of “the people of Nephi,” “my soul delighteth”/“grieveth.”
 - F Jacob’s teachings witness of Christ.
 - G Nephi’s witness of Christ.
 - F* Isaiah’s prophecies witness of Christ.
 - E* Historical interlude—the education of “my people”—“my soul delighteth”/“grieveth.”
 - D* Final restatement of Nephi’s prophecies—to *all people*.
 - C* Nephi’s detailed explanation of *the way or doctrine* of Christ based on what he learned from the Father and the Son directly.
 - B* The Spirit—the Holy Ghost will show you what to do.
 - A* Nephi’s final testimony and call *to all people* to repentance.

Commentary on This Structure

Even in this exploratory analysis a few observations are suggested. First, it may be noticed that the first four elements identified (A–D), when compared to the final four (D*–A*), remind us of the division of 1 Nephi between Lehi’s account (chs. 1–9), so labeled by Nephi, and Nephi’s own account (chs. 10–22). The first four feature Lehi’s testimony, preaching, teachings, and prophecies. The last four focus on the testimony, preaching, teachings, and prophecies of Nephi. Second, while 1 Nephi initially focused on ways in which the Lord delivered Lehi, Nephi, and their people from their enemies and the trials of their journeys, leading them to a promised land in this world and evoking an Exodus typology,¹⁹ 2 Nephi next focuses on the Lord’s ability—through the atonement of Christ—to deliver the faithful from the devil and lead them to eternal

life in the next world. Third, the chiastic organization of 2 Nephi reveals how the first half of the book focuses on specific accounts of specific people—usually Lehi and his family—and on the teachings, blessings, and prophecies directed to them. But the second half takes those same teachings and prophecies in turn and universalizes them by applying them to “all people.” The story of Lehi and his people becomes a surrogate for the Lord’s plan of deliverance for all peoples, in the same way that chosen Israel is an exemplar for all nations of how they can be blessed by Israel’s god or punished—according to their willingness to repent and take up his covenants and endure to the end.

Finally, the language and organization of Nephi’s writing explicitly invokes the biblical motif of the Two Ways.²⁰ While it was thought for some time by scholars that this motif was mostly a development of early Christians derived from the Savior’s reference to himself as “the way,” it is now widely understood that its significant usage in the Dead Sea Scrolls and its appearance in Old Testament writings such as Deuteronomy and Jeremiah and even more obviously in the wisdom literature demonstrates its firm origins in the Jewish traditions.²¹ Both Lehi in his exposition of the plan of salvation and Nephi in his detailed presentation of the gospel or doctrine of Christ, as taught to him by the Father and the Son, deliberately speak of these as God’s ways for man. Further, Lehi develops the contrast between God’s way and the devil’s way, as he develops his teaching on the necessity of opposition in all things and his account of human beginnings. As suggested above, 1 Nephi details how God fulfilled his covenant with Lehi and Nephi (like Abraham) by protecting their growing posterity and leading them to a promised land. And 2 Nephi turns the journey motif into an account of the gospel as a path or “the only way” that leads to eternal life.²² Just as the miraculous director was given to Lehi to point the way for his party to travel toward the promised land, so Nephi will explain that as one progresses on “this straight and narrow path” that leads to eternal life (2 Nephi 31:18–19), “the Holy Ghost . . . will shew unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5).

Analyzing Lower Rhetorical Levels

If the division of 2 Nephi into thirteen sub-units that are organized chiastically is correct, we might expect some or all of these to exhibit additional subordinate levels of rhetorical organization. To test this hypothesis further, I will focus in this paper on the seventh or central element G from the first analysis. Again, to the extent this proves

successful, 2 Nephi would seem to invite similar analyses for the other twelve level-2 text units. Table 3 outlines the central unit G of the level-2 chiasm as an eight-element chiasm at level 3. Tables 4a–4d will provide a rhetorical analysis of each of those eight elements at level 4. The entire text of G is included in the analysis and in these tables.

Table 3: 2 Nephi 11:2–8

- 2 A And now I Nephi write more of the words of Isaiah,
- 3 B Wherefore I will send their words forth unto my children to prove unto them that my words are true. [a proof by citing three witnesses]
- 4 C Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ
- 5 D And also my soul delighteth in the covenants of the Lord which he hath made to our fathers
D* yea, my soul delighteth in . . . the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death.
- 6 C* And my soul delighteth in proving unto my people that save Christ should come all men must perish.
- 7 B* For if there be no Christ there be no God. And if there be no God we are not, for there could have been no creation. But there is a God and he is Christ, and he cometh in the fullness of his own time. [a proof by logical reasoning]
- 8 A* And now I write some of the words of Isaiah.

In Tables 4a–4d, the complete text of the four pairs of chiastic elements from table 3 will be analyzed as pairs to examine their internal rhetorical structures and the various ways in which their parallel characters can be described at rhetorical level 4.

Table 4a: 2 Nephi 11:2, 8

- 2 A a And now I Nephi write more of the words of Isaiah,
b for my soul delighteth in his words.
c For I will liken his words unto my people.
- =====
- 8 A* a And now I write some of the words of Isaiah,
b that whoso of my people which shall see these words may lift up their hearts and rejoice for all men.
c Now these are the words, and ye may liken them unto you and unto all men.

The eight-element chiasm of G is framed by two parallel triplets—A and A*. But as with Hebrew poetry generally, the second element in a parallel structure provides added or intensified meaning by adding phrases or changing some of the words. The first lines (a/a) of each triplet are virtually identical, providing this central text unit G with an easily recognizable inclusio, which frequently signals that the material within the inclusio may be structured as another chiasm—as G indeed turns out to be. But line b in the second triplet (A*) adds meaning as Nephi’s personal delight in Isaiah’s words becomes the rejoicing of his people *for all men*. And in lines c/c, just as Nephi could “liken” Isaiah’s words unto his people in A, so his readers are invited in A* to liken these words unto themselves “and *unto all men*.” In this way, the first pair of parallel elements in G introduces us to the universalizing theme of the second half of 2 Nephi.

Table 4b: 2 Nephi 11:2–3, 7

- 2 B a And I will send them [his words] forth unto all my children,
 b for he (Isaiah) verily saw my Redeemer,
 c even as I have seen him.
- 3 b* And my brother Jacob also hath seen him
 c* as I have seen him.
- a* Wherefore I will send their words forth unto my children
 aa to prove unto them that my words are true.
 bb Wherefore by the words of three, God hath said,
 cc* I will establish my word.
 bb* Nevertheless God sendeth more witnesses,
 aa* and he proveth all his words.

=====

- 7 B* a For if there be no Christ
 b there be no God;
 c and if there be no God we are not,
 c* for there could have been no creation.
- b* But there is a God,
 a* and he is Christ,

Ballast line: and he cometh in the fullness of his own time.

The second pair of parallel elements (B/B*) presents a more complicated text and might escape notice were not the following two pairs (C/C* and D/D*) so obvious—driving us to look more carefully for B/B*. As analyzed above, B presents us with two very different but closely linked rhetorical structures. The first and last lines of the first structure are nearly identical, forming an *inclusio*, and setting the first structure off from the second—the difference between a and a* being that *them* (the words of Isaiah) in a becomes *their words* (the words of Isaiah and Jacob) in a*. But inside the *inclusio*, we find not another chiasm but instead a form known by biblical rhetoricians as alternating parallels. Lines b and b* are obviously similar, as each reports that a different prophet—Isaiah and Jacob respectively—has seen the Redeemer. Lines c and c* each contain Nephi's personal witness that he also has seen the Redeemer.

The second rhetorical structure contained in B turns out to be a short chiasm that steps aside from the historical facts Nephi has just reported to explain why those facts amount to a proof to Nephi's children that his witness of the Redeemer is true. God has given the standard that the word of three witnesses is proof of his word—possibly alluding to Deuteronomy (4:26 and 17:6)—and Nephi has provided three eyewitnesses. And God has sent and will send more witnesses. The theme of proving the prophecies of Christ's future coming is what binds B and B* together as parallel elements in this level-4 chiasm.

B* picks up the “proof” theme—but in a new way—offering a logical proof from theological reasoning. While this brief passage composed of seven very short clauses may not satisfy a modern reader's learned preference for syllogisms, it is clearly framed rhetorically as a chiasm composed principally of antithetically parallel elements. Line a* positively contradicts the negative hypothesis raised in a, and b* positively negates the negative conclusion proffered in b. The central lines c/c* state and restate the counterfactual conclusion to be drawn from a and b that neither we nor creation itself could exist without God—a fundamental premise that was likely accepted universally in seventh-century Israelite and quite possibly in all Middle Eastern cultures. It should be noticed here that this proof constitutes a simple expansion of the briefer argument for the existence of God that Lehi had proffered in the course of his blessing to Jacob—adapting it to serve as a proof of the future Christ as well—and reuses precisely some of Lehi's phrasings.²³

The final independent clause in B* is not part of its chiasmic structure. It does extend the teaching about Christ with Nephi's affirmation that he

will come “in the fullness of his own time”—the important additional information drawn from the visions received by Nephi, Lehi, Jacob, and Isaiah that has not yet been articulated in the series of proofs. By completing or rounding out what has been said in the rhetorical form, this line fills the role that biblical rhetorician Jack Lundbom recognizes as a “ballast line”—as he and others find these frequently bringing balance at the conclusion of small rhetorical structures in biblical writing.²⁴

Table 4c: 2 Nephi 11:4, 6

- 4 C a Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people
 - b the truth of the coming of Christ,
 - c for for this end hath the law of Moses been given.
 - b* And all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world unto man
 - c* are the typifying of him (Christ).

=====

- 6 C* a And my soul delighteth in proving unto my people
 - b that save Christ should come
 - c all men must perish.

The repetition of the opening line (a) in C and C* supplemented by the common content of b in each is more than sufficient to establish the parallelism of these two short elements in the level-3 chiasm—even though the two have rather different internal rhetorical structures at level 4. C begins with a normal triplet reiterating Nephi’s sense that his writing will prove the truth of the prophesied coming of Christ for his people in a and b, but adding in c the further connection between the law of Moses and the coming of Christ. Nephi has already informed us that the Nephites “did observe to keep the judgments and the statutes and the commandments of the Lord, in all things according to the law of Moses” (2 Nephi 5:10). And now he explains their understanding that the law of Moses was given to remind Israel of the future coming of Christ in c. The next sentence goes on to restate and expand b and c in b* and c* respectively, producing another example of alternate parallelism. C* begins with the same statement as C but develops into a simple triplet with the added conclusion in c that without Christ’s coming “all must perish.”

Table 4d

- 5 D a And also my soul delighteth
 b in the covenants of the Lord
 c which he hath made to our fathers.

=====

- D*a Yea, my soul delighteth
 b in his grace and his justice and power and mercy,
 c in the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death.

With D and D* we have finally arrived at the rhetorical center of 2 Nephi. Here, two simple triplets face each other in the chiastic structure of G. Their equivalence in a parallel structure is provided once again by starting each triplet with the same principal clause: “my soul delighteth.” To the extent this pair of triplets constitutes a turning point for all of 2 Nephi, and simultaneously for its central text unit G, we are led once again to the comparison between 1 and 2 Nephi. The first triplet (D) expresses Nephi’s delight in the covenants the Lord made with “our fathers,” which we should understand to include specifically Abraham, Moses and all Israel at Sinai, and Lehi most recently. The second turns our focus to the atonement of Christ, which Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob now understand as the mechanism through which the Lord has established his gospel as part of “the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death” and as the fuller understanding of the ancient covenants as demonstrated in the forward-looking significance of the law of Moses as just discussed.

Conclusions

The experiment conducted in this paper has been the application of the principles of Hebrew rhetoric—as that has come to be understood by biblical scholars over the last half century—to the book of 2 Nephi, self-described as personally written by Nephi, who was educated in Jerusalem at the end of the seventh century BCE, a time and place where these writing principles are now thought by scholars to have been *de rigeur*. The experiment did not refute the hypothesis, but instead did produce a plausible division of the book into thirteen subunits that are demarcated by inclusios and that readily organize themselves chiastically as a whole. The experiment also took the central rhetorical subunit G and explored its internal rhetorical structure down two more levels. That

analysis has produced a plausible chiasmic structure in which every word of the passage fits comfortably into yet another lower level of rhetorical structures. In addition, this passage (2 Nephi 11:2–8) turns out to feature the principal theses of Nephi's writings at the same time that it explains the inclusion and placement of the long excerpts from Lehi, Jacob, and Isaiah, even though it is a passage that has rarely been featured in Book of Mormon analyses. These results are sufficiently positive and justify moving the project forward to the much larger task of providing rhetorical analyses for the twelve remaining major textual subdivisions of the book.

We have also learned that, contrary to my 1980 assessment, 2 Nephi is not a random collection of teachings and prophecies that didn't fit into 1 Nephi's structure.²⁵ Rather, the book appears as a matching structure which required its own book. Both structurally and thematically, the two books appear to be designed as a pair—each with its own message and emphases. While 1 Nephi provides Nephi's proofs based on Lehi's travels to the promised land that “the tender mercies of the Lord are over all them whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty, even unto the power of deliverance” (1 Nephi 1:20), 2 Nephi elevates the traditional meaning of the Abrahamic/Lehite promises for this life into a focus on the atonement and gospel of Jesus Christ which provide the way of deliverance to eternal life. And so God's prophecies and covenants with Israel turn out to be surrogates for the eternal promises he offers to all his children—in all times and in all places (2 Nephi 30:2).

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Notes

1. The first publication was John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 10, no. 1 (1969): 69–84, which was followed by his thesis: John W. Welch, "A Study Relating Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon to Chiasmus in the Old Testament, Ugaritic Epics, Homer, and Selected Greek Authors" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1970). Examples of additional significant studies would include "Chiasmus in Biblical Law: An Approach to the Structure of Legal Texts in the Hebrew Bible," *Jewish Law Association Studies* 4 (1990): 5–22, and John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structure, Analysis, Exegesis* (Hildesheim: Gerstenburg, 1981; repr., Provo, UT: Research Press, 1994).
2. This early history is helpfully summarized by Roland Meynet in the first two chapters of his volume, *Rhetorical Analysis: An Introduction to Biblical Rhetoric* (Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 44–130.
3. See Noel B. Reynolds, "The Return of Rhetorical Analysis to Bible Studies," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 17 (2016): 91–98, for a brief introduction to the current state of understanding as represented in Hebrew rhetorical studies. The two works selected for this review were Jack R. Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism* (Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Phoenix, 2013); and Roland Meynet, *Rhetorical Analysis: An Introduction to Biblical Rhetoric* (Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998). Meynet has subsequently produced an updated and more comprehensive *Treatise on Biblical Rhetoric* (trans. Leo Arnold; Leiden: Brill, 2012).
4. For the most detailed explanation of rhetorical levels, see Meynet, *Rhetorical Analysis*, 199–308. It should be mentioned that Meynet represents a formalistic extreme in his approach when compared to other rhetorical analysts.
5. J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 161–162.
6. Meynet, *Rhetorical Analysis*, 171.
7. Nils Wilhelm Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in the Form and Function of Chiastic Structures* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1942).
8. James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969): 8.
9. See note 4.
10. See the discussion in Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric*, 73–74.
11. For a helpful explanation of *inclusio*, the history of this usage in studies of biblical rhetoric, and biblical examples of its use, see Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric*, 325–27.
12. In *Biblical Rhetoric*, 25–36, Lundbom provides general principles and common patterns by which texts can be delimited into sub-units. He provides an instructive example when he goes on in chapter 4 to apply these to his analysis of Jeremiah (pp. 37–59).
13. Meynet, *Rhetorical Analysis*, 199–308.
14. Book of Mormon quotations are taken from the 2009 Yale critical edition: Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2009).
15. Noel B. Reynolds, "Nephi's Outline," *BYU Studies* 20, no. 2 (1980): 1–18; also in *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins* (ed. Noel B. Reynolds; Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1982), 53–74.
16. Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 9.
17. Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 10.

18. See Frederick W. Axelgard, "1 and 2 Nephi: An Inspiring Whole," *BYU Studies* 26, no. 4 (1986): 53–65; and Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology* (Salem, OR: Salt Press, 2012), 34–35. In "On Doubting Nephi's Break between 1 and 2 Nephi: A Critique of Joseph Spencer's *An Other Testament: On Typology*," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 25 (2017): 85–102, I explain why I see that approach as seriously misguided.

19. The deployment of Exodus typology in the Book of Mormon was initially displayed in George S. Tate, "The Typology of the Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon," in *Literature of Belief: Sacred Scripture and Religious Experience* (ed. Neal E. Lambert; Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 1981), 245–62.

20. For an extended discussion of the two-ways motif, see Noel B. Reynolds, "The Ancient Doctrine of the Two Ways in the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2017): 49–78.

21. See Margaret Mary McKenna, "The Two Ways in Jewish and Christian Writings of the Greco-Roman Period: A Study of the Form of Repentance Parenthesis" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1981), 293–309, 349–57.

22. See Noel B. Reynolds, "This Is the Way," *Religious Educator* 14, no. 3 (2013): 71–83.

23. Cf. 2 Nephi 2:13.

24. Lundbom borrows the concept of ballast lines from Muilenburg and George Adam Smith and illustrates the form these took in Isaiah in *Biblical Rhetoric*, 133–35.

25. Reynolds, "Nephi's Outline," 16.

Jesus and the Roman Centurion (Matthew 8:5–13)

A Window to Chiasmus and Apostolic Pedagogy

H. Douglas Buckwalter

At the time I was doing my post-graduate work in New Testament studies at Kings College at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, my wife gave birth to our second child, a son. Under the National Healthcare System that was provided, we were periodically visited at home by a district nurse. As our son grew a little older, she began to bring colored toy blocks for him to play with. At first, she would randomly pick out any colored block, say a blue block, and see if he could associate color and pick out the same colored block. In time this progressed to short sequences and then longer ones, where she might line up a row of blocks in the order of red to blue to green to yellow and see if he could follow the pattern and create on his own the same arrangement. Such patterning ability was considered an important marker of cognitive development.¹

In a landmark study on Hebrew literary structure in the Old Testament,² David A. Dorsey has plausibly demonstrated that such patterning techniques (parallelism, symmetry/chiasm) comprise a common writing format used in each book of the OT to convey meaning and even to grace simultaneously linear chronological accounts.³ After years of research and careful analysis of the Hebrew, his work is a compendium of the fruits of his labors in each Old Testament book. His argument is quiet but persistent and compelling that the OT text exhibits *a conscious surface structure designed to convey meaning*.⁴ Dorsey has provided extensive, sensible patterning examples (most as chiasms) of this, supplying with commentary the overall pattern for each book, the

patterns for each of their sub-points, and sometimes those of the third level as well.⁵

It is fascinating to see the cognitive link between the patterning development testing that the nurse was doing with my young son and the consistent use of these very same patterns as foundational “literary packaging”⁶ designed to preserve and pass on history and instruction, in this instance, to Israel throughout the OT era.

When approaching an OT text, Dorsey explains that literary structure conveys meaning in three primary ways:

- through the composition’s overall structure
- through structure repetition
- through positions of prominence⁷

A literary structure’s reach can be at the overall book-wide level or extend down to sub-sections at multiple levels within a book. Having had the opportunity to carefully read through a full-length copy of the manuscript before Dorsey sent it to the publisher,⁸ I began to wonder if this was an organizing and communication technique used by the New Testament writers in the same kind of thoroughgoing way to convey and package meaning for the benefit of their readers. This essay will seek to put a sleeve to a window and give it a good rub in the hopes that in some small way it will let us see back to the days of the apostles and glimpse what they, perhaps, consciously embedded in the very words of their written text.

We will use as our sample study the Gospel story of Jesus’ healing of the Roman centurion’s servant as preserved for us in Matt 8:5–13.⁹ Before looking at its patterning, we will first examine the larger literary patterns in which the story itself forms a part. This broader perspective increases the likelihood that these structures originate with the biblical author and help readers understand better the author’s purposes for the passage in its context and for the passage itself. Next, we will analyze the literary structure of the story, keeping in mind Dorsey’s three points for examining structured text. In closing, we will attempt some observations on what this study may show us about first-century apostolic pedagogy.

Gospel Literary Setting

The overall book-wide unit in which the Roman centurion story occurs is Matt 8:1–11:1.¹⁰ A guiding rationale that supports this block of text as

a literary unit is its six-part parallel arrangement (A-B-A'-B'-A''-B''), alternating between miracle stories and discipleship passages:

A three miracle episodes (8:1–17)

- ^[1]Jesus heals a leper (8:1–4)
- ^[2]Jesus heals a centurion's paralyzed servant (8:5–13)
- ^[3]Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law of her fever (8:14–15)
- ends with a summation of Jesus' extensive healing ministry (as also in point A'')

B short section of Jesus' teaching on discipleship (8:18–22)

- Jesus calls two would-be disciples to follow him

A' three miracle episodes (8:23–9:8)

- ^[1]Jesus calms a storm (8:23–27)
- ^[2]Jesus heals two demon-possessed men (8:28–34)
- ^[3]Jesus heals a paralytic (9:1–8)

B' longer section of Jesus' teaching on discipleship (9:9–17)

- includes Matthew accepting Jesus' call to follow him

A'' three miracle episodes (9:18–38)

- ^[1]Jesus heals a woman's bleeding disorder and raises a ruler's daughter from the dead (9:18–26)
- ^[2]Jesus heals two blind men (9:27–31)
- ^[3]Jesus heals a mute demon-possessed man (9:32–34)
- ends with a summation of Jesus' extensive healing ministry (as also in point A)

B'' longest section of Jesus' teaching on discipleship (10:1–11:1)

- he prepares to send out the Twelve, whom he called to himself

The unit's two strands of material each consists of three points.¹¹ The A points form the first strand, containing three episodes each on Jesus' miracle working in Galilee. The B points form the second strand, all recording some of Jesus' teaching on discipleship and progressively increasing in length, from point B which contains two short interactions between Jesus and two would-be disciples (82 words) to point B' which contains Jesus' calling of Matthew to follow him, the bridegroom analogy, and a couple of short teachings that show the newness that has come with him (198 words) to point B'' where Jesus gives a lengthy speech comprising all of chapter 10 in preparing to send out his chosen disciples, designated apostles, to preach the gospel of the kingdom in the towns of Israel as an extension of his own ministry (747 words).

The unit's pattern helps the reader make a visual connection between what Jesus' miracles show about him and the nature of true discipleship. It demonstrates from Jesus' life and actions who his miracles reveal him to be and the purpose of his mission. By nature, he is sovereign over death and demons and is able to forgive sin (e.g., the middle cluster of miracles), and by nature he is willing to make others clean by taking their uncleanness upon himself (the first summary of Jesus' miracle working, 8:16–17). Jesus is the Good News. The only suitable response to him then is to follow him with utter abandonment. Even partial allegiance to him is not to accept him fully for who he truly is.

The passage that leads to the story of the Roman centurion takes us to point A of the first sub-section of the unit, the first cluster of three miracle episodes in Matt 8:1–17. It is organized according to a three-part symmetric (chiastic) pattern, finishing with a climaxing summary point (A-B-A'-C):

A Jesus heals a leper through touch (8:1–4)

- ends: the healed man was to go and show himself to the priests as testimony to them

B Jesus heals the centurion's paralyzed servant by merely willing it from a distance (8:5–13)

- ends: the servant was apparently healed the moment Jesus told the centurion to go and it would be done as he had requested of Jesus

A' Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law through touch (8:14–15)

- ends: the healed woman got up and waited on Jesus

C CLIMACTIC SUMMATION of Jesus' healing ministry (8:16–17)

- fulfills Scripture: Isaiah 53:4 cited ("he took our illnesses and bore our diseases")

All three healing passages speak volumes about Jesus in that the recipients of his healing ministry were a leper, a Roman soldier, and a woman. The leper and woman in the A points were more marginalized in Jewish society and, of course, the Roman soldier in the middle B point was of the hated Roman occupying force. Yet Jesus' mission was not affected by class, gender, race, or even apparent sinfulness, as in the case of the leper (the visitation of things like leprosy, blindness, and paralysis on a person was commonly seen among the Jews as punishment for sin; see, e.g., John 9:1–2). Important language repetition between the A points is Jesus healing through *touch*, expressing the value and dignity he gives to the leper and Peter's mother-in-law, in addition to their healing:

Jesus touched (ἥψατο, *hēpsato*) the leper (8:3)

Jesus touched (ἥψατο, *hēpsato*) the hand of Peter's mother-in-law (8:15)

Our passage is the featured middle healing story. What separates it from the other two episodes is that Jesus never goes to the centurion's house, which would have allowed him to touch the servant in healing him. It is what happens in this exchange between the centurion and Jesus that distinguishes this healing story from the other two and which probably factored into its being given this center position status.

Analysis of Story

In light of this contextual study, the story of Jesus' healing of the Roman centurion's servant in Matthew 8:5–13 has an important position at the head of this unit (8:1–11:1). It forms the featured miracle episode of the opening cluster of miracles, which begins the unit (8:1–17). This means that a featured element within this story may be intended to stand over the entire unit, including all of the discipleship material. In exploring this possibility, we will examine the story's literary arrangement. We will analyze its paired points, noting key relationships of meaning between the matching points, and in the process, possibly see how literary patterning can add a memorable instructional design to a chronological account, without forfeiting enjoyment of the story¹² or necessarily compromising its historical integrity. It enables the reader to see the truth of Jesus in his personal interaction with others. We will close this section with a brief assessment of how this analysis links up with Dorsey's three ways that literary structure conveys meaning.

The episode is arranged according to a six-part symmetry (chiasm) (A-B-C-C'-B'-A').

A the centurion's servant is paralyzed and suffering terribly at home (8:5–6)

B Jesus says to the Roman centurion: "I will go and heal him" (8:7)

- focus: Jesus will go to the centurion's house and heal the servant there

C CENTER: the centurion displays great faith in Jesus, believing he can heal from afar just by commanding it to happen (8:8–9)

- the centurion's display of faith: "only say the word and my servant will be healed"
- the centurion's understanding: Jesus can heal from a distance

C' CENTER: Jesus exclaims that he has not seen such great faith in Israel and issues a kingdom pronouncement on such faith (8:10–12)

- Jesus remarks on this expression of faith: “truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel”
- Jesus’ pronouncement: such faith will be the only grounds by which Jews and Gentiles alike will sit at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

B’ **Jesus says to the Roman centurion: “you go and it will be done just as you believed it would”** (8:13a)

- focus: Jesus will stay where he is and heal the centurion’s servant from afar

A’ **the centurion’s servant was healed at that hour** (8:13b)

The paired A points (8:5–6, 13b). The paired A points act as an *inclusio*, beginning and ending the pattern with a description of the current status of the servant’s health, with the second A point as the actual record of the miracle.

point A = When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came up to him, pleading with him, saying, “Lord, **my servant** is lying at (ἐν, *en*) home paralyzed, suffering terribly.”

point A’ = **His servant** was healed at (ἐν, *en*) that hour [or *moment*].

The italicized prepositional phrase, beginning with ἐν in each instance, draws attention to the present circumstance of the servant—the first being his location (in that he was not with the centurion), the second being the time (at the time of Jesus’ exchange with the centurion). But the key paired meaning here is the *contrast* between the underlined material. *Contrasting meaning is where one or more things between the matching points is slightly to highly different, contrary, or opposite to the other.* Initially, the servant is suffering terribly; ultimately, he is healed. The servant goes from excruciating and incapacitating physical suffering (point A) to complete and instant physical healing, thus highlighting the miracle (point A’). In a sense, the pattern’s foundation is the A points in the miracle work of Jesus. He is the one solely responsible for the servant’s healing. He did the miracle.

The paired B points (8:7, 13a). In the B points the action of *going* in connection to Jesus’ healing of the servant plays a strategic role.¹³

point B = *Jesus said to him*, “I will go (ἐλθὼν, *elthōn*) and heal him.”

point B’ = *Jesus said to the centurion*, “[You] Go (ὑπάγε, *hypage*)! As you have believed, let it be done to you.”

What is immediately evident with the italicized narrative introduction to the direct address is that Jesus is the speaker in both points. This is important. What happens is not only by his permission but by his will. He authorizes it. Secondly, while it is clear that Jesus is going to heal the servant (point B), it would appear that he is most pleased to be able to alter how he is going to go about doing it in order to honor the centurion's great display of faith in him (point B').

Three paired meanings are significant between the B points. First again is the *contrast* as seen in the underlined words. Jesus initially prepares to go himself. The verb ἔρχομαι (*erchomai*, “to go/come”) is used, which is the verb generally used of Jesus in his public ministry travels with the disciples and often crowds of people, as would likely be the case here in proceeding to the centurion's home. However, in changing his plan and staying where he is, Jesus tells the centurion to go. In this instance, he uses the verb ὑπάγω (*hypagō*), which generally means “to go away” but can carry the sense of going away “particularly under cover, out of sight, with stealth.”¹⁴ This choice of wording seems plain enough here. Jesus does not wish on the centurion all the fanfare that could potentially accompany this change of plan; he wants for him to be able to go home without the public knowing what was at stake and in the luxury of the peace and quiet of his own home to enjoy and celebrate his servant's healing.

The second significant paired meaning is a *parallel*. *Paralleling occurs where something in the matching point loosely or tightly matches or agrees with something in the opening point*. Jesus is the healer in point B (“I will heal him”) and again in point B’ (“as you have believed, let it be done to you”). This factor has not changed but remains constant between the two points.

The third significant paired meaning is *progression*. *Progression occurs where the matching point shows a logical progression or development of thought or behavior from the opening point*. Jesus was planning to perform the miracle at the centurion's house (point B), but as the story progresses Jesus now has a change of plans and will do the miracle at a distance from the Roman soldier's house in order to honor the centurion's faith in him (point B'). Jesus is still going to do the miracle, but it will now take place according to the centurion's request. Why the change? This brings us to the central part of the story.

The paired C points (8:8–9, 10–12). Both of these points are long and consist entirely of direct address. In the first instance, it is by the

centurion to Jesus; in the second instance, it is by Jesus to the crowds about the centurion.

point C = Speaking up, the centurion said, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof, **but only say the word and my servant will be healed**, for I am also a man under authority, having soldiers under me—and I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” (8:8–9)

point C' = Now when Jesus had heard this, he marveled and said to those following him, “Truly I say to you, **I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel**. I say to you, *many will come from the east and west and be made to recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be thrown out in the outermost darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*” (8:10–12)

These points show nice literary balance with their content. Each begins with mention of the centurion’s faith: first by the centurion himself (8:8), then by Jesus (8:10). The remainder of each point expands the faith theme: the centurion explains why he is convinced that Jesus can heal by simply issuing a command without being present (8:9); Jesus issues a pronouncement on faith (“truly I say to you,” 8:11–12). The paired meaning here is a *continuity*. *Continuity in meaning is where the matching point continues or extends a particular idea, theme, or storyline of the opening point.* Jesus’ words in point C’ not only reiterate the idea of faith but continue the conversation and extend it with teaching of his own. The centurion exhibits remarkable faith in Jesus by asking him simply to say the word where he is and the miracle will happen, understanding himself how voiced authority works (point C); Jesus then comments on this remarkable display of faith in him and uses it as modeling the grounds upon which people will sit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (point C’).

Jesus decided not to go to the centurion’s home because of the centurion’s great faith in him (8:8–9), which he then greatly praised (8:10). “That faith was the more surprising since the centurion was a Gentile and lacked the heritage of OT revelation to help him understand Jesus. But this Gentile penetrated more deeply into the nature of Jesus’ person and authority than any Jew of his time.”¹⁵ This leads to Jesus’ pronouncement that people will sit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the messianic banquet at the end of the age only on the basis of the kind of faith exhibited by the centurion (8:11–12). This includes Jews (sons of the kingdom will be thrown out presumably for their lack of faith) and Gentiles (those

from the east and the west will take their seats with the patriarchs presumably on the basis of their faith). The object of belief is Jesus.

The importance of understanding this episode as the featured point of the opening cluster of miracles for the unit through this analysis of its literary structure has hopefully now become more apparent. It supplies the definition of what faith is, the demand for it in Jesus, the indiscriminate nature of it for those who believe, and the priority of it for entrance into the kingdom of God. What enhances its placement still more is that the first occurrence of the noun πίστις (*pistis*, “faith”) in Matthew’s Gospel is Jesus’ words about the centurion’s great faith in 8:10: “Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith (πίστιν, *pistin*) with anyone in Israel.”¹⁶ The Roman centurion’s behavior toward Jesus is *the defining act of faith* for the unit and the Gospel. He exhibits humility in recognizing that Jesus is vastly more important than he is and acts on it by asking Jesus simply to say the word where he is, believing that nothing more is needed for Jesus to heal his servant. *This is true faith in Jesus, pure and simple.* For a unit on discipleship that demands the right response to what Jesus displays about himself through his miracles, there is no greater opening impact point.

The analysis of how the literary structure of this NT text conveys meaning has demonstrated that a composition’s overall structure, structure repetition, and positions of prominence¹⁷ are integral ingredients sown into the actual fabric of the episode itself, creating a beautiful tapestry of meaning in the recounted episode, visible in its carefully crafted framework, texture, and coloring in the text’s arrangement, language, and paired meanings.

Sampling of Apostolic Pedagogy

It is easy to forget that as we read and study the Bible, we are doing cross-cultural studies. The Bible has appeared in the chapter and verse format that we are familiar with for many years, having “packaged” indented paragraphs and numbered chapters as we know them. This was not the way it looked when it was written. The same words and sentences were there, but their packaging may have instead been deliberately embedded with literary patterns that were intended to enrich the text as salt does to a good steak.

First-century culture was primarily an oral culture. While illiteracy rates were sometimes high, there were still many people who could read and write. However, it was simply too prohibitive to own a book. Books were relatively rare and expensive to publish. Few could afford to own

one. On the other hand, people were generally seasoned in the ability to memorize, since this is how most learning was done. An important point of structured text in the OT was to facilitate the ease of memorization and the learning of the lessons embedded in it.

In following the lead of the OT, it seems that apostolic teaching was passed on orally and, in time, in written form (as preserved for us in the NT) in these self-contained capsules of structured text. It is most humbling and yet exciting to consider that each of the points of the overall unit of Matt 8:1–11:1 has its own literary pattern and that each of the miracle episodes of the three clusters do as well. All of this was designed to contribute to the meaning of the unit. Just because we may not be able to fathom the literary presence of structured NT text should not be the basis for dismissing it. This runs the risk of cultural blindness and provincialism. Rather, the basis should stay with what examination of the structured NT text suggests, as with our sampling with the Roman centurion episode.

With this in mind, this study may contribute in five ways to understanding apostolic pedagogy in relation to structured text. First, structured texts were seemingly designed to be very accessible and understandable to the “lay person”; they were meant to be “reader friendly,” not obscure and hard to follow, although, to be sure, they required some initial instruction and mentoring.

Second, a text’s internal structure was to facilitate and safeguard accurate memorization. The patterned layout made it easier to memorize the words versus having to memorize a shapeless paragraph-long string of words. The layout, likewise, provided a grid of sorts to help with accurate recall and to protect losing parts of the text.

Third, a text’s internal structure appears simultaneously to have provided built-in apostolic instruction on the text itself. The lessons were embedded in the text, as we saw with the Roman centurion episode. This was most efficient and practical.

Fourth, memorization of a collection of such pieces of structured texts would have allowed the apostles to leave careful and precise Gospel teaching and Christian instruction with converts and fellow Christians, even though the apostles and early missionaries would have moved on to another place to preach. This was especially helpful in the early churches where there was no existing written material. Such structured text provided a measure of safety as well in times of persecution. With the lessons embedded in the memorized texts, they could not be burned or confiscated.

Fifth, rather than just putting the lessons in writing, there was an added benefit of memorizing a structured text. Memorization would have encouraged the apostolic teaching to be embedded in the heart of the individual, readily available to be applied to life. Something memorized is not quickly forgotten. This technique would have facilitated elders teaching in the church and parents teaching their children. Memorization would have profited the mutual edification of fellow Christians or one's personal walk with God and Jesus Christ.

We have put the sleeve to the window and given it a good rub. What we have seen is not new but quite old. It has a solid connection to the mechanics of OT structured text. What is dynamic is what it may mean for enriching our understanding of the New Testament.

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Notes

1. Children's nursery rhymes and stories frequently display similar carefully arranged sequences. E.g., if the houses of The Three Little Pigs story were illustrated with colored blocks—the house of straw as yellow, the house of sticks as brown, and the house of bricks as red—the story would appear as two repeating rows of this sequence of colored blocks (creating a six-part parallel pattern, with the final blocks of each row being the most important ones):

- yellow block (house of straw, in building it)
- brown block (house of sticks, in building it)
- red block (house of bricks, in building it, which the pig took a long time to build)
- yellow block (house of straw, in visit by the wolf)
- brown block (house of sticks, in visit by the wolf)
- red block (house of bricks, in visit by the wolf, which withstood the adversity)

In another example, if Hickory, Dickory, Dock were laid out in colored blocks—the refrain as blue, the mouse running as green, the clock striking as orange—the story would appear as two rows of blocks, sharing a block at the end of the first row and the

start of the second one, with the second row then following the color sequence of blocks of the first row in reverse order (creating a five-part symmetry/chiasm, with the middle block, in this instance, as the “turning” point):

blue block (Hickory, Dickory, Dock)

green block (the mouse ran up the clock)

orange block (the clock struck one, presumably scaring the mouse)

green block (the mouse ran down)

blue block (Hickory, Dickory, Dock)

2. David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999); see pp. 36, 38, for his linkage of patterning to nursery rhymes (“Three Little Pigs”).

3. Dorsey presents this in his Introduction, *Literary Structure*, 26–27, but then routinely illustrates it throughout his structural commentary on the literary arrangements of the OT books.

4. For his use of the term “surface structure,” see Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 15.

5. His introduction, *Literary Structure*, 15–44, consists of five helpful chapters that explore the history, procedure and methodology, and value of structure study.

6. An expression used by John Beekman, John Callow, and Michael Kopesec, *The Semantic Structure of Written Communication* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1981), 14–15, in their language work with indigenous oral cultures (as cited in Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 16–17).

7. Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 36.

8. Dave Dorsey was my esteemed Old Testament colleague.

9. Translations of this passage are my own from the UBS, 5th ed.

10. In working with the alternating narrative-discourse organizing principle for Matthew’s Gospel, some scholars consider 8:1–11:1 a literary unit subdivided between Jesus’ actions in chs. 8–9 and his speech in ch. 10. D. A. Carson, *Matthew 1–12* (EBC; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 53, and David L. Turner, *Matthew* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), vii, 10, subdivide the unit into two sections: 8:1–10:4; 10:5–11:1; Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (ZECNT 1; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 42–43, and Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew* (PCNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010), vii (who begins the unit at 8:2), slightly adjust the break to a few verses earlier: 8:1–9:34; 9:35–11:1. F. C. Fenton, “Inclusio and Chiasmus in ‘Matthew,’” *SE* 1 [TU 73] (1959): 174–79; C. H. Lohr, “Oral Techniques in the Gospel of Matthew,” *CBQ* 23 (1961): 403–35, esp. 427–34, make a clean break between chs. 8–9 and 10 as two individual points in their proposed thirteen-part chiasm for Matthew’s overall pattern, alternating between narrative and sermon with ch. 13 as the unmatched middle point. All of this comes in their attempt to account for the significance of the five speeches of Jesus in Matthew, as does Peter F. Ellis, *Matthew: His Mind and His Message* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1985), 12, in his nearly identical eleven-part chiasm. H. J. Bernard Combrink, “The Structure of the Gospel of Matthew as Narrative,” *TynBul* 34 (1983): 71, follows a similar division to that of Osborne and Talbert (except he ends the first point at 9:35 and begins the second at 9:36) but as overall points (C and D) of his proposed eleven-part chiasm of Matthew.

11. Scholars have commonly recognized the three clusters or “triads” of miracle episodes, to use the language of W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988, 1991), 1:67, 102; 2:3–4 in chs. 8–9. Moreover, Paul Gaechter, *Die literarische Kunst im Matthäus-Evangelium* (StBibS 7; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1966), ch. 2; and

Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 8–18, 3–4, 6, have observed the corresponding follow-up material on discipleship in 8:18–22 and 9:9–17 in the rhythm of a A-B-A-B-A parallel pattern; both relegate ch. 10 to another overall unit. Turner, *Matthew*, 227, has the same sequence as Gaechter and Davies and Allison but adds a closing third B point (9:35–10:4) as summary and transition.

12. It is this “on the street” experience between the Roman centurion and Jesus that makes the pattern so compelling and meaningful; it depicts a snapshot taken from a person’s life. The patterning assists in drawing the reader’s eyes to what is the most important or memorable part of the picture.

13. The “at that hour/moment” phrase in point A’ is in all probability referring back to the “going” scenario as played out at the time of the second B point.

14. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (comp. and ed. S. Zodhiates; Chattanooga, TN: AMG, 1992), 1407.

15. Carson, *Matthew* 1–12, 202.

16. The noun πίστις (*pistis*, “faith”) occurs 8x in the Gospel: 8:10; 9:2, 22, 29; 15:28; 17:20; 21:21; 23:23. Incidentally, the first of the eleven occurrences of the verb form πιστεύω (*pisteuō*, “to believe”) is in 8:13 in Jesus’ words to centurion about his faith: “Go! As you have believed (ἐπίστευσας, *episteusas*), let it be done” (elsewhere, 9:28; 18:6; 21:22, 25, 32 [3x]; 24:23, 26; 27:42).

17. Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 36.

Rethinking the Structure of the “Farewell Discourse” (John 13–17) through a Chiastic Lens

Wayne Brouwer

Introduction

Briefly stated, my thesis is this: although it is very difficult to read the mind of the Evangelist, or the redactor who brought elements of previously written material into the shape of the gospel as we have it today, it appears that the repetitive and reflexive elements of the Johannine farewell discourse fit together into a large chiasm¹ bounded by expressions of spiritual intimacy with God on either end (the foot washing episode of ch. 13 and the prayer of ch. 17) and channeled toward the challenge to “abide” in Jesus at the center (15:1–17). In outline, it could be diagrammed as follows:

- A Gathering scene (Focus on unity with Jesus expressed in mutual love) (13:1–35)
- B Prediction of the disciples’ denial (13:36–38)
- C Jesus’ departure tempered by assurance of the father’s power (14:1–14)
- D The promise of the παράκλητος (“Advocate”) (14:15–26)
- E Troubling encounter with the world (14:27–31)
- F The vine and branches teaching (“Abide in me!”) producing a community of mutual love (15:1–17)
- E₁ Troubling encounter with the world (15:18–16:4a)
- D₁ The promise of the παράκλητος (“Advocate”) (16:4b–15)
- C₁ Jesus’ departure tempered by assurance of the father’s power (16:16–28)
- B₁ Prediction of the disciples’ denial (16:29–33)
- A₁ Departing prayer (Focus on unity with Jesus expressed in mutual love) (17:1–26)

Read in this manner, John 13–17 takes on a different character than it would if understood primarily as a linear discourse. For one thing, the vine and branches teaching of 15:1–17 becomes the apex of its development, proclaiming the dominant theme that spiritual unity with Jesus (summarized a number of times in the phrase “abide in me”) is at the center of the discourse, shaping and pervading the surrounding material. Also, the repetitive themes of betrayal, Jesus’ leaving, the promise of the spirit as “Advocate,” and the character of the disciples’ interaction with the world, initially stated in chapters 13 and 14, become paired in a meaningful way with their counterparts in chapters 15 and 16. Each of these themes becomes an extension of the “Abide in me!” injunction of 15:1–17, explicating its significance in one of several ways.

Finally, in this chiasmic reading of the discourse, there is an understanding of the foot-washing scene, which serves as a prelude to the discourse proper (13:1–35), as being a counterpart to the prayer of chapter 17. If union with Jesus is the organizing theme of the discourse, the disciples enter the discourse through a visible expression of Jesus’ desire for their intimacy and leave with a spiritual expression of that same desire. Although this reading of John 13–17 is similar in various elements to other chiasmic proposals, it is rooted in the dual assumptions that both the historical development of the text and its current form are of significance for interpretation. As a result, Jesus’ command to “abide in me,” reiterated several times in the central element of the discourse (15:1–17), serves to provide a cohesive understanding of the text in its received shape (which is the goal of synchronic interpreters) while, at the same time, encourages the investigations of historical criticism to provide insight into the editing process which is behind the final arrangement of the text (the emphasis of diachronic interpreters). In this manner, reading the farewell discourse chiasmatically brings resolution to many of the issues of interpretation that have stood between the diachronic and synchronic approaches.

Nonlinear Communication

It is important, at this point, to determine more specifically the criteria by which chiasmus in biblical literature will be assessed. Although there are clear representations of chiasms scattered throughout the literature of antiquity, it was not until early in the twentieth century, largely through the work of Nils Lund, that chiasmic analyses in biblical studies were more widely developed.

While he was a student at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago, Lund began an investigation that would ultimately become a

lifetime passion, namely, to observe and specify the use of chiasm as a New Testament literary convention. From 1929 through 1934 Lund published a series of seven articles on various aspects of the topic.² At the same time, he was working on a much more comprehensive investigation of chiasm in its historical and biblical expressions. This monograph eventually became his PhD dissertation for the University of Chicago.³ In it, Lund devoted himself to "the tracing of the Hebrew literary influence on the Greek text of the New Testament,"⁴ with a particular focus on "the extensive use of the inverted order commonly called chiasmus."⁵ In an early article,⁶ Lund had outlined what he perceived to be the chiastic structure to the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel. His analysis of that passage continues to be influential for many scholars through to the present.⁷ It included the elucidation of elements of chiastic arrangement that Lund would later distil into seven theses:⁸

- The center of a chiastically shaped pericope *is always the turning point*.
- The thought shifts at the centre, often to an antithetic thought, only to return to the previous line of argument or topic development.
- Identical ideas are distributed across the given passage "at the extremes and . . . centre."
- Some ideas are redistributed in the second half as if deliberately reiterated.
- Certain terms appear to gravitate toward the center of the passage.
- Larger units are frequently introduced and concluded by "*frame-passages*."
- Chiastic developments are frequently interspersed with linear progressive lines.

These "laws"⁹ are essentially observational hypotheses. Yet, they resonate with recurring phenomena in the textual data.¹⁰ For Lund, they indicated thought processes at work in both the Hebrew Bible and in the New Testament that consciously highlighted an idea of significance by placing it at the center of a discourse. The normative character of this centered idea in the pericope as a whole was reinforced textually through balanced pairs of inverted, parallel, complementary statements or themes on either side of it that "pointed" back to it as the structuring motif of the larger passage.

Focus on Repetition and Centering

While Lund's concise "laws" governing chiastic movement within a passage are useful in discerning the broad outlines of chiastic passages,¹¹ they lack the precision required for careful examination of those texts where a chiasm might be suspected as playing a role in the development of themes and concepts.¹²

First, as Alan Culpepper noted,¹³ Lund's "laws" fail to provide a clear set of criteria for identifying clues that might signal chiastic intent. They document what Lund declares to be the moves of chiasm, but they do not indicate where one begins to look for those moves. David Clark worked to fill this void in his 1975 essay, "Criteria for Identifying Chiasm."¹⁴ According to Clark, chiastic repetition, parallelism, and centering may be found in any, several, or all of these dimensions of a passage: content, structure, choice of words, setting, and theology.¹⁵ Thus, for Clark, chiasm might be found on several levels of literary expression. Although he does not make entirely clear the precise tools which might be used in assessing each of these dimensions of communication, Clark's analysis of Lund's general search for parallel repetition into several categories broadens the possibilities in the search for chiasm while, at the same time, it calls for more clarity in describing what sorts of parallels are to be found. In addition, Clark observed that most assessments of chiasm are to be evaluated on some cumulative collection of evidence that may be less than fully apparent at the first reading.¹⁶ He offers several different types of measures by which to assess possible chiastic design in a text, especially focusing on locating and isolating repetitions of content within a pericope either in language or structure.¹⁷

Second, Lund's "laws" fail to explore adequately both the idea of the heightened literary impact of the central element in a chiasm and the importance of balanced length on both sides of this center. Ian Thomson, in rewriting Lund's "laws" and amplifying them to address that need more specifically, suggested the following, more precise, criteria:¹⁸

Chiasms frequently exhibit a shift at, or near, their center. This change can be very varied in nature: a change of person of the verb, a new or unexpected idea suddenly introduced, and so on. Usually after the "shift," the original thought is resumed. For this reason, in this study, the phrase "shift and reversion" is preferred to Lund's simple term. This immediately highlights the problem associated with all such characteristics. Many passages have "shifts" but are obviously not chiastic. In a chiasmus, "shifts" that are not at its center will occur, marking, for example, points of development in an argument.

Chiasms are sometimes introduced or concluded by a frame passage. Lund himself makes no comment on this, but, judged by examples which he later gives, a "frame-passage" is a springboard from which to launch into the chiasmus, or a section which acts as a tail-piece to a chiasmus without itself being part of the chiastic pattern.

Passages which are chiastically patterned sometimes also contain directly parallel elements.¹⁹

Identical ideas may occasionally be distributed in such a fashion that they occur at the extremes of the passage and also again at the center of a given chiastic system.

Balancing elements are normally of approximately the same length. On a few occasions when this is not the case, some explanation seems to be called for.

The center often contains the focus of the author's thought. It will be suggested that this is a particularly powerful feature with obvious implications for exegesis.

In light of what Thomson believes are a plethora of unwarranted, supposed discoveries of chiasm throughout the New Testament, he elaborates on the use of his guidelines, making a plea for rigorous objectivity by those who seek to assess any passage for possible chiastic development.²⁰ First, Thomson says, "The chiasmus will be present in the text as it stands, and will not require unsupported textual emendation in order to 'recover' it."²¹ Either it is there or it is not, and any attempt to find it in previous redactions of the text only remind us that the form of the passage in its final editing undid whatever chiasm might have been there earlier.

Second, according to Thomson, "The symmetrical elements will be present in precisely inverted order."²² That is to say, where one must seek to rearrange elements in order to gain parallel inversion of elements in a passage, it is not likely that chiastic intent was there in the first place. Thomson does allow for some latitude in this requirement, so long as the rationale for a departure from the norm makes sense within the development of the passage itself.

Third, says Thomson, "The chiasmus will begin and end at a reasonable point."²³ In other words, the reason for expressing a thought in chiastic design is to define the relationships among the elements of a single subunit of communication, whether it is represented in four short lines of poetry or encompasses a comprehensive tale unfolded in an extended narrative. There must be a correlation between the completeness of the thought unit and the extent or boundaries of the chiastically shaped passage. If either moves on before the other, chiasm is not likely to be present at all.²⁴

Although it is clear that chiasm is one among many literary forms used in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, it is not always

as certain when chiastic patterns are definitively present. According to the criteria established by Clark, chiastic intent in a passage is recognized on the basis of the strength and combination of up to five intermingling elements: "(1) content—the theme or themes of each pericope, (2) form or structure—the type of narrative and/or dialogue of which the pericope is composed, (3) language—primarily the occurrence [*sic*] of catchwords. . . . [T]wo other features . . . are worth separate listing: (4) setting, and (5) theology."²⁵

While these five criteria are the basis for chiastic exploration, they are not sufficiently precise to provide the specific tools of analysis in all instances. As Thomson says, the process for identifying chiasm "is inevitably complex."²⁶ Not only that, but it appears, at times, to become an exercise in circular reasoning: one reads a passage looking for a particular pattern of repetition or reflexivity; then, when hints of such a pattern are found, one declares that the form of the pattern found is both typical and original. It is typical because it follows the preasserted pattern, and it is original in the sense that its form provides the basis upon which to seek further similar patterns.

Pay Attention to Balance and Parallelism

Thomson suggests both a two-step method by which to assess the evidence for chiasm in a text and a series of carefully delineated guidelines that are designed to shape the process of testing the hypothesis from beginning to end. The first stage in Thomson's investigation is "to identify a pattern which is potentially chiastic."²⁷ Thomson urges the reader to pay attention to repetition of vocabulary and syntax and to seek the possible inverse paralleling of common words and ideas. Thus, the first step is that of data collection. Are there triggers in the text that give the reader a reason to pause for a second appraisal, seeking larger patterns of recurring movement? Is there a sudden shift of an idea back along the path recently taken? Do the extremes of a passage reiterate a single idea in some reflexive form?

Secondly, according to Thomson, the suspected chiasm must be put to a critical test involving the use of his criteria for chiasm assessment in a particular manner. The procedure requires movement through the following specific steps:²⁸

Note whether there is a critical shift at the center of the suspected chiasm which clearly returns the thought back along the path recently taken.

Check for the possibility of a "frame passage" which either introduces or concludes a chiastic passage (or perhaps both), clearly setting the chiasm apart from its larger literary environment.

Analyze the passage to determine possible subunits of chiastically aligned elements which are themselves parallel in structure.

Extrapolate thematic relationships, realizing that these most often occur at the extremes of the passage and possibly also at or near the centering element.

Check to see whether there is a clear balance of length between the elements of the chiasm that occupy the first half of the design and those which follow the midpoint.

Assess the significance of the central element of the passage for the meaning or impact of the passage as a whole. There are most often a heightening and clarification of the main "point" of the narrative or a poetic implication in the central element itself. The center, rather than the beginning or ending, holds the interpretive key.

In response to the increased interest in chiastic studies in recent years, Thomson expresses wary skepticism toward simplistic exegetical efforts that find a plethora of chiastic development throughout biblical texts. He posits several limitations to these investigations that he believes will help scholars looking for chiasm to maintain a necessary academic rigor as they pursue their goals.

For one thing, he holds to the view that chiasm is strictly a device of words and phrases and not of themes.²⁹ In this regard he would not agree with Clark that themes might be chiastically arranged in a literary passage, even where the vocabulary and grammar may not appear so. Thomson calls this "chiasmus by headings,"³⁰ where the reader, rather than the author, views the larger contours of a literary unit and determines a recurrence of themes and ideas. "This produces a potentially circular argument," according to Thomson: "headings are interpretatively selected to create or bolster a chiasmus; it is then argued from the chiasmus that the selective choice of heading reflects the true interests of the author!"³¹ There must be a clear correspondence of terms, mirrored across a central axis, according to Thomson, in order for chiasm to be present in a passage.

After following Thomson's first instruction when seeking a possible chiasm, interpreters should allow Thomson's second limitation to shape further analysis of the text. As Thomson puts it, the "chiasmus will begin and end at a reasonable point."³² In his estimation, chiasm is generally

limited to short passages where clear reflexivity is immediately accessible. The longer the passage, even where repetitions, regressions, and *inclusios* are evident in the broader sweep, the more difficult it is to pin down either chiastic intent or the benefits of a chiastic reading.

Thomson is astute in these points. It is important that the paralleled elements of a passage emerge from the passage itself and are not imposed upon it by way of hopeful thematic projection on the part of the modern interpreter. Also, length certainly plays a crucial role in the clarity of chiastic approbation: the longer a passage is, the harder it becomes to determine whether, or in what clear manner, chiastic design pervades the whole.

What is not immediately apparent, however, is the basis for Thomson's rejection of any chiastic correspondence between themes and ideas that might not exactly repeat certain words or phrases in the paired sections of the chiasm. After all, micro-chiastic parallelism in the several lines of a poem often uses different terms to refer to a single thing or idea. It seems probable that, in a similar manner, paired sentences or paragraphs reflecting on common ideas or actions might use different terms or phrases to give shape to these considerations in macro-chiastic developments.

In the same way, there seems to be no clear basis for Thomson's adamant limitation of chiastic length to roughly fifteen verses. He offers no reason for denying chiasm to pericopes that extend beyond that arbitrary maximum other than his skepticism at some lengthy and seemingly contrived chiastic outlines, particularly those by Lund.

In essence, Thomson rigorously develops criteria for assessing micro-chiasm while denying the possibility of macro-chiasm as a literary device. At issue is whether chiasm is a literary device at work exclusively in relatively brief expressions of reflexive poetic parallelism and quickly told tales or whether it also functions on a broader level as a shaping tool for organizing multiple literary panels. Evidence of the presence of micro-chiasm in biblical poetry and short narrative is well documented.³³ Research into the possibility of identifying macro-chiasm as a literary tool at work in longer, multiple-panel biblical passages abounds³⁴ and requires a careful reflection on the relationship between the devices of rhetorical technique and the thought patterns at work in the crafting of narratives.

The heart of the discussion focuses on the question of whether there is a type of pervasive chiastic thought process at work in certain

cultures of antiquity that may have resulted, over time, in broadening the range of use of chiasmic reflexivity in literary expression. Is it possible for writers within those cultures to think chiasmically when developing ideas or narratives, thus producing macro-chiasmic patterns of literary development in passages that extend beyond several lines of poetry or single-panel stories?

Regardless of the limits Thomson places on the length of chiasmic passages, he believes that chiasmic patterns of thinking grew out of the practices of oral recitation and memorization in both the formal and informal training processes of ancient near-eastern cultures. He notes that "even Greek itself at one time was sometimes found written from left to right in one line and from right to left in the next."³⁵ It is his contention that chiasm is a communicative technique of the "cultural environment"³⁶ that gave rise to the scriptures of the Hebrew and Christian traditions. He even conjectures that this "ambilateralism" was responsible for a broadened use of chiasm beyond the shorter reflexive parallelism of poetry.³⁷

Thomson's work with micro-chiasmic studies invites a similar attention to precision and consistency in macro-chiasmic investigations. It suggests, further, that if there are literary movements in a text longer than fifteen verses which appear to function in a manner similar to the reflexive parallelism of words in micro-chiasm, these literary movements need to be governed and assessed by criteria that explain both thematic and conceptual parallels and grammatical and verbal parallels between the halves of the chiasm.

Extending the Reach: Carl Blomberg on Macro-Chiasm

Stanley Porter and Jeffrey Reed, like Thomson, proposed limiting the scope of chiasmic investigations to short passages that would be termed micro-chiasms. They do not believe that supposed macro-chiasms identified by other scholars are legitimate analyses, since, as they assert, "To date a convincing set of criteria for how to identify chiasm has not been developed."³⁸ In their view, there are at least three difficulties with the proposals of Lund and Clark.³⁹ First, most of the schemes are overly complex, with duplicated or restated criteria. Second, many of the criteria posited are difficult to quantify. Third, some of the criteria put forward have an "impressionistic" quality about them, resulting in assessments of macro-chiasm that are based largely on what Porter and Reed would term subjective "generalizations."⁴⁰

Porter and Reed rightly argue that unless more objective and measurable criteria are established, it will be impossible to use macro-chiasm in a standardized way as an interpretive tool in biblical or classical studies. Their challenge for someone to produce such criteria has already been answered, however, according to Boyd Luter and Michelle Lee,⁴¹ in theses put forward by Blomberg nearly a decade prior to their request.⁴² Concerned that “chiastic outlines have become so fashionable among biblical scholars” without scholarly consensus regarding the “detailed criteria which hypotheses of extended chiasmus must meet in order to be credible,” Blomberg proposed “a fairly rigid set of criteria” by which he hoped explorations in macro-chiasm would be assessed.⁴³

Blomberg found sufficient documentation of the extensive use of chiasm in the literature of antiquity to move present scholarship beyond a skeptical stance regarding its existence.⁴⁴ Further, he believed that chiasm “underlies numerous portions of Scripture where it has not usually been perceived,”⁴⁵ since “it was used far more widely in the ancient world than it is today.”⁴⁶

He then outlined his criteria for macro-chiasm in nine points, summarized as follows:

There must be a problem in perceiving the structure of the text in question which more conventional outlines fail to resolve. If a more conventional and straightforward structure can adequately account for the textual data, recourse to less obvious arrangements of the material would seem, at the very least, to risk obscuring what was already clear.

There must be clear examples of parallelism between the two “halves” of the hypothesized chiasmus to which commentators call attention, even when they propose quite different outlines for the text overall. In other words, the chiasmus must be based on actual verbal repetitions or clear thematic parallels in the text which most readers note irrespective of their overall synthesis. Otherwise, it is too simple to see what one wants to see and to impose on the text an alien structural grid.

Verbal (or grammatical) parallelism as well as conceptual (or structural) parallelism should characterize most, if not all, of the corresponding pairs of subdivisions. The repetitive nature of much biblical writing makes it very easy for general themes to recur in a variety of patterns.

The verbal parallelism should involve central or dominant imagery or terminology, not peripheral or trivial language. Ancient writers often employed key terms as catchwords to link passages together, although the material they considered central does not always match modern preconceptions of what is important.

Both the verbal and conceptual parallelisms should use words and ideas not regularly found elsewhere within the proposed chiasmus. Most unpersuasive proposals fail to meet this criterion; while the pairings suggested may be plausible, a little ingenuity can demonstrate equally close parallelism between numerous other pairs of passages which do not support a chiastic whole.

Multiple sets of correspondences between passages opposite each other in the chiasmus as well as multiple members of the chiasmus itself are desirable. A simple ABA' or ABB'A' pattern is so common to so many different forms of rhetoric that it usually yields few startlingly profound insights. Three or four members repeated in inverse sequence may be more significant. Five or more elements paired in sequence usually resist explanations which invoke subconscious or accidental processes.

The outline should divide the text at natural breaks which would be agreed upon even by those proposing very different structures to account for the whole. If a proposed chiasmus frequently violates the natural "paragraphing" of the text which would otherwise emerge, then the proposal becomes less probable.

The center of the chiasm, which forms its climax, should be a passage worthy of that position in light of its theological or ethical significance. If its theme were in some way repeated in the first and last passages of the text, as is typical in chiasmus, the proposal would become that much more plausible.

Finally, ruptures in the outline should be avoided if at all possible. Having to argue that one or more of the members of the reverse part of the structure have been shifted from their corresponding locations in the forward sequence substantially weakens the hypothesis; in postulating chiasmus, exceptions disprove the rule!⁴⁷

Blomberg's criteria for macro-chiasm show great care and insight. They retain the emphasis on strong parallelism and reflexivity present in Thomson's criteria for micro-chiasm as well as the emphasis on the heightened significance of the central element and the clear limits of the chiastic passage. At the same time, they recognize the possibility of "conceptual (or structural)" parallelism (criterion #4) which is an essential element of macro-chiasms, stretching beyond the simple verbal reflexivity and parallelism of micro-chiasms.

Blomberg, in fact, shows how these criteria function in an assessment of 2 Corinthians 1:12–7:16. He outlines the passage chiastically in the following manner:

- A 1:12–22 the Corinthians can rightfully boast in Paul
- B 1:23–2:13 grief and comfort over the painful letter; hope for forgiving the offender
- C 2:12–13 looking for Titus in Macedonia
 - D 2:14–4:6 a series of contrasts—belief vs. unbelief, centered on Christians as the letters of the living God, in glory being transformed into his image
 - E 4:7–5:10 surviving and triumphing despite every hardship
 - F 5:11–21 the theological climax: the ministry of reconciliation
 - E' 6:1–10 surviving and triumphing despite every hardship
 - D' 6:11–7:4 a series of contrasts—belief vs. unbelief, centered on Christians as the temple of the living God, in light being transformed into his holiness
- C' 7:5–7 finding Titus in Macedonia
- B' 7:8–13a grief and comfort over the painful letter; joy after forgiving the offender
- A' 7:13b–16 Paul can rightfully boast in the Corinthians⁴⁸

A review of this literary development in light of his nine criteria for the assessment of macro-chiasm shows all points are met. He also reviews briefly a number of other supposed chiastic analyses of other passages which conform to all, some, or a few of these criteria and thus show varying degrees of success or failure in providing beneficial interpretations.⁴⁹ Porter and Reed agree that Blomberg's criteria "improve upon" Clark's six-point revision of Lund's "laws,"⁵⁰ and they find Blomberg's first criterion "particularly relevant."⁵¹ Yet they retain an overall skeptical stance against any assessment of macro-chiasm in biblical literature.⁵² Porter and Reed see a "conflict" between the first criterion and the common concerns of criteria 2 and 6. They assume that no scholar could acknowledge parallel developments in a passage and then not provide some satisfactory structure for organizing the materials of the whole.⁵³ That, of course, has not been the case in a number of New Testament passages, most notably the book of James, where much effort has been made to ascertain a meaningful structure for the commonly perceived repetitive and parallel elements, usually with inconclusive results.⁵⁴

Further, when responding to Blomberg's seventh and ninth criteria (requiring any chiastic interpretation of a text to follow natural literary

breaks), Porter and Reed assume that if the breaks in a text are natural, this fact necessarily means that chiastic interpretation is not necessary.⁵⁵ As Blomberg has demonstrated in his review of the issues surrounding the interpretation of 2 Corinthians 1–7, this is simply not the case: although "every division in the proposed chiasmus appears as a major or minor break in the Nestle-Aland Greek NT and is supported by various commentaries,"⁵⁶ no other analysis of textual development has proven widely agreeable. It is, in fact, because "Paul's logic contains regular transitional paragraphs which can easily be taken as either concluding a previous thought or beginning a new thought" that no suitable linear understanding of the passage has emerged.⁵⁷ Similarly, common recognition of literary shifts in the Johannine farewell discourse has not brought a common sense of structure and has, for some, suggested an investigation into chiastic ordering of these passages.

Blomberg's criteria for assessing macro-chiasm appear to provide a reasonable and thorough measure by which to determine the possible existence and scope of chiastic paralleling in biblical and other texts. To date, there are no assessment criteria that exceed Blomberg's in either specificity or cohesiveness. Some, like Porter and Reed or Thomson, might argue with Blomberg that chiasm exists only on the micro level of twelve to fifteen lines at maximum and want to limit chiastic reflexive parallelism only to exact verbal or grammatical repetitions. If, however, as many others allow, chiastic reflexivity can also occur on a macro level of paralleled concepts and structures in narrative development, Blomberg's criteria are specific enough to guard against the excesses of those who would impose such outlines on the text rather than read them from the actual content of each passage.

It is thus fair to say that macro- as well as micro-chiasm is evident at various places throughout the literature of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Further, it appears that Thomson's criteria and method for locating and analyzing chiastic development on the micro-chiastic level are a beneficial refinement of Lund's initial "laws" regarding chiasm. Finally, Blomberg's criteria for the assessment of macro-chiasm have proved beneficial. They should serve well as tools to determine the validity of the thesis explored in the next section that the farewell discourse in John 13–17 can be read chiastically and that, when interpreted from that development, there is provided a new and important step in the continuing analysis of the passage.

Looking for Reflexive Parallelism

As noted, Thomson suggested that the first clue to chiasm in a passage is repetition and the second clue is the presence of a central element of heightened significance that calls attention to the reflexive mirroring of words and themes in the other elements of the passage across the midpoint of the text. In reading the development of John 13–17 as an unfolding narrative “plot,” the following movements emerge:⁵⁸ Jesus had announced, in 12:23ff, that his “hour” had come and that this hour would bring his death. As chapter 13 opens, it appears that Jesus is about to explain how this “hour” will affect his disciples (13:1). The process of setting in motion the execution apparatus is announced (13:2) but sidelined temporarily (until verse 18ff). The first major scene portrays Jesus washing the disciples’ feet (13:3–17). Because of the dialogue between Peter and Jesus (13:6–10), the impact of the scene appears to be that of the disciples gaining and retaining a spiritual connection with Jesus (13:8—“share [μέρος] with me”). This also appears to be the case because, as the conversation continues and Judas is identified as the betrayer (13:18–30), the narrator explains that “Satan entered into [Judas]” (13:27), with the result that Judas separates himself from Jesus and whatever glory there might be surrounding Jesus in this special hour, opting instead to go out into the night [νύξ] (13:30).

Now the “hour” apparently begins, and Jesus announces it with a summary statement regarding glorification, his leaving, and the command to love (13:35). These are rolled into one another with such continuity that they appear to be a single great declaration.

There is a brief period of dialogue with Peter (13:36–37), Thomas (14:5), Philip (14:8), and Judas (14:22) interacting with Jesus, raising questions in response to his statements. Peter has previously spoken to Jesus in both the foot-washing episode (13:6–9) and in the conversation in which Judas is identified as the betrayer (13:24–25). Peter seems to have a bold and assertive relationship with Jesus that prompts him to react quickly to Jesus’ actions and statements. After 13:36, however, the dialogue appears to be more roundtable, with different disciples entering the dialogue at various points. Thus, it appears at this point that the tone of the narrative shifts from action to a more formal expression of conversation and discourse.

Even though Peter asks Jesus where he is going (13:36), the focus turns immediately (and rather unexpectedly) to Peter’s denial of Jesus (13:37–38). The suddenness with which that topic enters the conversation at that particular point stands out. There was nothing in the context

to prod Jesus' challenging response to Peter. For some reason, the intervening verses (13:37–38) seem to move the dialogue somewhat abruptly in a different direction.

Chapter 14:1–14 unfolds with a fairly consistent movement. Jesus is going away to his Father's house (14:2–3) to take up his residence and prepare residences for the disciples. They will be able to travel the road to the Father's house, provided they attach themselves to Jesus (14:6). The unique connection between Jesus and his Father is further explained in 14:8–14, yet Jesus indicates that the disciples are also able to enter into this special relationship (14:11–14).

A new theme develops in 14:15. It is related to the previous section in terms of a call for the connectedness of the disciples with Jesus and through him with the Father. Yet, now the nature of that connectedness is spelled out as a ministry of the *παράκλητος* ("Advocate") (14:16) who is identified as the "Spirit of truth" (14:17). It is in this context that the connection between Father, Jesus, and disciples is confirmed and nurtured (14:18–24), leading back to a specific identification of the ministry of the "Advocate" again in 14:26. But the Advocate disappears from the scene until 15:26, and Jesus develops these themes no further until then.

Now the tone changes again. Rather than focusing on the relationship between Jesus, the Father, and the disciples, nurtured by the Advocate, Jesus speaks about his peace giving the disciples fortitude in the troubling times that will follow his departure. The language of 14:27 mirrors that of 14:1, the first time in the discourse that a specific repetition is apparent. There does not, however, appear to be a broader repetition of ideas or themes at this moment. Jesus instead continues the new theme of the peace that his disciples will receive through this knowledge, even in the context of a troubling situation.

The last phrase of 14:31 is enigmatic. Jesus suddenly says, "Rise, let us be on our way." Yet no movement appears to take place, and chapter 15 marches on into a clearly different, though related, element of discourse. It is apparent that the unifying theme of the first eight verses is Jesus' teaching about the vine and branches. At the heart of his monologue is a call and challenge for the disciples to "abide in me" [μείνατε ἐν ἐμοί] (15:4, 5, 6, 7), repeated in some form at least eight times.

At 15:9, there is a moment of indecisive apprehension for the reader. The Greek term *καθώς* ("As") sometimes signals the start of a new thought development. Yet there are three more references to "abide in" in 15:9–10, and these appear to wed the ideas of these verses very closely to the theme of 15:1–8. 15:11 seems to finish the thought begun in the

previous verses because of the reference to Jesus' joy being in the disciples [ἐν ὑμῖν], which appears to imply again the "abiding in" continuity.

With 15:12 we have a clear reiteration of 13:34. Not only that, but 15:17 repeats the mutual love command once again. The intervening verses pick up the theme of masters and servants first expressed in 13:16 and the exhortation to bear fruit from 15:1–8. They also reflect the commissioning theses of 13:31–33. The dominant theme of 15:12–17 seems to be an intentional repetition of the major ideas of 13:31–33.

As we move into 15:18ff, parallels with and repetitions of things stated earlier leap out with great constancy. 15:18–25 picks up the contrast between the power and attitude of the "world" [ὁ κόσμος] that appears prominent in 14:27–31. Similarly, 15:26–27 appears to be a reiteration of the words and ideas of 14:25–26. Suddenly it seems as if we are backing our way along the course recently travelled. 16:1–4a continues the themes of 15:26–27, giving substance to them in the specific situation of excommunication from synagogues. 16:4a ties 15:26–16:4a together as a package and again brings thoughts of repetition from 15:25.

Jesus' statement in 16:5 that "none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'" reminds us immediately of Peter's question to that effect back in 13:36. Yet the theme of 16:4b–15 is largely parallel to that of 14:15–24 where Jesus promises to send the *παράκλητος* ("Advocate") who strengthens those who know Jesus and the Father but works in opposition to whatever belongs to "the world."

16:16–28 brings back Jesus' talk of leaving "in a little while" and the comfort to be provided by the Father that was first presented in 14:1–14. In fact, just as at the center of the earlier passage where Thomas and Philip bring questions about the meaning of Jesus' words, so also at the center of this section the disciples as a group are given to questioning. The section ends similarly to the manner in which 14:1 began, with a straightforward declaration by Jesus that he is returning to the Father.

Then, when it seems as if clarity in all things has arrived (16:29) and the disciples are affirming confidence in the teachings Jesus has spoken, the dark shadows of 13:36–38 return. There, Jesus declared solidarity with the disciples in the trauma of the times ahead, and Jesus returned a prophecy of denial; here in 16:29–33, after the disciples together speak declarations of great faith, Jesus foretells their communal desertion from him.

As chapter 17 opens, Jesus takes command of the group in a way that is reminiscent of the beginning of chapter 13. Not only that, but Jesus repeats the line from 13:1 which declares that "the hour has come" (17:1).

In 13:3 the evangelist tells us that Jesus knew "that the Father had given all things into his hands." In 17:2 Jesus declares, in his prayer, that the Father "has given him authority over all people." Then, in parallel to the foot-washing episode in chapter 13, Jesus now announces in chapter 17 that he has prepared the disciples to belong to the Father. Further, he declares that all of them have, in fact, become one with the Father and Jesus "except the one destined to be lost" (17:12). This note about a contrary disciple who does not remain close to Jesus is located, in the flow of the prayer, in a position virtually identical to Jesus' declaration during the foot-washing ceremony that "not all of you are clean" (13:11).

As Jesus concludes his prayer in 17:21–24, he makes reference to the shared glory of the Father and himself, repeating again the theme (and almost the wording) of 13:31–33. The culmination of the prayer is a definitive declaration that shared love will become the norm (17:25–26). These words repeat, in fulfilled form, the injunction of the new commandment stated in 15:12–17 and earlier in 13:34–35.

Weighing the Evidence

From this reading of the farewell discourse, the first stage of Thomson's investigation is met. There is, indeed, repetition of terms and ideas that balance themselves in somewhat equivalent measure on either side of a pivotal center. In broad outline, the following repetitious elements are most noticeable in John 13–17:

Jesus is about to leave the disciples and go to the Father (13:1, 3, 33, 36; 14:2–4, 12, 28–29; 16:5–7, 16, 28).

Jesus will be betrayed by Judas (13:2, 11, 18, 21–30), disowned by Peter (13:38), and deserted by the Eleven (16:32).

The disciples are chosen by Jesus (13:18; 15:19).

Jesus issues the "new commandment" to love each other (13:34–35; 15:12–17).

"Asking" and "receiving" are encouraged (14:13–14; 16:23–24, 26).

"Obedience" to Jesus' "commands" is the sign of "love" for him (14:15, 21, 23–24; 15:9–10).

Jesus promises the coming of the *παράκλητος* ("Advocate") to "testify" in and through the disciples (14:16–18, 26; 15:26–27; 16:7–11, 12–15).

Jesus declares his "peace" upon the disciples (14:1, 27; 16:33).

Jesus promises "joy" (15:11; 16:20–22).

Jesus foretells the "hatred" of the world (15:18–25; 16:1–4).

Clearly, there is sufficient repetition of words and ideas in the Johannine farewell discourse to suggest the possibility of chiastic reflexivity. Virtually all who read John 13–17 take note of these obvious repetitions.⁵⁹

The second stage of chiastic investigation, according to Thomson, calls for a closer look at the correspondence between parallel repetitive sections and the manner in which the movement of thought in the elements relates to the conceptual development of the whole. Based on the movement of plot in the discourse, an initial broad understanding of the reflexive movement would look something like this:

- A Symbolic Union with Jesus (13:1–35)—an act of sanctification (foot washing)
- B Themes of Leaving, Denial, Trouble and Comfort (13:36–14:31)
- C Life Connections (15:1–17)
- B₁ Themes of Trouble, Comfort, Leaving and Denial (15:18–16:33)
- A₁ Symbolic Union with Jesus (17:1–26)—an act of sanctification (prayer)

Indeed, those who look for elements of parallelism that may be read chiastically in the Johannine farewell discourse begin here.⁶⁰ Yet while the simplicity and thematic clarity of the above chiastic reading has inherent integrity, it is too brief to deal with the larger complexity of the two major discourse sections, 13:35–14:31 and 15:18–16:33.

John 13–17 as Macro-Chiasm

The chiastic reading of John 13–17 presented in this study results in an interpretation of the farewell discourse that addresses a number of important issues in Fourth Gospel studies. It offers, for instance, an intelligible role for the repeated “love command,” showing it to be part of the chiastic framing and centering of the discourse as a whole. Furthermore, it highlights the significance of the vine and branches teaching in 15:1–17, allowing it to stand prominently as the turning point around which the discourse is built and using its metaphor as the guiding principle by which the rest of the teachings of the discourse hold together.⁶¹ Finally, it balances the introductory narrative—shaped by its expression of union with Jesus at entrance into the hour of glory—with the concluding prayer, where, once again, union with Jesus is shown to take place in the experience of the hour of glory.⁶²

Indeed, this approach has potential for bringing together some of the best understandings developed by the otherwise-divergent synchronic and diachronic readings of John 13–17. Each of those readings is based on a linear movement of either the text or some perceived psychological

development behind the text. The synchronic readings too quickly dismiss the disjunctures of the passage at its literary level as if these do not matter much. The diachronic readings, on the other hand, cannot seem to find a comprehensive understanding of the text as it stands, focusing instead upon the meaning of portions of the discourse and their presumed history.

If, however, the sections of the discourse as they have been collected and edited in the final redaction hold together in a chiastic reading, the disjunctions take on new significance. The strange ending of chapter 14 can be recognized as both a lingering indication of redactive editing as well as a signal announcing the move from one section to the next, perhaps even hinting at some of the multiple levels of meaning Thomas Brodie suggested, particularly with reference to the crowning apex of chiastic design that follows in the vine and branches teaching of 15:1–17.⁶³ The repetitious elements of the discourse begin to make sense as parallel teachings on common themes. The character of the vine and branches teaching becomes more obvious in its role as the chiastic pivot, shaping the flow of meaning for the discourse as a whole. Jesus' ministry is one that incorporates the disciples into the glory he shares with the Father. He creates the context in which they will abide in him (13:1–35; 17:1–26), producing a community of mutual love. If they should fail to abide in him, life becomes very dark (13:36–38; 16:29–33). Therefore, in view of Jesus' imminent departure, abiding in Jesus takes on eschatological overtones (14:1–14; 16:16–28). The *παράκλητος* ("Advocate") becomes the spiritual link by which the disciples are able to abide in a physically absent Jesus (14:15–26; 16:4b–15), and threats to disrupting this linkage create a challenging context for living faithfully (14:27–31; 15:18–16:4a).

This chiastic reading of the discourse goes beyond previous approaches to John 13–17 in several ways. First, it shows the significance of the central teaching of the vine and branches as the focus of the passage rather than just a thematic turn along the way. In the other readings of the discourse, emphasis is often placed upon the meal (e.g., Brown, Schnackenburg), on the discourse as a farewell (e.g., Segovia, Brodie), or even upon the history of the community in which the discourse is transmitted (e.g., Painter).

Second, the prominent sections that begin (the outward union of the disciples with Jesus through the washing in the foot-washing scene) and end (the inner union of the disciples with Jesus through the sanctification offered in his prayer) the discourse are understood as parallel explications of the central theme: "Abide in me!" The discourse holds

together in this reading, and the foot-washing scene is directly linked to the theology of the passage. Similarly, the prayer in chapter 17 is neither the climax nor the summary of the discourses. Instead, it functions to conclude the discourses as a sort of reflection on the foot-washing scene, confirming the intimate connection between Jesus and his disciples.

Third, the otherwise cumbersome repetition of themes, from the small references focusing on denial to the larger investigations of the work of the Spirit, would be understood in this reading as a means by which the flow of the discourse in its entirety would be shepherded along a meaningful movement of ascending and descending paired stairs, bringing the reader up toward or down from the central thrust of the whole.

In this manner, a chiastic reading of the Johannine farewell discourse provides new insight. If the text of the Fourth Gospel as it has come to us, with the farewell discourse developed in its present formation, is a finished product designed to convey meaning and significance related to the person and teachings of Jesus, the chiastic reading of John 13–17 presented here offers an interpretive approach that can provide a new way in which to bring together the insights provided by both the diachronic and synchronic readings of the text. Moreover, it encourages recognition that the multiple sections of the farewell discourse reflect each other and build upon one another in a manner that allows the whole to become more than the sum of its parts.⁶⁴

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Notes

1. Chiasm is the term used to describe the literary flow of a passage in which each element of the first half of the poem, story, or discourse is mirrored in a similar element in the second half, inverted in order. Most often, though not always, a center element

will be unparalleled, and it will carry a unique statement of the most significant idea intended by the author.

2. Nils W. Lund, "The Presence of Chiasmus in the Old Testament," *AJSL* 46 (January 1930): 104–26; "The Presence of Chiasmus in the New Testament," *JR* 10 (January 1930): 74–93; "The Influence of Chiasmus upon the Structure of the Gospels," *ATR* 13 (1931): 27–48; "The Influence of Chiasmus upon the Structure of the Gospel according to Matthew," *ATR* 13 (1931): 405–33; "The Literary Structure of Paul's Hymn to Love," *JBL* 50, no. 4 (1931): 266–76; "Chiasmus in the Psalms," *AJSL* 49 (July 1933): 281–312; H. H. Walker and N. W. Lund, "The Literary Structure of the Book of Habakkuk," *JBL* 53 (December 1934): 355–70.

3. Nils W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in the Formgeschichte* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942).

4. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 28.

5. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 28–29.

6. Lund, "Influence of Chiasmus upon the Structure of the Gospels," 27–48.

7. Cf. R. Alan Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," *NTS* 27 (October 1981): 1–31; Jeff Staley, "The Structure of John's Prologue: Its Implications for the Gospel's Narrative Structure," *CBQ* 48 (April 1986): 241–64.

8. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 40–41, emphasis in original.

9. In a review of Lund's book in *JTS*, "Reviews," s.v. "Chiasmus in the New Testament, a Study in Formgeschichte, by Nils Wilhelm Lund," 45 (January 1944): 82. T. W. Manson suggested that the term "law" is excessive.

10. Ian H. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters* (JSNTSup 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 213–19.

11. Cf. Culpepper, "Pivot of John's Prologue," 6–7.

12. Cf. Stanley E. Porter and Jeffrey T. Reed, "Philippians as a Macro-Chiasm and Its Exegetical Significance," *NTS* 44 (April 1998): 213–31.

13. Culpepper, "Pivot of John's Prologue," 6–7.

14. David J. Clark, "Criteria for Identifying Chiasm," *LB* 35 (September 1975): 63–72.

15. Clark, "Criteria for Identifying Chiasm," 63.

16. Clark, "Criteria for Identifying Chiasm," 66. See also Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 32–34; Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 35–40.

17. Clark, "Criteria for Identifying Chiasm," 68–69.

18. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 27.

19. Lund, according to Thomson, lacks precision in his quest for chiasm by ignoring the obvious possibility of direct parallels between chiastic halves. It is at this point in his rewriting of Lund's criteria that Thomson is beginning to push in the direction of clearly articulated word and phrase parallels as necessary for chiastic design. In this, he rejects Lund's thematic parallelism and, with it, much of Clark's recommendation regarding the possibility of multidimensional layers of chiastic meaning.

20. John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structure, Analysis, Exegesis* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981), 13.

21. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 28.

22. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 29.

23. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 29.

24. These criteria, according to Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, rule out the more speculative ends to which chiasm has sometimes been pushed, such as "chiasmus by headings" without reference to the substance of the text itself (p. 30), the selective use of certain recurring words or thoughts while bypassing other instances of the same words or thought which simply do not fit the projected chiasm (p. 31), ignoring nonbalancing elements in a particular passage (pp. 31–32), and using chiasm as a quick answer in situations where other scholarship has failed to reach some degree of consensus in interpretation (p. 32).

25. Clark, "Criteria for Identifying Chiasm," 63.

26. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 33.

27. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 33.

28. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 27.

29. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 30–31.

30. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 30.

31. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 31.

32. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 29.

33. Cf. Anthony R. Ceresko, "The Chiastic Word Pattern in Hebrew," *CBQ* 38 (July 1976): 303–11; Anthony R. Ceresko, "The Function of Chiasmus in Hebrew Poetry," *CBQ* 40 (January 1978): 1–10; Angelico di Marco, "Der Chiasmus in der Bibel," *LB* 36 (1975): 21–79; 37 (1976): 49–68; 44 (1979): 3–70; John T. Willis, "The Juxtaposition of Synonymous and Chiastic Parallelism in Tricola in Old Testament Hebrew Psalm Poetry," *VT* 29 (October 1979): 465–80.

34. Cf. Peter F. Ellis, *Matthew: His Mind and His Message* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1974); Peter F. Ellis, *Seven Pauline Letters* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1982); Peter F. Ellis, *The Genius of John: A Composition-Critical Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1984); M. Philip Scott, "Chiastic Structure: A Key to the Interpretation of Mark's Gospel," *BTB* 15, no. 1 (1985): 17–26; Charles H. Talbert, "Artistry and Theology: An Analysis of the Architecture of Jn 1,19–5,47," *CBQ* 32 (July 1970): 341–66; Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*.

35. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 21. As evidence of this βουστοφηδόν, he notes extant manuscripts containing copies of Solon's Laws written in this fashion.

36. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 22.

37. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 22–24. Cf. H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956); Augustine Stock, "Chiastic Awareness and Education in Antiquity," *BTB* 14, no. 1 (1984): 23–27.

38. Porter and Reed, "Philippians as a Macro-Chiasm," 221.

39. And with many who attempt chiastic interpretations based upon their methods. Cf., e.g., John Ashton, *Studying John: Approaches to the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 153.

40. Porter and Reed, "Philippians as a Macro-Chiasm," 218–19.

41. A. Boyd Luter and Michelle V. Lee, "Philippians as Chiasmus: Key to the Structure, Unity and Theme Questions," *NTS* 41 (January 1995): 89–101.

42. Craig Blomberg, "The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1–7," *CTR* 4, no. 1 (1989): 3–20.

43. Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians," 5.

44. Besides Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, Blomberg points to the "voluminous catalog" of Angelico di Marco, *Il Chiasma nella Bibbia: Contributi di Stilistica Strutturale* (Torino: Marietti, 1980), in Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians," 5.

45. Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians," 5.

46. Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians." Cf. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 36: "The fact that modern readers of New Testament Greek may struggle to identify a chiasmic structure may say more about the modern cast of mind than about the presence and relevance of chiasmus. It may well be, therefore, that the readers (or even the hearers) of a particular epistle of Paul's would be aware of the presence of chiasmus because of a much more highly developed consciousness of chiasmic patterns resulting from its prevalence in the languages of their day." Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), believes that the link between the micro-chiasm of literary technique and the macro-chiasm of narrative has its origins in the art of storytelling and the manner in which oral recitations have a tendency to come full circle in thought processes from beginning to end. First, chiasmic inversion (repetition of terms and ideas across a midpoint) and *inclusio* (returning to an original expression or its variation to bring a tale to completion) aid in memorization. With its balance of related words, themes, and sentence structure, chiasm offers a way to organize and connect the elements of a prose or poetic recitation. Where details of a story must be carried along from generation to generation in the mind rather than on paper, these aids to memorization become very important. Second, chiasmically developed thought is primarily inductive rather than deductive. No "thesis" is stated at the beginning, to be aided and supported by syllogistic logic. Instead, the "point" of the narrative approaches in measured anticipation and then is brought back to its home turf with deepened insight. Third, there is inherent artistic beauty to chiasmically ordered communication. The skill of the storyteller is at stake. Both a well-told story and the apparent sagacity of its teller are a product of practice and repetition.

47. Luter and Lee, "Philippians as Chiasmus," 95–97, adopt these criteria as the basis for their investigation of a chiasmic structure to Philippians, though their examples of "clear parallelism between the two 'halves' of the chiasm" (criterion #2) are not convincing. At best, their statement of the divisions of the text seems somewhat arbitrary (criterion #7), and the use of the Pauline "travelogue" in Phil 2:17–3:1 as the "climax" of the chiasmic development (criterion #8) presents a strange twist on the usual interpretations of the letter. Indeed, rather than disproving the value of Blomberg's criteria for chiasmic assessment, they have affirmed it, indicating the manner in which it appears to undermine their own attempt at macro-chiasmic analysis.

48. Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians," 8–9.

49. Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians," 7–8.

50. Porter and Reed, "Philippians as a Macro-Chiasm," 220.

51. Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians," 219.

52. Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians," 221.

53. Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians."

54. Cf., e.g., Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 22–29. Interestingly, Davids suggests that a type of chiasmic ordering may be helpful in finding a meaningful relationship between the parallel themes and terms occurring in the letter.

55. Porter and Read, "Philippians as a Macro-Chiasm," 220.

56. Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians," 9–10, 14.

57. Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians," 14.

58. Cf. R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 77–98. See also the method of reading the biblical text

described by Charles H. Talbert in *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 1–6, and in *Reading Corinthians: A Literary and Theological Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), xiii.

59. Cf. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (AB 29 & 29a; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966, 1970), 588–94.

60. Cf. Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (SP Series 4; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1998), 24.

61. Spiritual attachment to Jesus brings one into the circle of divine glory (13:1–30; 17:1–26), safeguards against the tendencies toward denial (13:36–38; 16:29–33), creates a context in which Jesus' departure holds comfort (14:1–14; 16:16–28), is given substance by way of the Spirit (14:15–26; 16:4b–15), and provides endurance in the face of persecution by the world (14:27–31; 15:18–16:4a).

62. Note that in each instance, Judas is removed at the time of the cleansing motif and is separated from the subsequent glory: 13:18, 17:12.

63. Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 437–40.

64. For a more complete treatment of these things, with additional data on biblical chiastic expressions and passages, along with a comparison of this reading of John 13–17 alongside several other prominent approaches, see Wayne Brouwer, *The Literary Development of John 13–17: A Chiastic Reading* (SBLDS; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000).

From “Linguistic Turn” and Hebrews Scholarship to *Anadiplosis Iterata*

The Enigma of a Structure

Gabriella Gelardini

In 1963, when the “linguistic turn” had evidently taken hold of New Testament studies, Albert Vanhoye, a linguistically trained Catholic priest, published a monograph entitled *La structure littéraire de l'épître aux Hébreux*.¹ The manifold reactions to his refined literary-rhetorical approach and conclusions in favor of a concentric structure oscillated between euphoric approval and offensive disapproval. Along with its translation into German (1979/1980) and a decade later into English (1989), Vanhoye's study influenced and stimulated Hebrews scholarship like none other in the twentieth century.

Vanhoye and the so-called French school of Hebrews scholarship carried out what the “linguistic turn” had heralded: the turn to language. From the very outset of this philosophical movement, however, language was studied along two lines: the structuralist line focused on the structure and logic of language, and the pragmatic one maintained interest in its use. The first section of this essay provides a short history of ideas and highlights issues relevant to biblical studies.

While the French school engaged mainly in structuralism, the two subsequent schools, the German and the American, turned to pragmatics. Each school made key contributions to advancing the scholarly understanding and interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Section two considers their history, methods, structures, and main theological emphases.

Based on the distinction between structure and pragmatics and on the three key insights of Hebrews scholarship—concentric structure, homiletic form, and covenant theology—the third section formulates a

new structural proposal. I aim to demonstrate that the argumentation on the macrostructural level follows a concentric catena (or *anadiplosis iterata*), whereas that on the microstructural level operates in terms of concentric circles of thought (*Gedankenkreise*) throughout the entire book. The generated result allows for an interpretative comparison of sister paragraphs and generates a hermeneutical key capable of placing all parts of the book into a logical and coherent whole.

History of Ideas

Linguistic Turn

Linguistics claims cult status in biblical exegesis. Given the nature of this literary craft, this propensity seems to suggest itself. The circumstances leading up to it, however, reside in the so-called “linguistic turn” that originated in England and subsequently took hold of philosophy in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Shifting from neoidealistic to scientific concepts, the “linguistic turn” initially resembled the attempt to resolve traditional philosophical problems by analyzing the meaning of related terminology and subsequently of human language *per se*. This procedure, however, came at the price of eventually forsaking the long-believed unity of language and its represented reality.

Generally speaking, we can distinguish two traditions: on the one hand, analytical philosophy—represented chiefly by Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), Rudolf Carnap (1891–1970), and Willard Van Orman Quine (1908–2000)—attempted to clarify philosophical language by means of formal logic. On the other hand, ordinary language philosophy—exemplarily represented by George Edward Moore (1873–1958), Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), Gilbert Ryle (1900–1976), and John Langshaw Austin (1911–1960)—sought to provide clarification by analyzing the colloquial use of philosophical terminology.

The two traditions revealed early two possible viewpoints with regard to language analysis: (1) language itself—its system, its logic, and its structure—and (2) language for its use and pragmatics. Avram Noam Chomsky (1928–) introduced a third aspect: the capacity of language production or language competence.²

Structuralism

The analysis of language as a structured system became important in the 1950s and 1960s within the intellectual movement of structuralism, which originated in France. Published posthumously and edited as early

as 1916 following its reconstruction by two of his former students on the basis of lecture manuscripts and student notes taken at the University of Geneva, Ferdinand de Saussure's (1857–1913) *Cours de linguistique générale* became generally regarded as the seminal structuralist work.³ The acceptance of the *Cours*, however, took a long time.

Whereas linguists had traditionally looked at the history or etymology of language to explain its meaning, the *Cours*, so to speak, performed a Kantian turn immanent to language by placing the production of meaning and regulations into language itself. Saussure considered language—*langue*—a structured system from which he distinguished the individual linguistic utterances—*parole*.

Modern linguists widely accept this central idea of language as a structured system. Notwithstanding this common denominator, various schools emerged from linguistic structuralism: for instance, the Prague school and its theory of functionalism (Roman Jakobson, Nikolaj S. Trubetzkoy), the Copenhagen school and its theory of glossematics (Louis Hjelmslev), and the American school with its descriptivism and distributionalism (Leonard Bloomfield).

Apart from linguistics, structuralism proved profoundly influential in other areas within humanities as well. First and foremost, it affected the study of literature, as evidenced by the work of Roland Barthes (1915–1980),⁴ Algirdas Julien Greimas (1917–1992),⁵ and Vladimir Yakovlevich Propp (1895–1970),⁶ who laid foundations for narrative criticism. It also influenced the anthropology of religions, where Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009)⁷ applied Saussurian ideas to the description and analysis of myths in prephilosophical societies. Finally, it helped to shape sociology, where Barthes (once more) and Umberto Eco (1932–2016)⁸ proceeded to apply structuralistic ideas to modern societies, arguing that here too the meaning of cultural forms becomes evident in relation to a structured system of signs for which the term semiotics was coined.⁹

Poststructuralism

Structuralism, the last modern scientific attempt to devise an interpretational system of the cosmos, which assumed metaphysical dimensions in Lévi-Strauss's version, provoked criticism and gave rise to poststructuralism.

The protagonists of the methodologically heterogeneous poststructuralism dismissed the idealistic consequences of classical structuralism, albeit without discarding its instruments wholesale. They critiqued both the concept of a closed structure being in effect beyond history as well

as the idea of a center existing above this structure. Instead, they tried to think of the existence of decentered structures, such as that of Barthes in the field of text theory, Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) in the field of philosophy (by applying deconstruction), Michel Foucault (1926–1984) in historiography (by analyzing power discourses), and Jacques Lacan (1901–1981) in the field of psychoanalysis. They asserted that neither the identity of the subject (author) nor the identity of signs are certain, and that meaning instead relates to context. This insight substantiated the rhetoricity of all communication, which engendered the new rhetorical criticism in the 1980s and furthermore instigated a shift from the analysis of language as a structured system toward the analysis of language in its contextual and pragmatic use.¹⁰

Cultural Turn

Poststructuralism was succeeded by the cultural turn, and the cultural turn itself includes a variety of turns, of which the last one seems to be the so-called iconic turn.¹¹

But I shall focus on the “linguistic turn” and shall now consider biblical criticism to show how this philosophical concept has influenced Hebrews scholarship in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Hebrews Scholarship in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

History

Historical critical exegesis arrived as a much-needed rationalistic response to the dogmatic and single-verse-oriented approach of German Protestant orthodoxy.¹²

The historical interest subsequently taken in Hebrews scholarship occurred as an expression of this intellectual climate. Yet this historical quest circled mainly around the ancient dilemma of the authorship of Hebrews and culminated in Friedrich Bleek’s outstanding two-volume introduction and commentary (1828–1840) in which he unquestionably proved that Paul was not its author. At the same time, however, Bleek quickly exhausted the historical quest.¹³ Some forty years later, this prompted another eminent scholar—a friend of Friedrich Nietzsche’s—to draw a symptomatic and pessimistic conclusion, with which most Hebrews scholars will be familiar (or at least with the italicized passage):¹⁴

Es liegt im Wesen aller Kanonisation ihre Objecte unkenntlich zu machen, und so kann man denn auch von allen Schriften unseres neuen Testaments sagen, dass sie im Augenblick ihrer Kanonisierung aufgehört haben verstanden zu werden. Sie sind in die höhere Sphäre einer ewigen Norm für die Kirche versetzt worden, nicht ohne dass sich über ihre Entstehung, ihre ursprünglichen Beziehungen und ihren ursprünglichen Sinn ein dichter Schleier gebreitet hätte. Was sich aber in dieser Beziehung von den meisten neutestamentlichen Schriften nur unter gewissen Einschränkungen behaupten lässt ist vom Hebräerbrief, einer der eigenthümlichsten unter ihnen, im strengsten Sinne wahr. Man kann von diesem Brief, mit Anwendung einer seiner eigenen seltsamsten Allegorien auf ihn, sagen, dass er im Kanon vor dem nach seiner historischen Entstehung fragenden Betrachter wie ein *melchisedekitisches Wesen ohne Stammbaum* dasteht. Wer hat ihn geschrieben? Wo und wann ist er geschrieben worden, und an wen ist er ursprünglich gerichtet gewesen?—Man weiss es nicht. Auf alle diese Fragen hat die Tradition entweder gar keine Antwort, oder sie beantwortet sie doch in anderer Art als bei den übrigen Schriften des Neuen Testaments. Sie sind daher, wovon aus der neueren Geschichte der Auslegung des Hebräerbriefs nur zu viel zu erzählen ist, gänzlich der Hypothese preisgegeben und werden mit dem gegenwärtigen Bestande der Quellen zur Geschichte des Urchristenthums niemals mit Gewissheit zu beantworten sein.

All canonization by nature makes its object unrecognizable. Thus one can say that all New Testament writings stopped being understood at the moment of their canonization. Canonization shifted them into the higher sphere of an eternal norm for the church where a thick veil spread over the circumstances of their emergence and their original relations and meaning. What one maintains with respect to most New Testament writings only under certain conditions, however, holds true in the strictest sense in regard to the Epistle to the Hebrews as one of the most characteristic among them. Concerning the historical emergence of this letter, one can apply its own inherent and most peculiar allegory: it stands in the canon like a *Melchizedekan being without genealogy*. Who wrote it? Where and when was it written? At whom was it originally addressed? We do not know. The tradition has either no answer at all to these questions or answers them in view of the other New Testament writings. These questions are therefore wholly exposed to the hypothesis about which the newer history of interpretation of Epistle to the Hebrews tells only too much and, with the present inventory of sources on the history of early Christianity, may never be answered with certainty.

Franz Overbeck wrote these lines in 1880 in Basel where he became professor of New Testament Exegesis and Old Church History after his departure from the University of Jena.

The “linguistic turn,” that is, the turn toward the text occurring at this time, proved useful for Hebrews scholarship. It gave rise to the first of three schools that made an impact in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. I shall outline the achievements of these schools and their shortcomings below.¹⁵

Under the influence of structuralism, the French school—starting in 1902 with F. Thien¹⁶ and followed by Léon Vaganay,¹⁷ Albert Descamps,¹⁸ and Rafael Gyllenberg¹⁹—introduced new and important insights into the study of the Book of Hebrews. They observed the announcement of themes, hook words, thematic words, and changes in genre. Their method—literary-rhetorical criticism—was implemented in its most refined fashion in the work of Albert Vanhoye in 1963, who added two further observations, namely inclusion and symmetry.²⁰ As many argued, the work of Louis Dussaut in 1981 led their method *ad absurdum*.²¹ Vanhoye, the French Catholic, had studied linguistics—prior to theology—just as de Saussure’s *Cours* began taking hold of French intellectuals.²² Their prioritizing of the text at the expense of historical and theological aspects was, as it were, revolutionary. While their accomplishments lay definitively in the area of textual composition, the chief theological thrust remained to this day exclusively Christological.

By contrast, their compositional accomplishments did not thoroughly convince scholars. The missing correspondence of form and content underwent critique in particular, and that created momentum for the German school during and especially after the Second World War in the early 1960s. In reaction to the French school, scholars such as Ernst Käsemann,²³ Otto Michel,²⁴ Wolfgang Nauck,²⁵ and later Erich Gräßer²⁶ emphasized content and applied thematic criticism. This allowed them to raise awareness of the paraenetic material. The main theological emphasis subsequently shifted from Christology to paraenesis. This shift produced the form-critical side effect—which influenced the American school—that perceived Hebrews as a sermon mainly in the context of the ancient synagogue.

Against the backdrop of the rise of rhetorical and new rhetorical criticism in the 1980s, the early American school appeared most closely associated with the accomplishments of the German and French schools with regard to the rhetorical character of Hebrews. Scholars such as George W. Buchanan,²⁷ Harold W. Attridge,²⁸ and Craig R. Koester²⁹

applied rhetorical criticism and frequently disregarded the rather simplistic structural solutions of the German school. They opted instead for a five-partite structure similar to the French school, albeit on the basis of ancient rhetorical paradigms. In the tradition of Buchanan, the main achievement of the early American school was the rehabilitation of covenant theology in Hebrews, which—beginning with Attridge—expressed itself in a dual covenantal-Christological emphasis. Notwithstanding the discovery of Jewish covenant theology, their method of rhetorical criticism—except for that of Buchanan—focused more on Hellenistic-Roman traditions at the expense of Hellenistic-Jewish literary traditions. Probably due to the triumph of pragmatics in the context of structural and poststructural linguistics since the late 1980s, members of the younger American school have further elaborated the rhetoricity of Hebrews first postulated by the early school. Scholars such as Linda Lloyd Neeley,³⁰ George H. Guthrie,³¹ Kenneth Schenck,³² Cynthia Long Westfall,³³ and most recently John Paul Heil³⁴ have applied discourse analysis or text-linguistics and narrative criticism with its particular interest in the rhetorical effect of the text on its addressees. Another group of younger scholars—such as John Dunnill (cultural anthropology),³⁵ David A. deSilva (socio-rhetorical criticism),³⁶ and Ellen Bradshaw Aitken (political-ideological criticism)³⁷—has applied methods of nonliterary structuralism.

With the exception of a few approaches adopted by female scholars such as Mary Rose D'Angelo,³⁸ Cynthia Briggs Kittredge,³⁹ Ulrike Wagener,⁴⁰ and Gabriella Gelardini,⁴¹ who apply methodological insights from poststructuralism—namely feminist biblical hermeneutics—Hebrews scholarship, as might have become clear, remains a stronghold of structural methods.

While taking into account that it is a method that generates a structure and a structure that generates one or multiple textual centers, that is, main theological emphases, what can we learn from these three schools with regard to the structure of Hebrews?

Methods

The demarcation of texts requires a method. We see such a method even applied in antiquity, for instance, considering the *kephalaia*, the practice of inserting titles into manuscripts. I mention this because not every Hebrews scholar considered it necessary—James Moffatt and his colleague Theodore H. Robinson, for instance, explicitly opted for an agnostic approach.⁴²

The application of methods ought to be explicit. Astonishingly, most scholars fail to address what seems obvious; instead they apply their methods implicitly, especially in relation to thematic criticism.

The application of a method must be thorough. For instance, while most thematic approaches demarcate subsections, they frequently neglect to demonstrate the relation or the logic linking of certain subsections to a section and of certain sections to a main section.

The application of multiple methods is part of common sense in Hebrews scholarship. One of the first scholars to demonstrate this was Walter G. Übelacker (1989).⁴³ The application of multiple methods, however, must be performed in a transparent and comprehensible manner, something that is lacking in some sociorhetorical and textlinguistic approaches. Only interpretations that disclose their underlying presuppositions and the various analytical and interpretive steps taken are fair and ethical.

The choice of a method or methods must consider the function that it or they ought to serve. Thus, thematic and/or literary-rhetorical criticism is useful if the focus lies on textual logic and structure. Discourse analysis best serves a pragmatic interest, that is, an interest in the addressee. A joint textual and pragmatic focus calls for the application of both methods (and possibly even of additional methods). A thorough understanding of the text remains indispensable, and all findings arrived at through the application of various complex methods must ultimately measure up to the text.

Structures

Current Hebrews scholarship assumes the integrity of the text. Most scholars have thus proposed a text center or—beginning with Vanhoye—a concentric three- or five-partite structure on the basis of production aesthetics.⁴⁴ With the exception of Westfall,⁴⁵ all scholars—Vanhoye,⁴⁶ Neeley,⁴⁷ Guthrie,⁴⁸ Gelardini,⁴⁹ as well as John W. Welch⁵⁰—who have undertaken detailed structural analyses have observed symmetries on the macrostructural level; numerous scholars, moreover, have observed symmetries on the microstructural level. Without any doubt, however, Hebrews scholarship owes the most fruitful impact regarding structure to Vanhoye, and subsequent scholarship is advised not to dismiss his original insight of a concentric composition.

By contrast, both the beginning and the end of the supposed centric part remain subject to dispute. Simplistically speaking, the largest group of scholars holds that the center commences either in Heb 4:14,

arguing mostly for a wide-spanning inclusion with a correspondence between Heb 4:(11)14–16 and 10:19–23(25),⁵¹ or in Heb 7:1. Correspondingly for most scholars, the centric section ends either in chapter 10 at verse 18—or in chapter 12 at verse 29. These scholars usually perceive the climax somewhere in the central section in either chapter 8 or 9. Interestingly however, those three scholars, who have applied discourse analysis—Neeley, Guthrie, and Westfall—all identify the climax in the final section or rather in Heb 12:18–24(29).⁵²

The structural proposals presented so far seem to fall short in one or several of the following areas: the correspondence between structure and content, the relation between structure and the many and important quotations from the Hebrew Bible, and the correspondence between structure and genre on the basis of ancient production and reception aesthetics. This seems odd, especially in light of the fact that scholars by and large perceive the theological message of Hebrews as a unity.

Main Theological Emphases

Generally speaking, Hebrews scholarship has overcome Christocentric exclusivity with regard to the choice of its main theological emphasis. Covenant theology in particular has attracted, and quite rightly continues to attract, growing attention, among others in the work of Attridge, Dunnill, Koester, Knut Backhaus, and Gelardini.⁵³

Certain methods and their resulting structures do not necessarily produce a typical theological emphasis. For instance, Thien's five-partite structure emphasizes paraenesis,⁵⁴ and Eduard Riggenbach's three-partite structure highlighted Christology.⁵⁵ Rather, a scholar's particular milieu or context would appear to influence where he or she places the main theological emphasis. Along these lines, it is hardly accidental that the French-Italian Catholic context promotes a high-priest Christology up to this day, or that paraenesis is advanced mainly by scholars based in post-Second World War Germany, and that covenant theology was first proposed in the mostly Protestant American context of the 1970s.

In conclusion, the following new proposal takes into account the three great accomplishments of twentieth-century Hebrews scholarship: the concentric structure of the French school, the homiletic form of the German school, and the covenant theology of the American school (see *History*). The method applied to generate the structure I consider to be explicit, thorough, transparent, and considerate of the function that it ought to serve (see *Methods*). The subsequently generated structure demonstrates the correspondence between structure and content,

between structure and the central quotations, and between structure and homiletic form (see *Structures*). And finally, the resulting theological emphasis is considered logical and corresponding to method and structure (see *Main Theological Emphases*).

Structural Analysis: A New Proposal

The following structural analysis and subsequent proposal is only one out of seven methodological steps that I took in interpreting Hebrews.⁵⁶ Although I started out from structure, this analysis continually developed, along with its interpretation, as I proceeded through the various steps. The results allowed me additionally to draw conclusions between structure and homiletic form.⁵⁷

Method

Presupposing the text's integrity, the structural analysis served the function of gaining an initial interpretive understanding of the text and its compositional logic. This approach helped to transcend—where necessary—the medieval chapter and verse divisions. From the viewpoint of structural text theory, a text is a text because the elements of the linguistic expressions contained therein refer to each other, and they can only be understood in relation to each other as well as to the immediate intertext.⁵⁸

In my first reading—the structural analysis—I applied a combined method, which allowed me to demarcate sections in respect to content (including the central quotations) and form: first and foremost, I paid attention to three thematic aspects of content, and second, I looked at three formal, literary-rhetorical aspects.

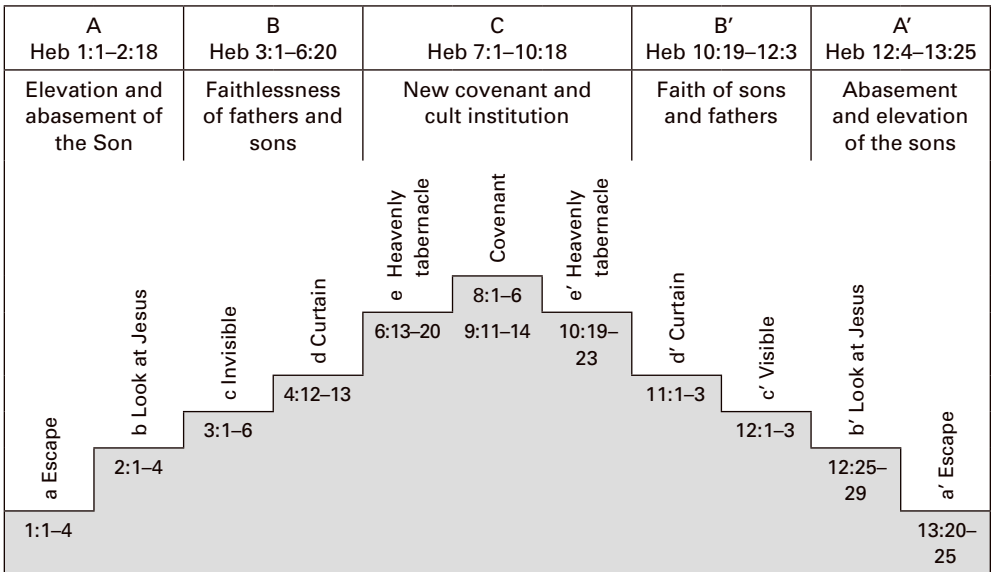
With regard to the thematic aspects, and in relation to keywords (or *Leitworte*), I first found myself in agreement with what Nauck—summarizing other commentators—termed “*stufenweises Vorgehen*” (step-by-step action).⁵⁹ This expression refers to a step-by-step composition or procedure, which affords a two-dimensional view of the text. This scheme, named *Anadiplosis*, refers to a repetition of the final word (or phrase, or clause, or concept) of the previous line (or phrase, or clause) at the beginning of the next one. As a well-described rhetorical figure of speech, even within the New Testament, it often appears repeated and is hence termed *anadiplosis iterata*.⁶⁰ We often find it combined with climax and/or chiasm.⁶¹ Second, I paid much attention to the intertext and especially to the longer quotations in Hebrews 3–4 and 8 along with its interpretations and applications. Hereby I wanted especially to

take into account the story from Numeri 13–14 to which Hebrews 3–4 refer by means of Psalm 95. Both author and addressee recall the story in the absence of a numerical reference system not just as narrative but as a narrative in context. Thus, the breaking in Kadesh-Barnea of the renewed Sinai covenant between God and the exodus generation leads to their disinheritance of the land. Third, I paid attention to the specific text-semantic and narrative logic.

Regarding literary-rhetorical aspects, I first paid attention to hook words in their natural relationship to the rhetorical figure of *anadiplosis iterata*, second to thematic transitions (rather than changes in genre), and finally to symmetries on the microstructural level, that is, with regard to concentric circles of thought (*Gedankenkreise*), and to symmetries on the macrostructural level.

Macrostructure of Hebrews

The application of a combined method, an approach that serves to understand the logic of the text, resulted in a macrostructure consisting of a five-partite two-dimensional and concentric step-by-step arrangement with a climax at the center along with rhetorical accents at the beginning and at the end of the text.



Following the diagram above, close analysis revealed the subsequent concentric structure on the horizontal macro level.

A. *Heb 1:1–2:18*: The first main section compares the Son with the angels in chapter 1, in explicit favor—in quality and locally—of the elevated Son. The addressed abasement of the Son under the angels in chapter 2 serves to save the sons. The keywords “Son” and “angels” establish the coherence of this first main section, which we consider structurally the least disputed part in Hebrews.

B. *Heb 3:1–6:20*: The intertext of Numbers 13–14 dominates the second, more heterogeneous main section. That text compares the faithless fathers at Kadesh-Barnea in chapters 3, 4, and 6,⁶² that is, their disobedience toward the law as specified in the Sinai covenant, with the sons and addressees in a warning manner. The keywords “disobedience” and “faith” establish the coherence of this main section. One may wish to contest my suggested coherence of this main section by pointing out the introduction of the Son as a high priest in chapters 4 and 5. By way of response, I would argue that Hebrews 3 starts out by comparing the Son to Moses, both of whom are deemed “faithful.” According to the intertext from the Septuagint, Moses’ faithfulness comes from the fact that as the servant of God’s house (the fathers), he once again atones for the sin(s) of the fathers at Kadesh-Barnea and thereby saves them from impending death. This deed qualifies him as “faithful.” Similarly, as introduced in chapter 2, Jesus’ faithfulness also arises from his atoning for and thereby saving of God’s house (addressees) from impending death; this action qualifies him as “faithful” and “obedient.” Hence the talk about the Son in chapters 4 and 5 deals with his predisposition, his aptness—his “faithfulness” and “obedience”—for the atoning work discussed in section C. The theme of “faith(fulness)” and “disobedience” belongs to section B and does not appear in section C at all but reappears in the corresponding section B’.

C. *Heb 7:1–10:18*: The third and central main section introduces God’s new covenant in chapter 8 as mediated through his Son. Since a covenant by necessity introduces or requires a cult institution, cultic vocabulary, located mainly in various semantic fields, such as “priesthood” (ch. 7), “sanctuary” (chs. 8 and 9), and atoning “sacrifice” (chs. 9 and 10), establishes the coherence of this central main section.

B’. *Heb 10:19–12:3*: The fourth main section again compares the faithful Son and faithful sons *in spe* in chapter 10 with the faithful fathers in chapter 11. The keyword “faith,” establishes the coherence of this main section and hence establishes its inverse correspondence with its sister paragraph B.

A'. *Heb 12:4–13:25*: After introducing atonement, the fifth and last main section addresses the abasement of the sons via discipline in chapter 12 and their elevation—locally and in quality—in chapters 12 and 13. The keywords “sons” and “angels” establish the coherence of this main section and hence establish its inverse correspondence with its sister paragraph A.

Close analysis revealed the following concentric structure on the vertical macro level:

a-a'. *Heb 2:1–4 and 12:25–29*: Only the transitional sections a-a' contain the word “escape” (*Heb 2:3a; 12:25b: ἐκφεύγω*).

b-b'. *Heb 3:1–6 and 12:1–3*: Only the transitional sections b-b' contain the invitation to look up at Jesus (*Heb 3:1; 12:2*).

c-c'. *Heb 4:12–13 and 11:1–3*: Only the transitional sections c-c' contain the stem φα(ι)ν- (*Heb 4:13a; 11:3b*), which stands in the context of the word of God once as “invisible” and once as “visible.”

d-d'. *Heb 6:13–20 and 10:19–23*: Only the transitional sections d-d'—apart from one other occurrence (*Heb 9:3*)—contain the word “curtain” (*Heb 6:19b; 10:20a: καταπέτασμα*).

e-e'. *Heb 8:1–6 and 9:11–14*: Finally, only the transitional sections e-e' address the heavenly tabernacle (*Heb 8:2a; 9:11a: σκηνή*).

Heb 4:(11)14–16 and 10:19–23(25)?: It has become evident that there is more than just one wide-spanning inclusion (see *Structures*), and that the passages *Heb 4:(11)14–16* and *10:19–23(25)* fail to correspond in the above scheme. While they may do so on the surface, they do not correspond on a deeper structural level. At least four criteria support my thesis: a semantic, a compositional, a contextual, and an intertextual one.⁶³

Microstructure of Hebrews 3:1–6:20

To display the microstructural symmetries existing throughout the entire book would go beyond the scope of this essay. Nonetheless, I would like to demonstrate how I generated the three formal, literary-rhetorical aspects inductively by means of the concentric circles of thought (along with hook words and transitions) or the so-called “waves” (*ondes concentriques*) that Ceslas Spicq⁶⁴ had already intuited in the 1950s. The reader may find it surprising to see how nicely one concentric thought circle lines up to the next one. This occurs throughout the entire book, including that main section B considered the most heterogeneous out of all, *Heb 3:1–6:20*:

| | | |
|------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 3:1–6 | <i>Chiastic transitional element:</i> Look up to the faithful Jesus | |
| 3:7–4:11 | Section: | Faithless fathers |
| 3:7–11 | <i>Chiastic subsection, quotation:</i> Ps 95:7–11 The father's rebellion | |
| 3:12–19 | <i>Chiastic subsection, interpretation/application a:</i> Warning of such rebellion | |
| 4:1–11 | <i>Chiastic subsection, interpretation/application b:</i> Thus, do not miss to enter rest | |
| 4:12–13 | <i>Chiastic transitional element:</i> For nothing is hidden from the judging word of God | |
| 4:14–6:12 | Section: | Faithless sons |
| 4:14–5:10 | <i>Chiastic subsection, interpretation/application c:</i> Faithless people need high priest's redemptive interaction | |
| 5:11–6:12 | <i>Chiastic subsection, interpretation/application d:</i> Repeated sin after such redemption leaves only godly judgment | |
| 6:13–20 | <i>Chiastic transitional element:</i> Thus, hold on to God's oath given to Abraham that reaches behind the curtain | |

The following chart displays the symmetries in each element, the transitions and the hook words linking these elements, and the semantic overlaps occurring only in the corresponding sister paragraphs:

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>Hook words</i> | 2:17; 3:1 high priest |
| 3:1–6 <i>Chiastic transitional element</i> : Look up to the faithful Jesus ^a | |
| <p>^{3:1} Ὁθεν, ἀδελφοὶ ἅγιοι, κλήσεως ἐπουρανίου μέτοχοι, κατανοήσατε τὸν ἀπόστολον καὶ ἀρχιερέα τῆς ὁμολογίας ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν,</p> <p>² πιστὸν ὄντα τῷ ποιήσαντι αὐτὸν ὡς καὶ Μωϋσῆς ἐν [ὄλῳ] τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ.</p> <p>³ πλείονος γὰρ οὗτος δόξης παρὰ Μωϋσῆν ἡξίωται, καθ’ ὅσον πλείονα τιμὴν ἔχει τοῦ οἴκου ὁ κατασκευάσας αὐτόν·</p> <p>⁴ πᾶς γὰρ οἶκος κατασκευάζεται ὑπὸ τινος, ὁ δὲ πάντα κατασκευάσας θεός.</p> <p>⁵ καὶ Μωϋσῆς μὲν πιστὸς ἐν ὄλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ ὡς θεράπων εἰς μαρτύριον τῶν λαληθησομένων,</p> <p>⁶ Χριστὸς δὲ ὡς υἱὸς ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ· οὗ οἶκός ἐσμεν ἡμεῖς, ἐάν[περ] τὴν παρρησίαν καὶ τὸ καύχημα τῆς ἐλπίδος κατάσχωμεν.</p> | <p>A: Heb 3:1 Jesus B: Heb 3:2 faithful Moses, house C: Heb 3:3 builder C’: Heb 3:4 built B’: Heb 3:5 Moses faithful, house A’: Heb 3:6 Christ</p> |
| <i>Hook words</i> | 3:5; 3:12 faithful, faithless |
| 3:7–4:11 <i>Section</i> : Faithless fathers^b | |
| 3:7–11 <i>Chiastic subsection, quotation</i> : Ps 95:7–11 The father’s rebellion | |
| <p>^{3:7} Διό, καθὼς λέγει τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον· σήμερον ἐὰν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε,</p> <p>⁸ μὴ σκληρύνητε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν ὡς ἐν τῷ παραπικρασμῷ κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ πειρασμοῦ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ,</p> <p>⁹ οὐ ἐπείρασαν οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν ἐν δοκιμασίᾳ καὶ εἶδον τὰ ἔργα μου</p> <p>¹⁰ τεσσεράκοντα ἔτη· διὸ προσώχθισα τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ καὶ εἶπον· ἀεὶ πλανῶνται τῇ καρδίᾳ, αὐτοὶ δὲ οὐκ ἔγνωσαν τὰς ὁδοὺς μου,</p> <p>¹¹ ὡς ὥμοσα ἐν τῇ ὀργῇ μου· εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου.</p> | <p>A: Heb 3:7–8 hearts B: Heb 3:8 testing B’: Heb 3:9 tested A’: Heb 3:10–11 heart</p> |

| 3:12–19 <i>Chiastic subsection, interpretation/application a: Warning of such rebellion</i> | |
|--|--|
| <p>^{3:12} Βλέπετε, ἀδελφοί, μήποτε ἔσται ἐν τινι ὑμῶν καρδία πονηρὰ ἀπιστίας ἐν τῷ ἀποστῆναι ἀπὸ θεοῦ ζώντος,</p> <p>¹³ ἀλλὰ παρακαλεῖτε ἑαυτοὺς καθ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν, ἅχρις οὗ τὸ σήμερον καλεῖται, ἵνα μὴ σκληρυνθῇ τις ἐξ ὑμῶν ἀπάτῃ τῆς ἀμαρτίας –</p> <p>¹⁴ μέτοχοι γὰρ τοῦ Χριστοῦ γεγόναμεν, ἕάνπερ τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς ὑποστάσεως μέχρι τέλους βεβαίαν κατὰσχωμεν –</p> <p>¹⁵ ἐν τῷ λέγεσθαι· σήμερον ἐὰν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε, μὴ σκληρύνητε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν ὡς ἐν τῷ παραπικρασμῷ.</p> <p>¹⁶ τίνες γὰρ ἀκούσαντες παρεπίκραναν; ἀλλ' οὐ πάντες οἱ ἐξεληθόντες ἐξ Αἰγύπτου διὰ Μωϋσέως;</p> <p>¹⁷ τίσιν δὲ προσώχθισεν τεσσεράκοντα ἔτη; οὐχὶ τοῖς ἀμαρτήσασιν, ὧν τὰ κῶλα ἔπεσεν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ;</p> <p>¹⁸ τίσιν δὲ ὤμοσεν μὴ εἰσελεύσεσθαι εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ εἰ μὴ τοῖς ἀπειθήσασιν;</p> <p>¹⁹ καὶ βλέπομεν ὅτι οὐκ ἠδυνήθησαν εἰσελθεῖν δι' ἀπιστίαν.</p> | <p>A: Heb 3:12 unbelieving B: Heb 3:13 sin C: Heb 3:14–15 listen, rebellion C': Heb 3:16 listened, rebelled B': Heb 3:17–18 sinned A': Heb 3:19 unbelief</p> |

| 4:1–11 <i>Chiastic subsection, interpretation/application b: Thus, do not miss to enter rest</i> | |
|---|--|
| <p>4:1 Φοβηθῶμεν οὖν, μήποτε καταλειπομένης ἐπαγγελίας εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ δοκῇ τις ἐξ ὑμῶν ὑστερηκέναι.</p> <p>2 καὶ γὰρ ἐσμεν εὐηγγελισμένοι καθάπερ κάκεῖνοι· ἀλλ’ οὐκ ὠφέλησεν ὁ λόγος τῆς ἀκοῆς ἐκείνους μὴ συγκεκρασμένους τῇ πίστει τοῖς ἀκούσασιν.</p> <p>3 Εἰσερχόμεθα γὰρ εἰς [τὴν] κατάπαυσιν οἱ πιστεύσαντες, καθὼς εἶρηκεν· ὡς ὥμοσα ἐν τῇ ὀργῇ μου· εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου, καίτοι τῶν ἔργων ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου γενηθέντων.</p> <p>4 εἶρηκεν γάρ που περὶ τῆς ἐβδόμης οὕτως· καὶ κατέπαυσεν ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἐβδόμῃ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ,</p> <p>5 καὶ ἐν τούτῳ πάλιν· εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου.</p> <p>6 ἐπεὶ οὖν ἀπολείπεται τινὰς εἰσελθεῖν εἰς αὐτήν, καὶ οἱ πρότερον εὐαγγελισθέντες οὐκ εἰσηλθόν δι’ ἀπειθείαν,</p> <p>7 πάλιν τινὰ ὀρίζει ἡμέραν, σήμερον, ἐν Δαυὶδ λέγων μετὰ τοσοῦτον χρόνον, καθὼς προεῖρηται· σήμερον ἐὰν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε, μὴ σκληρύνητε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν.</p> <p>8 εἰ γὰρ αὐτοὺς Ἰησοῦς κατέπαυσεν, οὐκ ἂν περὶ ἄλλης ἐλάλει μετὰ ταῦτα ἡμέρας.</p> <p>9 ἄρα ἀπολείπεται σαββατισμὸς τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ.</p> <p>10 ὁ γὰρ εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτὸς κατέπαυσεν ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ ὥσπερ ἀπὸ τῶν ιδίων ὁ θεός.</p> <p>11 Σπουδάσωμεν οὖν εἰσελθεῖν εἰς ἐκείνην τὴν κατάπαυσιν, ἵνα μὴ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ τις ὑποδείγματι πέσῃ τῆς ἀπειθείας.</p> | <p>A: Heb 4:1 enter his rest B: Heb 4:2–4 rest, rested C: Heb 4:4 day D: Heb 4:5 enter D’: Heb 4:6 enter C’: Heb 4:7 day B’: Heb 4:8–10 rested, rest A’: Heb 4:11 enter this rest</p> |
| <i>Hook words</i> | 4:7; 4:12 heart |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>4:12–13 <i>Chiastic transitional element</i>: For nothing is hidden from the judging word of God^c</p> | |
| <p>^{4:12} Ζῶν γὰρ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐνεργῆς καὶ τομώτερος ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν μάχαιραν δίστομον καὶ διῆκνουνος ἄκρι μερισμοῦ ψυχῆς καὶ πνεύματος, ἁρμών τε καὶ μυελῶν, καὶ κριτικὸς ἐνθυμήσεων καὶ ἐννοιῶν καρδίας·</p> <p>¹³ καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν κτίσις ἀφανῆς ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, πάντα δὲ γυμνά καὶ τετραχλησμένα τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτοῦ, πρὸς ὃν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος.</p> | <p>A: Heb 4:12 the word B: Heb 4:12 soul and spirit B': Heb 4:12 desires and thoughts A': Heb 4:13 the word</p> |
| <p><i>Hook words</i></p> | <p>4:12; 6:5 word of God</p> |
| <p>4:14–6:12 Section: Faithless sons^d</p> | |
| <p>4:14–5:10 <i>Chiastic subsection, interpretation/application c</i>: Faithless people need high priest's redemptive interaction</p> | |
| <p>^{4:14} Ἐχοντες οὖν ἀρχιερέα μέγαν διεληλυθότα τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, Ἰησοῦν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας.</p> <p>¹⁵ οὐ γὰρ ἔχομεν ἀρχιερέα μὴ δυνάμενον συμπαθεῖν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις ἡμῶν, πεπειρασμένον δὲ κατὰ πάντα καθ' ὁμοιότητα χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας.</p> <p>¹⁶ προσερχώμεθα οὖν μετὰ παρρησίας τῷ θρόνῳ τῆς χάριτος, ἵνα λάβωμεν ἔλεος καὶ χάριν εὐρωμεν εἰς εὐκαιρον βοήθειαν.</p> <p>^{5:1} Πᾶς γὰρ ἀρχιερεὺς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων λαμβανόμενος ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων καθίσταται τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν, ἵνα προσφέρῃ δῶρά τε καὶ θυσίας ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν,</p> <p>² μετριοπαθεῖν δυνάμενος τοῖς ἀγνοοῦσιν καὶ πλανώμενοις, ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτὸς περικείται ἀσθένειαν</p> <p>³ καὶ δι' αὐτὴν ὀφείλει, καθὼς περὶ τοῦ λαοῦ, οὕτως καὶ περὶ αὐτοῦ προσφέρειν περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν.</p> <p>⁴ καὶ οὐχ ἑαυτῷ τις λαμβάνει τὴν τιμὴν ἀλλὰ καλούμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ καθὼς περ καὶ Ἀαρών.</p> <p>⁵ Οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς οὐχ ἑαυτὸν ἐδόξασεν γεννηθῆναι ἀρχιερέα ἀλλ' ὁ λαλήσας πρὸς αὐτόν· υἱός μου εἰ σύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε·</p> <p>⁶ καθὼς καὶ ἐν ἑτέρῳ λέγει· σὺ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ,</p> <p>⁷ ὃς ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ δεήσεις τε καὶ ἱκετηρίας πρὸς τὸν δυνάμενον σφάζειν αὐτὸν ἐκ θανάτου μετὰ κραυγῆς ἰσχυρᾶς καὶ δακρύων προσενέγκας καὶ εἰσακουσθεὶς ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας,</p> <p>⁸ καί περ ὢν υἱός, ἔμαθεν ἀφ' ὧν ἔπαθεν τὴν ὑπακοήν,</p> <p>⁹ καὶ τελειωθείς ἐγένετο πᾶσιν τοῖς ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ αἷτιος σωτηρίας αἰωνίου,</p> <p>¹⁰ προσαγορευθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀρχιερεὺς κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ.</p> | <p>A: Heb 4:14 high priest B: Heb 4:15–16 suffer with C: Heb 5:1–4 high priest taken from men does not take honor on his own C': Heb 5:5–6 Christ did not glorify himself as high priest B': Heb 5:7–8 suffered A': Heb 5:9–10 high priest</p> |

| 5:11–6:12 <i>Chiastic subsection, interpretation/application d: Repeated sin after such redemption leaves only godly judgment</i> | |
|--|--|
| <p>^{5:11} Περὶ οὗ πολλὸς ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος καὶ δυσερμήνευτος λέγειν, ἐπεὶ νωθοὶ γεγόνατε ταῖς ἀκοαῖς.</p> <p>¹² καὶ γὰρ ὀφείλοντες εἶναι διδάσκαλοι διὰ τὸν χρόνον, πάλιν χρεῖαν ἔχετε τοῦ διδάσκειν ὑμᾶς τινὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν λογίων τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ γεγόνατε χρεῖαν ἔχοντες γάλακτος [καὶ] οὐ στερεᾶς τροφῆς.</p> <p>¹³ πᾶς γὰρ ὁ μετέχων γάλακτος ἄπειρος λόγου δικαιοσύνης, νήπιος γάρ ἐστιν.</p> <p>¹⁴ τελείων δέ ἐστιν ἡ στερεὰ τροφή, τῶν διὰ τὴν ἑξίν τὰ αἰσθητήρια γεγυμνασμένα ἐχόντων πρὸς διάκρισιν καλοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ.</p> <p>^{6:1} Διὸ ἀφέντες τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον ἐπὶ τὴν τελειότητα φερώμεθα, μὴ πάλιν θεμέλιον καταβαλλόμενοι μετανοίας ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων καὶ πίστεως ἐπὶ θεόν,</p> <p>² βαπτισμῶν διδαχῆς ἐπιθέσεώς τε χειρῶν, ἀναστασεώς τε νεκρῶν καὶ κρίματος αἰωνίου.</p> <p>³ καὶ τοῦτο ποιήσομεν, ἐάνπερ ἐπιτρέπη ὁ θεός.</p> <p>⁴ Ἀδύνατον γὰρ τοὺς ἄπαξ φωτισθέντας, γευσασμένους τε τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου καὶ μετόχους γενηθέντας πνεύματος ἁγίου ⁵ καὶ καλὸν γευσασμένους θεοῦ ῥῆμα δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος ⁶ καὶ παραπεσόντας, πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν, ἀνασταυροῦντας ἑαυτοῖς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ παραδειγματίζοντας.</p> <p>⁷ γῆ γὰρ ἡ πιοῦσα τὸν ἐπ' αὐτῆς ἐρχόμενον πολλάκις ὑετὸν καὶ τίκτουσα βοτάνην εὐθετον ἐκείνοις δι' οὓς καὶ γεωργεῖται, μεταλαμβάνει εὐλογίας ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ.</p> <p>⁸ ἐκφέρουσα δὲ ἀκάνθας καὶ τριβόλους, ἀδόκιμος καὶ κατάρας ἐγγύς, ἥς τὸ τέλος εἰς καῦσιν.</p> <p>⁹ Πεπείσμεθα δὲ περὶ ὑμῶν, ἀγαπητοί, τὰ κρείσσονα καὶ ἐχόμενα σωτηρίας, εἰ καὶ οὕτως λαλοῦμεν.</p> <p>¹⁰ οὐ γὰρ ἄδικος ὁ θεὸς ἐπιλαθέσθαι τοῦ ἔργου ὑμῶν καὶ τῆς ἀγάπης ἧς ἐνεδείξασθε εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, διακονήσαντες τοῖς ἁγίοις καὶ διακονοῦντες.</p> <p>¹¹ ἐπιθυμοῦμεν δὲ ἕκαστον ὑμῶν τὴν αὐτὴν ἐνδείκνυσθαι σπουδὴν πρὸς τὴν πληροφορίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἅχρι τέλους,</p> <p>¹² ἵνα μὴ νωθοὶ γένησθε, μιμηταὶ δὲ τῶν διὰ πίστεως καὶ μακροθυμίας κληρονομοῦντων τὰς ἐπαγγελίας.</p> | <p>A: Heb 5:11 sluggish B: Heb 5:12–14 beginning C: Heb 6:1–3 works D: Heb 6:4–6 tasted once D': Heb 6:7–8 drank often C': Heb 6:9–10 work B': Heb 6:11 end A': Heb 6:12 sluggish</p> |
| Hook words | 6:12; 6:15 perseverance, persevering |

| 6:13–20 <i>Chiastic transitional element</i> : Thus, hold on to God's oath given to Abraham that reaches behind the curtain ^e | |
|--|---|
| <p>^{6:13} Τῷ γὰρ Ἀβραὰμ ἐπαγγελιάμενος ὁ θεός, ἐπεὶ κατ' οὐδενὸς εἶχεν μείζονος ὁμόσαι, ὥμοσεν καθ' ἑαυτοῦ</p> <p>¹⁴ λέγων· εἰ μὴν εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσω σε καὶ πληθύνων πληθυνῶ σε·</p> <p>¹⁵ καὶ οὕτως μακροθυμήσας ἐπέτυχεν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας.</p> <p>¹⁶ ἄνθρωποι γὰρ κατὰ τοῦ μείζονος ὀμνύουσιν, καὶ πάσης αὐτοῖς ἀντιλογίας πέρας εἰς βεβαίωσιν ὁ ὄρκος·</p> <p>¹⁷ ἐν ᾧ περισσότερον βουλόμενος ὁ θεὸς ἐπιδείξει τοῖς κληρονόμοις τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τὸ ἀμετάθετον τῆς βουλῆς αὐτοῦ ἐμεσίτευσεν ὄρκῳ,</p> <p>¹⁸ ἵνα διὰ δύο πραγμάτων ἀμεταθέτων, ἐν οἷς ἀδύνατον ψεύσασθαι [τὸν] θεόν, ἰσχυρὰν παράκλησιν ἔχωμεν οἱ καταφυγόντες κρατῆσαι τῆς προκειμένης ἐλπίδος·</p> <p>¹⁹ ἦν ὡς ἄγκυραν ἔχομεν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀσφαλῆ τε καὶ βεβαίαν καὶ εἰσερχομένην εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος,</p> <p>²⁰ ὅπου πρόδρομος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν εἰσῆλθεν Ἰησοῦς, κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ ἀρχιερεὺς γενόμενος εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.</p> | <p>A: Heb 6:13 God B: Heb 6:13 promised Abraham C: Heb 6:13 swore C': Heb 6:16 swear B': Heb 6:17 heirs of promise A': Heb 6:18–20 God</p> |
| Hook words | 6:20; 7:1 Melchizedek |

Notes to the Readings

a. Lexeme occurring only in the transitional elements Heb 3:1–6 and 12:1–3: witness, witnesses (Heb 3:5; 12:1).

b. Lexemes occurring only in the sections Heb 3:7–4:11 and 11:4–40: Egypt (Heb 3:16; 11:26, 27), disobedient/disobedience (Heb 3:18; 4:6, 11; 11:31), David (Heb 4:7; 11:32), saw (Heb 3:9; 11:5, 13, 23), wilderness (Heb 3:8, 17; 11:38), foundation (Heb 4:3; 11:11), left (Heb 4:1; 11:27), people of God (Heb 4:9; 11:25), fall (Heb 3:17; 4:11; 11:30), wander (Heb 3:10; 11:38), come short (Heb 4:1; 11:37), be afraid (Heb 4:1; 11:23, 27).

c. Lexemes occurring only in the transitional elements Heb 4:12–13 and 11:1–3: invisible/visible (Heb 4:13; 11:3), word of God (Heb 4:12; 11:3).

d. Lexemes occurring only in the sections Heb 4:14–6:12 and 10:24–39: love (Heb 6:10; 10:24), judgment (Heb 6:2; 10:27), Son of God (Heb 4:14; 6:6; 10:29), enlightened (Heb 6:4; 10:32), need (Heb 5:12; 10:36).

e. Lexeme occurring only in the transitional elements Heb 6:13–20 and 10:19–23: curtain (Heb 6:19; 10:20).

Main Theological Emphasis and Interpretation

The Center in Section C: The logic of a concentric structure necessarily unfolds from its center. Unlike Vanhoye, I locate the center not in Heb 9:11, with Christ's high priesthood,⁶⁵ but instead in Heb 8:7–13 (9:10), which contains God's promise of a covenant renewal as expressed in the longest quotation of the Hebrew Bible in the New Testament from Jer 31:31–34. Contrary to the opinions of Neeley (Heb 10:19–13:21), Guthrie (Heb 12:18–24), and Westfall (Heb 12:1–28), moreover, the center proposed here does not lie either in Hebrews 12, which issues the invitation to approach the heavenly sanctuary.⁶⁶ From a pragmatic point of view, we could consider locating the center in Hebrews 12—indeed plausible—and commend the latter three scholars for their analyses. Yet from a logical, structural point of view, the center must lie in Hebrews 8 in which God and not the Son promises a new covenant. This proposal in turn disqualifies a center in Hebrews 9. Rhetorically speaking, this center forms the logical and necessary precondition for the appointment of the Son as mediator and for the invitation to the addressees to approach God's throne in the aftermath of the high priest's atoning endeavor. Hence, rather than judging either the one or the other proposed center as flawed, we can—based on the insights from the "linguistic turn"—distinguish the center in Hebrews 12 as the pragmatic and therefore paraenetic one, yet the center in Hebrews 8 as the logical, structural, and therefore theological center. This approach not only allows an interpretative comparison of sister paragraphs but also generates the hermeneutical key that allows us to place all the parts of the book into a logical and coherent whole:

Main Section C: This central section speaks of a new covenant inaugurated by God and mediated by Christ. Hence, God, the central persona and considered more important than the Son, initiates the covenant renewal. We can confirm this when analyzing the semantic inventory related to God, which appears slightly higher than that related to the Son. Commentators frequently neglect this fact. Along with the new covenant, this section describes the new—actually old and original (see Exod 25:40 in Heb 8:5)—celestial cult institution. Beautifully reflected in the mountain-like-shaped climactic structure, the passage relates the new covenant to the celestial mount Zion.

Relation of Main Section C with B: Chiasm serves not merely an ornamental function, but rather, its power lies in the potential to unify what seems incompatible.⁶⁷ In this chiastic sense, the relation of B—covenant breaking—with C—covenant renewal—appears logical. Both of

the long quotations related to the Hebrew Bible express well-established polar concepts in early Jewish texts, liturgy, and culture.⁶⁸

Relation of Main Section B with A: I did not immediately perceive the relation of B with A, and only extensive intertextual search made clear to me that Kadesh-Barnea finally ends the renewed Sinai covenant on account of the people's sin. This one final sin in a series of ten (Num 14:22; cf. also Pss 78; 106), appears most similar to the idolatry with the golden calf committed at Sinai in Exodus 32–34. This context makes plain that the existence of angels occurs as the natural consequence of God's absence (Exod 33:2–3). Haggadic literature from the first century on widely reflects not only the danger that angels of revenge present for the people but also Moses' saving role. This narrative structure interlocks Hebrews with the narrative matrix of the Hebrew Bible, it further confers Moses' office upon Jesus, and vice-versa relates the intended listener to the fathers of the Hebrew Bible.

Relation of Main Section A with B': The understanding of section A leads smoothly over to B'. The faithful fathers and mothers (in past and present) become entitled as "witnesses." This legal term makes clear that their mentioning before God by Moses in the golden calf pericope (Exod 32:13–14) helps to save the lives of the sinful people. Likewise, the protecting and even salvific function of the faithful fathers in the interests of the sinful people appears also as a well-established motive in Hellenistic-Jewish, protorabbinic, and rabbinic literature, beginning with the writings of Philo (see, for instance, *Praem.* 166).

Relation of Main Section B' with A': In the latter section (= A'), we see the sons invited to the celestial cult and ethically and legally equipped for an existence under a renewed covenant. I have argued elsewhere that the location of the cult in heaven does not serve supersessionist needs, but rather, liturgical (for instance, the fast day of *Tisha be-Av*) and/or historical reasons (for instance, the destruction of the second temple in the year 70 C.E., which implies God's absence on earth and consolidates the broken covenant) might have necessitated this rhetorical strategy.⁶⁹ In making up for the earthly loss, the author invites his addressees to the one remaining legitimate temple, according to Exod 25:40, which is quoted in Heb 8:5, the celestial and original one to which God withdraws from earth in times of broken covenants. He takes them there step by step and relativizes possible apprehensions while at the same time empowering them mentally and spiritually to transcend their experiences of a disheartening present.

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Notes

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49. Gelardini, "Verhärtet eure Herzen nicht," 80–83, 353–57 and passim.
50. John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the New Testament," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*, ed. idem. (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981), 211–49, esp. 220–21.
51. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews*, 76–89; Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, xii, 136–37, 230–40.
52. Neeley, "A Discourse Analysis of Hebrews," 41, 51; Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 143; Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 301.
53. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*; Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews*; Koester, *Hebrews*; Knut Backhaus, *Der Neue Bund und das Werden*

der Kirche: Die Diatheke-Deutung des Hebräerbriefs im Rahmen der frühchristlichen Theologiegeschichte, NTAbh 29 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1996); Gelardini, "Verhärtet eure Herzen nicht."

54. Thien, "Analyse de l'épître aux Hébreux," 79, 86.

55. Eduard Riggenbach, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1922; repr. Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1987), xxiii–xxiv.

56. For a comprehensive overview of my methodological and structural considerations, see Gelardini, "Verhärtet eure Herzen nicht," 79–84, 193–99, 203–6, 249–54, 288–96, 326–35, 352–59.

57. Gelardini, "Verhärtet eure Herzen nicht," 87–180.

58. Wilhelm Egger, *Methodenlehre zum Neuen Testament: Einführung in linguistische und historisch-kritische Methoden*, 3d ed. (Freiburg i.B.: Herder, 1993), 28–33.

59. Nauck, "Zum Aufbau des Hebräerbriefes," 201–2.

60. Walter Bühlmann and Karl Scherer, *Sprachliche Stilfiguren der Bibel—Von Asso- nanz bis Zahlenspruch: Ein Nachschlagewerk*, 2d ed. (Giessen: Brunnen, 1994), 26–29, esp. 28.

61. Wilfred G. E. Watson, "Chiastic Patterns in Biblical Hebrew Poetry," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*, ed. John W. Welch (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981), 118–68, esp. 149–58.

62. The authors of the following articles convincingly demonstrate that Hebrews 6 forms an integral part of the interpretation of the quotations in Hebrews 3–4: Randall C. Gleason, "The Old Testament Background of the Warning in Hebrews 6:4–8," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (1998): 62–91; Dave Mathewson, "Reading Heb 6:4–6 in light of the Old Testament," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 61 (1999): 209–25.

63. (1) Semantic criterion: Heb 6:13–20 has many semantic overlaps with Heb 10:19–23, of which the most important was mentioned, the "curtain." (2) Compositional criterion: the two transitional sections flank the central and exclusively cultic section, which does not contain the keyword "faith." (3) Contextual criterion: Heb 6:13–20 is preceded by two themes that immediately follow Heb 10:19–23 in inverse order. Hebrews 6:9–12 as well as 10:24–25 contains the "works of love," and Heb 6:4–8 as well as 10:26–31 contains the stern message that for those once enlightened and sinning again, neither repentance nor sin sacrifice is left. (4) Intertextual criterion: the neglected renewal of repentance in Hebrews 6 is related to the intertext in Num 13–14; Hebrews 6 hence also pertains to the interpretation of Ps 95:7–11 in Heb 3:7–11.

64. Ceslas Spicq, *Introduction*, vol. 1 of *L'épître aux Hébreux*, 2 vols., EBib (Paris: Gabalda, 1952): 1:32.

65. Vanhoye, *La structure littéraire de l'épître aux Hébreux*, 237, 269.

66. Neeley, "A Discourse Analysis of Hebrews," 41, 51; Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews*, 143; Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 301.

67. Rodolphe Gasché, "Über chiasmische Umkehrbarkeit (1987)," in *Die paradoxe Metapher*, ed. Anسلم Haverkamp, Edition Suhrkamp 1940: Aesthetica (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1998), 437–55.

68. Gelardini, "Verhärtet eure Herzen nicht," 123–90.

69. Gabriella Gelardini, "Hebrews, an Ancient Synagogue Homily for Tisha be-Av: Its Function, Its Basis, Its Theological Interpretation," in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods, New Insights*, ed. eadem, BINS 75 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 107–27.

Mirrored Poeticity

Chiastic Structuring in Mayan Languages

Kerry Hull

The last quarter century has seen a marked shift in Maya hieroglyphic studies in recognition of the presence of poetic language in the script. Poetics in indigenous Mesoamerican tradition is based primarily upon the principle of parallelism, most often in the form of coupleted discourse. Chiasmus, a rhetorical feature fully dependent upon parallelism, was one such poetic device used by ancient Maya scribes and colonial period indigenous authors, and it is still found among modern ritual specialists in some Maya communities. In this study, I explore the use and forms of chiasmus over time among various Maya groups and languages. As I show, ancient Maya scribes incorporated chiasmus into hieroglyphic texts at particular moments for emphasis, as a means of highlighting key narrative events. Furthermore, scribes would at times display considerable poetic prowess through the use of what I term “rhetorical stacking,” that is, a multiplicity of rhetorical features used simultaneously within a larger poetic construction. Chiasmus, as it turns out, is often the larger rhetorical unit within which other forms of verbal art are expressed. As a poetic tradition established in the Late Classic period (250 AD–900 AD), chiasmus still flourished in colonial period documents and has survived into modern Mayan languages for ornamental and emphatic purposes.

Expressing through Chiasm

Chiasmus, according to Pelkey, is “the parallel, or (a)symmetrical, inversion of two or more terms framed as antithetical pairs, being held in something of a mirror image relation in order to suggest processes of

tension, reversal, or exchange.”¹ At its most basic level, a chiasm has the shape AB-B'A', a parallelism built upon the formal symmetry of both progressive and regressive movement. Poetic effect is sufficiently realized through the repetition of the constituent line of the divided couplets. However, chiasmus often does more by creating a focal point at the axis of the chiasm. As Welch has noted, “[a]n emphatic focus on the center can be employed by a skillful composer to elevate the importance of a central concept or to dramatize a radical shift of events at the turning-point.”² The importance of the center of the chiasm has been described by Lissner as “betweenity,” i.e., the way the chiasms, in crisscross fashion, point attention to an intermediate region. Lissner explains:

The cross's constituent lines “take off” from the concurrence of the midpoint to “then proceed in their own direction” (“Focus”). The pair of lines of equal length that compose the oblique cross gradually and evenly incline toward one another and meet up at a point absolutely inter-medial. Then from that intermediate place, a loci of adjoining or impinging, the lines “re-commit” (“re-turn”) to their “movement” or “action,” but with a decided difference. The resumption demonstrates decline and separation: the lines gradually and evenly decline away from one another in a precise, reverse mirroring of their inward motion.³

A chiasm engages the audience in narrative movement through its lines. The processional pivot or axis, especially when consisting of two semantically related lines, encourages reflection.

Cross-cultural Use of Chiasmus

In *The Arte of English Poesie* (1569), George Puttenham describes “antimetavole” (antimetabole, from Gk. ἀντιμεταβολή), a closely related or equivalent poetic figure to chiasmus, as a form of playful speech in which “Ye haue a figure which takes a couple of words to play with in a verse, and by making them to chaunge and shift one into others place they do very pretily exchange and shift the sence.”⁴ He illustrates this “antimetavole” with the following example:

We dwell not here to build us boures,
And halles for pleasure and good cheare:
But halles we build for us and ours,
To dwell in then whilst we are here.⁵

Puttenham also termed this construction “Counterchange” (a translation of *antimetavole*), reflective of the reversive or oppositional binary that a chiasm often entails. While chiasmus can certainly project coordination and balance, additional rhetorical impact accompanies antithetical or oppositional pairings. For Merleau-Ponty, a chiasm can represent “the idea that every perception is doubled with a counter perception . . . an act with two faces, [in which] one does not know who speaks and who listens.”⁶ Chiasmus, according to Pelkey, may function both “to vividly frame the contradiction or rupture between some set of oppositions and simultaneously to bring these differences into dialogue.”⁷ Quintilian, a Roman rhetorician, stated: *Non ut edam vivo, sed ut vivam edo*, “I don’t eat to live, but I live to eat,” exemplifying what Paul refers to as “mirroring,” in which the elements of the second half contradict those found in the first.⁸ In such constructions, chiasmus engages two or more ideas in a balanced, dialogic process, but whose internal dynamics “are characterized not by consonance but by dissonance, not by stabilizing resemblance but destabilizing antimony.”⁹ Antithesis, therefore, becomes a potent motivator toward cognition and contemplation; for example: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matt 16:25). Chiasmus invites the reader or hearer to ponder both bilateral symmetries and asymmetries, what Lissner calls the associative–dissociative dichotomy, contained in its structure.¹⁰

Chiasmus, as the present volume makes clear, is particularly prevalent in Near Eastern texts, but as a linguistic or cognitive phenomenon, it must be recognized as a global feature of discourse. From Greek writers such as Homer, to Roman writers such as Quintilian, to Beowulf, to Shakespeare, who used chiasmus in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*,¹¹ to Lévi-Strauss, who had a penchant for chiastic logic,¹² and up until present times, such as in Indonesia,¹³ chiasmus has enjoyed a wide degree of usage. Without a doubt, the basic AB-B’A’ pattern is most commonly attested, especially today.¹⁴ While most people would not recognize them as a chiasmus per se, balanced chiastic phraseology is common in our day; for example, “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country,”¹⁵ or the famous jingle “I am stuck on Band-Aid brand ‘cause Band-Aid’s stuck on me!”¹⁶ Thus, while often thought to be primarily an ancient mode of poetic expression, chiasmus is still used for rhetorical effect in cultures around the world, possibly containing insights into culturally specific notions. Chiasmus has traditionally been viewed as an organizing feature of discourse; however,

recent research is beginning to urge us to look beyond its use as simply a rhetorical tool and into its direct ties to conceptual patterning and human thought.¹⁷

Chiasmus in Ancient Mesoamerica

When one speaks of poetics in Mesoamerican tradition one speaks of parallelism. The rhyming schemes common to Western poetry play no role in Mesoamerican poetic styles. Instead, the building blocks of poetic discourse are parallel lines. The most common manifestation of parallelism in Mayan languages is the semantic couplet wherein a thought is expressed in two lines that have a close semantic or morphological relationship to each other, often only differing in a single element. For example, in an excerpt from a Tzotzil Mayan curing ritual, the shaman importunes:

I shall visit your shrines a little,
 I shall entrust my soul to you a little,
 To your feet,
 To your hands,
 For your sons,
 For your children,
 For your flowers,
 For your sprouts,
 For these I beseech divine pardon,
 For these I beg divine forgiveness . . .¹⁸

The prayer is almost fully composed of semantic couplets. What could be stated in a single line is amplified by repeating the thought in a second, augmented line (e.g., “beseech divine pardon” and “beg divine forgiveness”). Repetition, therefore, not rhyme, renders poeticity.

The use of parallelism can be traced back to the very earliest texts in ancient Mesoamerica. Indeed, the oldest example of writing ever found in Mesoamerica, the Cascajal Block, dating to the Early and Middle Formative period, between c. 1200 and 900 BC,¹⁹ seems to have a couplet of the paired signs of “throne” and “mat,” a well-known diphrastic kenning in Mesoamerican texts and iconography meaning “authority.”²⁰ For example, the Maya hieroglyphic *pohp/tz'am*, the Yukatek Maya *pop/tzam*, the Nahuatl *petlatl/icpalli*, are kennings literally translated

as “mat/throne” but representing the metaphorical notion of “authority” or “rulership.”²¹ The occurrence of the “mat/throne” couplet on the Cascajal Block speaks to the antiquity of the expression and the presence of poetic couplets and kennings at this early stage in Mesoamerican writing.²²

Maya hieroglyphic writing is replete with parallelism from some of the earliest texts until the last vestiges of the script fell into disuse in the seventeenth century. The great Mayanist J. Eric Thompson was the first to recognize parallelism in postcolonial writings in Mesoamerica, around the middle of the twentieth century.²³ Floyd Lounsbury successfully identified the presence of semantic couplets in the Maya hieroglyphic texts of Palenque, Mexico, in 1978.²⁴ Since then other researchers have expanded our understanding of the use of parallelism by the ancient Maya.²⁵ Chiasmus, a complex form of parallelism, however, has received relatively little attention in Maya hieroglyphic studies.

Chiasmus as used in Mesoamerica shows a clear intent to highlight the contents of the central axis. Furthermore, the paired constituent lines on both sides of the axis fit perfectly into the deeply rooted, standard system of parallelistic expression in Mesoamerica. In 1986, Josserand first noted the presence of chiasmus (which she also referred to as “nested couplets”²⁶) in the hieroglyphic script in the texts of Palenque, Mexico.²⁷ Josserand found an AB-B'A' pattern on the Tablet of the 96 Glyphs, forming a textual “mirrored image.”

Chiastic patterning also appears outside of a strictly linguistic context at the site of Palenque, Mexico. The dynastic ruler list at Palenque includes seventeen names, beginning with the founder, K'uk' Bahlam. Stuart has recently noted that five of the rulers' names are ordered precisely in reverse order: 1-2-3-4-5, 5-4-3-2-1 (fig. 1).²⁸ In essence, five rulers took earlier dynastic names but did so in chiastic-like form, terminating with the last king, K'inich K'uk' Bahlam, who bore the founder's name. Stuart states: “Palenque's later kings, it seems, deliberately chose to ‘fold’ time back on itself, and repeat the sequence of the kings who came before them.” Stuart finds this “odd, wonderful pattern” to possibly suggest a kind of dynastic “closed system” at play.²⁹

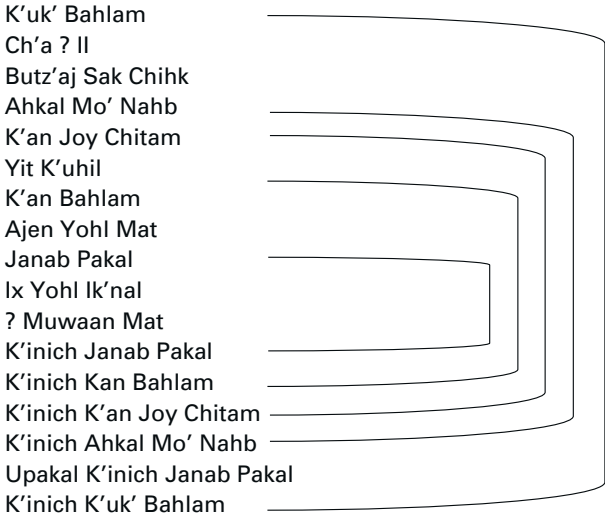


FIGURE 1. The Palenque dynastic list showing a chiasmic patterning in certain names (modified after Stuart 2011:280).

Maya hieroglyphic writing boasts various lengths of chiasmi, both micro as well as macro structures. An example of an AB-B'A' pattern is found on Pusilha Stela D, first noted by Kinsman³⁰ (fig. 2):

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>K'awiil Chan K'inich</i> | K'awiil Chan K'inich, |
| <i>Ux Buluk Pik Ajaw</i> | 3-11 Lord, [title] |
| <i>Chan Winikhaab Ch'ahom</i> | 4-Score Year Scatterer, [title] |
| <i>K'awiil Chan K'inich</i> | K'awiil Chan K'inich, |

The repeated name of the protagonist, K'awiil Chan K'inich, envelops two titles that he carries, forming a chiasm.

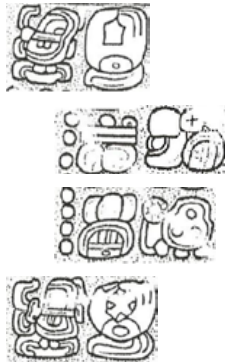


FIGURE 2. The text of Stela D at Pusilha containing an AB-B'A' chiasm (drawing by Christophe Helmke).

A slightly longer possible chiasmic structure has been suggested by Josserand³¹ with the shape of ABC-C'B'A' on the front edge of Yaxchilan Lintel 23 (A1–C2).

Carrasco has discussed an intricate chiasm at the site of Palenque, Mexico, that incorporates iconography and monument placement into the message of the chiasm.³² The text is divided between two monuments—the Tablet of the Orator and the Tablet of the Scribe (fig. 3a–b). The tablets depict two individuals flanking either side of a short staircase. The king's throne was positioned between the two tablets, which is important since the two individuals on the tablets gaze toward the throne. The second-person caption texts around the heads of the two individuals form a chiasm that is independent of both vertical texts. Thus, focal narrative begins on the Tablet of the Orator (lines 1–2) and terminates on the Tablet of the Scribe (lines 3–5).

1. *Ubaah ach'ahb ak'abil,*
 2. *Yajaw K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb Baahkab.*
 3. *Ilaaj abaah,*
 4. *Matwiil Ajaw,*
 5. *Usih ach'ahb ak'abil.*
-
1. The image of ? is **your creation in darkness**,
 2. **Lord of** Ahkal Mo' Nahb, Baahkab.
 3. Your image was seen,
 4. **Lord of** Matwiil,
 5. The gift of **your creation in darkness**.

At the axis of the chiasm is the phrase “Your image was seen,” precisely the spatial arrangement found in the two individuals who are shown “looking” at the king from each side of his throne. Thus, we have a text, iconography, and spatial layout all mirroring the message of the text, which itself is expressed in a chiasm that centralizes the image of the king in the stanza.



FIGURE 3. (left) The Tablet of the Orator from Palenque, Mexico. (right) Tablet of the Scribe from Palenque, Mexico (both drawings by Linda Schele, courtesy of the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc.).

Emotive events are prime candidates for parallelism and, more specifically, chiasmus.³³ One particularly clear example comes from the Dresden Codex, one of the only four remaining hieroglyphic “books” to have survived the Spanish conquest. While the codices themselves are replete with semantic couplets, Craveri and Valencia have also identified several chiasmi in the Dresden Codex. On page 22 of the Dresden Codex, the death of the Moon Goddess is lamented through a poetic, chiasmic construction (fig. 4).

1. *Chamal ‘U Ixik*

2. *umu’k*

3. *xib*

4. *chamal*

5. *xib*

6. *umu’k*

7. *Sak Ixik*

1. Death, the Moon Goddess,

2. its augury

3. is fear,

4. Death,

5. fear
6. is its augury
7. of the Moon Goddess.³⁴

The word “death” or “dead” (*chamal*) appears at the axis of the chiasm as at the beginning of the first line of the stanza, stressing the importance of her passing and the negative augury that accompanies this occurrence.



FIGURE 4. Detail of page 22 of the Dresden Codex (photo courtesy of the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc.).

An Elaborate Chiasm: Quirigua Stela C

A chiastic structure in the text of Stela C from the site of Quirigua, Guatemala was first identified independently in 1992 by Josserand and

Hopkins and by Hull.³⁵ Stela C has arguably the longest and most complex chiasm of the ancient New World (fig. 5).³⁶ Elegant in its narration, Quirigua Stela C employs numerous poetic devices simultaneously, including identical structure and related meaning parallelism, synonymous parallelism, triplets, embedding, and couplet breaking.



FIGURE 5. The creation text portion of Stela C from Quirigua containing the longest and most elaborate chiasm in the ancient New World (drawing by Matthew Looper).

The theme of the inscription revolves around certain events involved in the creation of the universe. In the Maya calendar these creation events corresponded to or near to the Long Count date of 13.0.0.0.0, equivalent to 13 August 3114 BC in the Gregorian calendar. Twelve specific creation events took place around this date, a number of which are discussed on Stela C. The text describes the manipulation of three hearthstones that were set up in the sky into what we now identify as the Belt of Orion. In addition, various gods “plant,” that is, erect stones in sacred mythological locations. This section of the text that narrates these creative events is presented in an elaborate chiasm that also exhibits rhetorical stacking. The underlying structure of the chiasm is AB[a]C[b][c][a]C'[b][c][a]C''[c][b]B'A'.

A 13.0.0.0.0, 4 Ajaw 8 K'umk'u jehlaj *k'o'b*.

B 3-k'ahlaj-tuun

a Utz'apaw tuun “Paddler Gods”

C b Uhtiyy Naah Ho' Chan;

c Hiix Tz'am Tuun-a';

a Utz'apaw **tuun** Ihk' Naah Chak Chahk,

C' b Uhtiyy kah?-kab;

c Chan Tz'am Tuun.

a Uhtiyy k'al-tuun Itzamnaaj;

C'' c Ha' Tz'am Tuun.

b Uhtiyy Ti' Chan;

B' Yax “**hearth**”-nal.

A' Tzutziiy 13 “Baktuun”.

A 13.0.0.0.0, 4 Ajaw 8 K'umk'u, the hearthstones were changed.

B **Three (hearth)stones** were wrapped.

a The Paddler Gods planted **a stone**,

C b **It happened at** the First Five Sky Place;

c it was the Jaguar **Throne Stone**.

a The god Ihk' Naah Chak Chahk planted **a stone**,

C' b **It happened at** the Great Town Place;

c it was the Snake **Throne Stone**.

a Then it came to pass **a stone** wrapping by Itzamnaaj;

C'' c it was the Water **Throne Stone**.

b **It happened at** the Edge of the Sky;

B' New "hearth" Place.

A' 13 **Baktuns** were completed.

This chiasm shows complex, multiple layers of poetic forms. The axis of the chiasm (CC'C") focuses the narrative on the location of the manipulation of the stones during these creation events. Three internal triplets are present ("abc"), the second element of each also serving as the "C" element of the chiasmic lines. Also, the last triplet construction inverses the order of "b" and "c," creating a poetic focus through the breaking of the clear expectation established in the previous two triplets, exemplifying, in Jakobson's words, when "the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination."³⁷ Jakobson defined poetics as the projection of the paradigmatic, i.e., the vertical substitution set of signifiers or signifieds that operate on the notion of interchangeability within a particular class, onto the syntagmatic axis, i.e., the horizontal or diachronic relationship among signifiers in a particular code. Thus, any alteration in syntagmatic axis can break the audience's expectation with a resulting poetic effect—precisely what occurs on Quirigua Stela C.

Chiasmus is the narrative frame of the creation narrative on Quirigua Stela C. The inclusion of three triplets within the chiasm is an example of what I refer to as "rhetorical stacking": the use of multiple poetic devices simultaneously in a pericope. The high degree of poeticity attained through rhetorical stacking serves to bring narrative focus and emphasis to this most important of events: the creation of the cosmos. Quite remarkably, the use of chiasmus when discussing creation events is also well attested in colonial and modern Maya creation accounts (see discussion below). What Quirigua Stela C makes clear is that the Late Classic Maya used intentional chiasmi to highlight important narrative content but also that they could do so in extraordinarily poetic fashion by intermingling other rhetorical features into the chiasmic structure.

Chiasmus in Colonial Mesoamerica

Chiasmus is, at its heart, simply a form of parallelism. Early research by Garibay, Edmonson, and León-Portilla in the 1960s made the case for the presence of parallelistic discourse in several Mesoamerican languages, particularly in the Yukatekan Mayan Books of Chilam Balam and the K'iche' Mayan Popol Vuh. Couplets were soon recognized as the primary vehicle for poetic expression in ritual speech in Mesoamerica. Miguel León-Portilla³⁸ initially identified couplets in the Popol Vuh,

a mytho-historic account of the K'iche' Maya. Soon thereafter, Edmonson, who had completed an English translation of the Popol Vuh, declared the text of the Popol Vuh to be "entirely composed in parallelistic (i.e., semantic) couplets."³⁹ However, this all changed when Allen Christenson, who had published a two-volume critical translation of the Popol Vuh,⁴⁰ first noted clear examples of chiasmus in the Popol Vuh. In the early 1990s, Christenson sent a letter to Edmonson detailing his discovery to see if he would accept the possibility that the Popol Vuh was not solely composed in parallel couplets. In Edmonson's brief response, he wrote to Christenson that he was convinced of the chiasmic passages Christenson sent him from the Popol Vuh. According to Christenson, Edmonson "was enthusiastic about its presence in Maya literature and arranged his letter of response in the form of an 'enthusiastic chiasmus.'"

Axial focus is considered to be one of the common motivators for the use of chiasmus in cultures around the world.⁴¹ Similar to other cultural traditions, in colonial and modern Mayan languages, the chiasmic axis can have a single branch or two lines forming a couplet at this narrative pivot locus.

In the following example, from the Chilam Balam of Tizimín, composed in Yukatek Mayan, has a couplet at the center of the chiasm, as first identified by Christenson.⁴²

1. *U koch bal cah.*
2. *Ti y ulel **Hun Pic ti Ax**;*
3. *Ti y emel **Can Ul***
4. ***ti chibal i.***
5. *Uuc ppelel hab u **chibal***
6. ***Can Ul**;*
7. *Uuc ppelel hab u chibal **Hun Pic ti Ax i.***
8. *Ti tal i y emel **u Koch Chakan.***

1. **The taxation** of the world.
2. That will be the coming of **Hun Pic from Ax**;
3. That will be the descent of **Can Ul**
4. by **succession**.
5. Seven years will be the **succession**
6. of **Can Ul**;
7. Seven years will be the succession of **Hun Pic from Ax**.
8. Then came the descent of **the tax** on fields.⁴³

As noted earlier, in many colonial and modern Mayan narratives, chiasmus is often used when recounting the acts of creation of the world or universe. For example, a Lakandon Mayan creation myth with clear resonances to the narrative on Quirigua Stela C is presented in chiastic form.⁴⁴ In this mythic account, the first three gods of the Lakandon pantheon, *Hachäkyum*, creator of human beings, *Sukunkyum*, lord of the underworld, and *Äkyantho*, the god of foreigners, are in dialogue during the first creation of the world:

59. *Ne tsoy tu yilab netsoy*
 60. *Tan u yilik holri' tunich*
 61. *Yan tunich yokol k'ax*
 62. *Tsok u mentik k'ax*
 63. *Tu wolol ch'ik binih*
 64. *Bähe' ne tsoy lu'um*

59. It is **good** they saw it **good**,
 60. They are watching **stone** **emerge**,
 61. There is stone in the **forest**,
 62. They finish making the **forest**,
 63. All the **stones** were **raised up**,
 64. Now the earth is very **good**.⁴⁵

The events of creation include the emerging or raising up of stones in the “forest,” clearly parallel to the stones that were said to be “planted,” i.e., stood up straight, on Quirigua Stela C. The opening and closing lines in which the gods pronounce what they saw as “good” (*tsoy*) are likely influenced by the biblical narrative in Gen 1:31, “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good (*tov*)” (NIV).

Many years ago, I noted a chiasm in the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel,⁴⁶ the context of which is, yet again, creation.

1. Çihci can y *etel luum*,
 2. *Eb haa*,
 3. *Luum, tunich, yetel che*:
 4. *Cihci ubal kaknab*,
 5. *Y etel luum*.

1. Heaven **and the earth** were created,
 2. The stairway of **water**,

3. The earth, rocks, and trees:
4. The things of the **sea** were created,
5. **And the earth.**⁴⁷

When one considers that chiasmus as a poetic form is used conservatively in Mayan languages, it is therefore telling that so many creation accounts are narrated in chiastic form.

Finally, in the mytho-historical account of the K'iche' Maya, the Popol Vuh, the creation narrative is also couched in a chiastic structure, as first identified by Christenson (see below). According to Christenson, the Popol Vuh recounts the first creation in a large chiasm. "Each phase of the creation is outlined in detail from the primordial stillness to the formation of the face of the earth, along with its mountains and rivers. The final portion of this section then recapitulates the events of the creation in reverse order."⁴⁸

Creation begun with a **declaration of the first words** concerning the creation
(lines 97–117)

The **sky** is in suspense and the **earth is submerged in water** (lines 118–36)

The creation is to be under the direction of **Its Heart Sky** (lines 137–92)

The **creation** of all things begun (lines 193–201)

The creation of **earth** (lines 202–32)

The creation of **mountains** (lines 233–55)

The **division of the waters** into branches (lines 256–58)

"Merely **divided** them existed **waters**," (line 259)

"Then were revealed great **mountains**." (line 260)

"Thus its creation **earth** this," (line 261)

"Then it was **created** by them" (line 262)

"**Its Heart Sky**, [who first conceived the creation]" (lines 263–67)

"It was set apart the **sky**, it was set apart also **earth within water**," (lines 268–69)

"Thus its **conception** this, when they thought, when they pondered"
(lines 270–74)

The gods Heart of the Sky, Sovereign, and Quetzal Serpent counseled together to create the physical earth. The creative actions are narrated in elegant, chiastic form (lines 253–61):

1. First the **earth**
2. Was **created**,
3. The **mountains** and valleys.

4. The **waterways were divided**,
5. their branches coursing among mountains.
6. Thus the **waters were divided**
7. revealing the great **mountains**
8. or thus was the **creation**
9. of the **earth**.⁴⁹

In each of the cases, including the Late Classic period example from Stela C at Quirigua, the salient events of creation are recounted in chiasmic form.

Chiasmus in Highland Mayan Languages

Chiasmus also appears in noncreation contexts in colonial and modern Mayan cultures. Highland Mayan languages, especially during the colonial period, contain numerous examples of chiasmus.

The first chiasm identified by Christenson in the Popol Vuh has an AB-B'A' structure.

32. *I 'yom,*
33. *Mamom,*
34. *Xpiyakok,*
35. *Xmuqane, u b'i',*

32. **Midwife,**
33. **Patriarch,**
34. **Xpiyacoc**
35. **Xmucane,** their names,⁵⁰

Christenson notes that the proper names of the couple are out of their normal order, something that puzzled Edmonson⁵¹ since the female deity name (*Xmucane*) always comes first in other pairings. The problem is solved when one understands the names have been purposely put into a chiasmic construction, thereby reversing the standard order of occurrence.⁵²

Further examples of chiasmus can be found in other colonial highland Mayan languages. The *Annals of the Kaqchikels* was composed in Kaqchikel Mayan between 1571 and 1604 by Francisco Hernández Arana Xajilá and Francisco Rojas. Stylistically the document is written in traditional, native parlance, capturing many pre-Columbian cultural conceptions. On a literary level, the authors show themselves to

be well-trained in traditional Maya forms of poetry and expression. In Maxwell and Hill's important translation and commentary on the text, they point out various occurrences of chiasmus.⁵³ In an excerpt from the *Xajil Chronicle*, a straightforward AB-B'A' chiasmus appears.

1. *K'oj xb'e chi kaj*,
2. *k'oj xqa pan ulew*
3. *K'oj xxule'*,
4. *xjote' chi qichin qonojel*

1. **Some** [of us] **went up** into the sky,
2. **some** [of us] **descended** into the earth.
3. **Some** of us **descended**,
4. **some** of us **ascended**.⁵⁴

Maxwell and Hill note that in this excerpt the chiasmus is not based on syntactic inversion since the structure of existential (*k'oj*), intransitive verb, and prepositional phrase remains consistent. Instead, the inversion takes place in the directionality of each intransitive verb of motion.⁵⁵

A number of other chiasmi appear in conjunction with descriptions of implements of war: the shield and the arrow. The pairing of shield and arrow, however, carries a special significance in several Mayan languages, including the hieroglyphic script, as they create a diphastic kenning representing the idea of "warfare" or "military might." In the *Annals of the Kaqchikels*, the two lines of the kenning are poetically divided when fit into chiastic form. The two terms, *ch'a'* ("arrows") and *pokob'* ("shield"), appear elsewhere in the text as a kenning for "military might," but likely without losing their original, literal connotations. In the following example, the warriors going to battle are told of the armor and armament they will carry into battle. Rather than simply state the arrows and shields they would bring, the author creates a chiasm by adding descriptive substitutions of each. The descriptions do not always form adjacent semantic couplets, however, since they are presented in an AB-B'A' structure (i.e., a chiasm wherein only the B-B' lines are proximate).

Example 1:

1. *Ja ruma ri' xtiwiqaj re':*
2. *setesik che'*,
3. *q'i'om aj;*
4. *ch'a'*,
5. *pokob';*

1. Therefore, you will bear these:

2. **rounded wood,**
3. **straight cane;**
4. **arrows,**
5. **shields;**⁵⁶

Example 2:

1. *a kà ri ajlabàl*
2. *xa ruyon ch'a,*
3. *pokob';*
4. *xa setesik che',*
5. *xa q'ìom*
6. *aj riqan' öq xpe Pa Tulla*

1. As for the warriors,
2. just **arrows,**
3. **shields;**
4. Just **rounded wood,**
5. just **straight cane**
6. was their burden when they came from Pa Tulan.⁵⁷

As Maxwell and Hill point out, the chiasmus is formed by a mention of the physical objects in one line of the couplet, but in the second it is “their form rather than by the nominal referent.”⁵⁸ Thus, in example 1 the descriptor “rounded wood” is paired with “shields,” and “straight cane” is associated with “arrows.” In terms of presentation, the order is “round wood–straight cane–arrows–shields.” In example 2, however, the constituents are reversed, with “arrow–shields–rounded wood–straight cane.” Regarding the use of chiasmus in Kaqchikel, Maxwell and Hill conclude: “In chiasmus and coupleting, parallelisms and inversion may focus on different structural levels; morphemes may be lexically or grammatically identical; identity may not be at the morphological level but at the syntactic level; equivalence may be shifted out from the syntactic level to the semantic. Lines may be paired to balance the weight of syllables as well as the content. The Kaqchikel authors exploit the full range of the grammatical potential of the language in creating the parallel tropes of formal exposition.”⁵⁹

The *Título Sacapulas* is a document composed in 1551 by Canil and Toltecat, K'iche' Maya lords residing at Sacapulas, Guatemala.⁶⁰ The

literary style of the composition is often distinctly pre-Columbian, as is its historical contents. Christenson has noted the following example of an ABC-C'B'A' chiasmus in the *Título Sacapulas*:

1. *Ta xepetic ruc' jun can saketzal ajaw ubi chuchaxic ta xpetic; mana c'ò ta xquitzucuj waral;*
 2. *Ma jabi c'a chila omuch inop omuch cakja ubi juyub ta xepetic c'a chila c'ut,*
 3. *Xepe wi chak'acho*
 4. *Chak'apalo*
 5. *Xa xecojena chiri oomuch inop comuch cakja*
 6. *Xecokena chiri ta xepetic chaumal k'ak' a kajajaw;*
-
1. **Then they came with a lord named Can Saketzal, it is said that they came together;** they did not seek this place;
 2. **There were not 400 ceiba trees and the 400 red houses,** as the mountains were called when they came;
 3. They came **from the other side of the sea,**
 4. **From the other side of the water;**
 5. **They lived there in the 400 ceiba trees, the 400 red houses;**
 6. **They lived there when came Chumul K'ak', the powerful lords.**⁶¹

After his extensive study on colonial and modern highland Maya use of chiasmus, Christenson came to four key conclusions,⁶² which are summarized below.

- There is a high frequency of chiasmus in texts with dialogues.
- There is an increase in chiasmus in texts that discuss or depend upon pre-Columbian religion or traditions.
- There is more chiasmus in texts with little Spanish intrusion (unlike other documents).
- The author(s) of chiastic texts almost always belonged to ruling dynastic lineages, perhaps suggesting a formal training was involved in the production of chiastic structures.

In the case of the highland Maya, chiasmus, in many cases, seems to be a poetic feature of purer, traditional texts, with less Christian or Western influence, written by those trained in traditional practice and rhetorical skills.

Lowland Mayan Languages and Chiasmus

Lowland Mayan languages share the use of chiasmus with highland Mayan language counterparts; however, chiasmus seems to be used in a wider range of speech genres in lowland languages, sometimes including oral traditions or explanations about the meanings of cultural traditions.

Ritual and elevated speech contexts show more parallelism across Mayan languages, and concomitantly, chiasmus has a stronger presence in ritual or formal discourse. Just as parallelism is found in quotidian contexts among Maya groups as a means of structuring conversations,⁶³ a short chiasm can occur in oral tradition recitation. For example, Rodríguez has noted a simple chiasm at the end of an oral tradition in Ch'ol Mayan, a language spoken in Chiapas, Mexico.

27. *Che' ta' mi yäl aha, kpapa, kmama bajche' jiñi.*

28. *Mm, che' añ bajche' jiñi.*

29. *Che' mi yäl ah bajche' jiñi. Aha.*

30. *Jiñ ah mukbä yäl kpapa wajali bajche' jiñi.*

27. That's what **my dad**, my mom **told** me **like this**

28. Mm, that's **how it is**.

29. So they said **like this**. Aha.

30. That's what **my dad** used to **tell** me back then, **like this**.⁶⁴

Rodríguez points out the rhetorical stacking within this stanza, wherein a couplet is placed “inside another to form a chiasmic structure, for example, two couplets AA BB rearranged as ABBA . . . Lines 27–30 and 28–29 are semantically and syntactically parallel.”⁶⁵

A similar set of couplets is put into a chiasm in the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel, written in Yukatek Mayan, where an AB-B'A' chiasm appears near the beginning of the section entitled “The Count of the *Katuns*.”

1703a. *U uayas ba*

1703b. *kab can*

1704a. *Ytz can*

1704b. *uayas ba*

1703a. **Shaped**

1703b. **by the juice of heaven,**

1704a. **By dew of heaven**

1704b. **shaped.**⁶⁶

In this passage, a group of “flower stones” (*nitic tun*) or “red stones” (*chac tun*) are “shaped by the juice of heaven, the dew of heaven, shaped,” a poetic reference to rain. The syntax of the construction with the final line “*uayas ba*,” “shaped,” is not natural but forced by the desired chiasm, and it is clearly distinct from the subsequent semantic couplets that follow with a more standard syntax.

Whereas the use of chiasmus in colonial K'iche'an texts diminished when nonindigenous topics or content increased,⁶⁷ this was not true in other cases, such as with Ch'olti' Mayan, a language that went extinct sometime in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Only a single written document in Ch'olti' survives, known as the Morán Manuscript,⁶⁸ which consists of a grammar and four Catholic doctrinal sections: (1) *Las Preguntas*, “The Questions,” (2) *Ucian Soneto Sacramento*, “The Great Holy Sacrament,” (3) *El Santo Rosario*, “The Holy Rosary,” and (4) a final section with confessional questions and some of the Ten Commandments.⁶⁹ In the doctrinal sections, especially the Holy Rosary, chiasmus and other traditional Maya poetic styles were “intentionally imitated” by the authors, according to Danny Law, and “imbued the Christian language with esoteric, religious, and emotional power recognizable to their intended audience but also lent an air of authority to the performer of the language.”⁷⁰ Axial prominence seems to have been a primary concern in most of the attested chiasms:

Example 3:

1. *Cha' k'otoy ox k'otoy taba, natz et kawahawil Jesucristo,*
 2. *Hatz'na et, lapa et, umenel katahnal.*
 3. *Utzil chakchak apat.*
 4. *Che ne utzil chakchaklaw apat*
 5. *Nohnoh ya'il amuku umenel katahnal.*
 6. *Ahtahnalon tati', tawut.*
 7. *Cha' k'otoy ox k'otoy taba, hunte' kami ti chan, Lahunte' Santa Maria chumul et.*
-
1. Praise be to you, O, our Lord Jesus Christ.
 2. You were beaten and whipped because of our sins.
 3. For righteousness' sake your back was red.
 4. It is said that for righteousness' sake your back turned red from the whip.
 5. You endured great pain because of our sins.
 6. We are sinners before your mouth, before your face.
 7. Praise be to you, One Our Father in Heaven, Ten You are Holy Mary's.⁷¹

Example 4:

1. *Ma ka a **hatpa***
 2. *ma ka a **xehela***
 3. *ubaktal kawahawil Jesucristo*
 4. ***tuxelpahel***
 5. ***tuhatpahel** upat ne pa'?*
-
1. It is **split**
 2. it is **divided**
 3. the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ
 4. in the **dividing**
 5. in the **splitting** of the back of the bread?⁷²

In example 3, the axis of the chiasm projects focus on the importance of Christ suffering “for righteousness’ sake.” In example 4, a discussion on the Christian sacrament, it is the body of Christ that is emphasized at the center of the ABC-B’A’ chiasm. In both examples 3 and 4, various poetic forms are employed simultaneously in addition to chiasmus. Semantic couplets abound and underlie the chiasmus lines. In addition, in example 3, the phrase “*Cha’ k’otoy ox k’otoy*” is highly metaphorical in Ch’olti’ and is likely only marginally adequately translated by “Praise be to you.” The consistent exploitation of Maya verbal art throughout the liturgy, according to Law, strongly suggests “the author(s) either consulted heavily or were themselves native Ch’olti’ speakers with training in traditional (elite) Mayan forms of discourse . . . [with] a firm grounding in Spanish and Catholic doctrine.”⁷³

In a similar context, the Christian authors of the Teabo Manuscript used native Maya poetic forms. The Teabo Manuscript, composed in Yukatek Mayan, originates from the town of Teabo in the Yucatan, Mexico, and dates to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century.⁷⁴ In one particular section, heavily influenced by the biblical narrative of Adam and Eve, God speaks in a parallelistic form common to Maya literary discourse, including chiasmus:

1. *a cici **ɔocbesex yetel a cici tacuntex tulacal yn ualmah Mahthanile,***
2. *bin yn hach yacunt tech y bin yn uilabeex yetel **a kaMycex Utz yetel tibil Uay,***
3. *yokol cabe bayix ti can xan Matan U yantal Numyaa uichilex.*
4. *Bay bin **a kaMycex Utz yetel tibil ua,***
5. ***bin a ɔoc lukeseex yn ualMahthanile.***

1. [If] you keep and guard well all my commandments,
2. I will really love you and you will be seen by me and **you will receive good and virtuous things**,
3. here on earth as it is in heaven you will have no misery inside you.
4. Thus **you will receive good and virtuous things**
5. **if you will keep perfectly my commandments.**⁷⁵

In this case, as in many others, it is likely that traditional, formal Maya speech styles were being imitated when presenting Christian teachings to a Maya audience.

Chiasmus has also been documented in another lowland Mayan language among the Ch'orti' Maya of southern Guatemala. Based on an extensive analysis of all known Ch'orti' Mayan literature, I concluded that chiasmus only appears in two discourse genres in Ch'orti': ritual healing rites and traditional practice or belief recitation.⁷⁶ For example, in an oral tradition recorded by the *Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala*, the commonly held belief among many Maya groups that frogs announce the coming rains is recounted:

1. *E pekpek che ke' una'ti'x tuk'a ajk'in twa' ak'axi e jajar che ke' e pekpek xe' chuchu'taka xe' uche tya' una'to'b'ix.*
 2. *akay umorojse ub'ob' twa' usajko'b'*
 3. *tya' twa' a'xo'b' uk'ajtyo'b' taka e Katata',*
 4. *I ak'aywyo'b' twa' e Katata' uye'b'ta watar e jaja'r*
 5. *che ke' tya' utajwyo'b' tya' twa' uk'ajtyo'b' taka e Katata',*
 6. *Che ke' umorojse ub'ob' i ak'aywyo'b' ayi tuno'rob'*
 7. *Ak'aywyo'b' kochwa' ja'xob' una'to'b' tuk'a ajk'in twa' e katata' uye'b'ta e jaja'r.*
1. Frogs, they say, **already know on what day it will rain**, they say the little frogs do it when they **already know**.
 2. They begin to **gather themselves together** to search
 3. **when they should ask God**.
 4. And they croak to God to send the rains.
 5. They say that when **they find when to ask God**,
 6. They say that **they gather themselves together** and they croak, they say.
 7. They croak since **they know on what day God should send the rains.**⁷⁷

The crux of the story is that frogs “croak to God to send the rains,” which is placed at the axial position of focus in an ABCDC'B'A' patterned chiasmus.

The following passage comes from the explanation of how the Ch'orti' protect themselves from eclipses as explained to me by a Ch'orti' ritual specialist, one who was fully trained in traditional poetic speech forms. His commentary is composed in a beautifully balanced, chiastic pattern of ABCB'A'.

1. *Twa' ma'chi uwiro'b' ub'an,*
 2. *Twa' ma'chi ak'ujxa e ch'urkab'.*
 3. *Ukacho'b' ani*
 4. *twa' ma'chi ache'na kilisar,*
 5. *Entonses ma'chi uwiro'b'.*
-
1. So that **they do not see it** either,
 2. **so that the children are not eaten.**
 3. They used to tie them up,
 4. **so that they would not be "eclipsed."**
 5. So **they do not see it.**⁷⁸

Eclipses are considered by the Ch'orti' to be extremely dangerous for pregnant women. The cultural practice of the Ch'orti' is to tie a red cloth around the waist of a pregnant woman to protect her and her baby from the damaging effects of an eclipse.⁷⁹ The specific language in line 2 of the child being "eaten" speaks to the pan-Mesoamerican indigenous notion of an eclipse being caused by a giant creature who "eats" the sun or moon. The child, therefore, could likewise be "eaten," i.e., harmed by the eclipse. The corresponding line in the second half of the chiasm (line 4) contains the expression *ache'na kilisar* ("be eclipsed"), a compound verb derived from a metathesized form of the Spanish *eclipse* with the meaning "to cause birth defects." Finally, the main point of the description is stated at the axis of the chiasm, that the best protection is to tie a red cloth around the stomach of the pregnant woman.

Couplet-Level Chiasmus Lines

Chiasmus lines in Mesoamerican texts can sometimes operate at the level of couplet.⁸⁰ Couplet-level chiastic lines occasionally appear in Ch'orti' Maya ritual discourse. This "stacking" of rhetorical devices results in an increased and intensified poeticity in the text. The fact that the line is operating at the level of couplet explains why there is not a strict reversal of the component nominals; rather, the chiasm progresses in clusters of two lines (i.e., one couplet) at a time. The following

example of couplet-level chiasmic lines comes from a Ch'orti' Maya ritual healing prayer I recorded in 2002.

1. *Ajtamu de Estumeka,*
 2. *Ajtamu Sendeyu't.*
 3. *Ajsokoyan de Estumeka,*
 4. *Ajsokoyan Sendeyu't.*
 5. *Ajgraniyo de Estumeka,*
 6. *Ajgraniyo de Sendeyu't.*
 7. *Ajsokoyan de Estumeka,*
 8. *Ajsokoyan de Sendeyu't.*
 9. *Ajtamu de Estumeka,*
 10. *Ajtamu de Sendeyu't.*
-
1. Poisonous Dust of This World,
 2. Poisonous Dust Eye Disease.
 3. Chill Causer of This World,
 4. Chill Causer Eye Disease.
 5. Skin Bump Causer of This World,
 6. Skin Bump Causer of Eye Disease.
 7. Chill Causer of This World,
 8. Chill Causer of Eye Disease.
 9. Poisonous Dust of This World,
 10. Poisonous Dust of Eye Disease.⁸¹

The single underlined term “*Estumeka*,” a ritual term meaning either “this world” or a type of ceremonial altar, has its couplet partner in the double underlined noun “*Sendeyu't*,” another ritual term referring to a type of eye disease.⁸² In this context, however, they are names of certain evil spirits that cause disease. Used together, they form the poetic framework for each couplet line in the chiasm.

Another Ch'orti' Maya curing prayer I recorded in 2001 near Jocotan, Guatemala further illustrates couplet-level chiasmic lines. Lines 1 and 2 constitute the first line of the chiasm; lines 3 and 4 the second, etc.

1. *Uyatradesir uyok,*
2. *Uyatradesir ukab'*
3. *Uxek'onir yer uyatradesir uyok,*
4. *Uxek'onir yer uyatradesir ukab'*

5. *Ya'syob' tama e gotera,*
 6. *Ya'syob' tama e gotera.*
 7. *Uxek'onir yer uyatradesir uyok,*
 8. *Uxek'onir yer uyatradesir uk'ab'*
 9. *Uyatradesir uyok,*
 10. *Takar uyatradesir uk'ab'.*
1. The inhibiting force of their legs,
 2. The inhibiting force of their hands.
 3. The stabbing pains of the inhibiting force of their legs,
 4. The stabbing pains of the inhibiting force of their hands.
 5. There they play in the eaves,
 6. There they play in the eaves.
 7. The stabbing pains of the inhibiting force of their legs,
 8. The stabbing pains of the inhibiting force of their hands.
 9. The inhibiting force of their legs,
 10. With the inhibiting force of their hands.⁸³

The axis of the chiasm contains a repeated line, “There they play in the eaves,” drawing upon a Ch’orti’ belief that evil spirits “play,” i.e., mischievously cause illness, at certain locations on earth, the eaves of houses being a prime example.⁸⁴ Additionally, note again that the repeated pair “legs” and “hands” does not reverse order after the axis of the chiasm because the two terms form a unit themselves. The combination of the terms *uyok* (“their legs”) with *uk’ab’* (“their hands”) creates a diphrastric kenning—one found in numerous Mayan languages, usually metonymically referring to “all the body” or another similar semantic extension. For example, in Tzeltal Mayan, the pairing of *okil kabil* (“feet” and “hands”) means “secretary.”⁸⁵ In Ixil ritual discourse, the couplet “over on his foot, over on his hand” is a metonymic reference to what is “beside him.”⁸⁶ In K’iche’ Mayan, *aqan, q’ab* (“foot, hand”) refers to a “human being,” precisely as the Nahuatl diphrastric kenning *in maitl, in icxiltl* (“hand, foot”) does also.⁸⁷ Similarly, in colonial Yukatek Mayan, the expression “*taclacal yalan auoc yalan akab*” (“we all beneath your foot, beneath your hand”) denotes “a whole person.”⁸⁸ In the above Ch’orti’ example, the kenning “legs/hands” is used to express the idea that the entire body of the evil spirit is at work causing illness upon an individual. The repeated use of “legs/hands” shows the conceptual structure of the chiasm operates at the couplet level.

Couplet-level chiasmic lines also appear in other Mayan languages, such as in the highland language of K'iche' in the Popol Vuh.

4948. *XA tz'aq,*
 4949. *Xa b'it ke'uchaxik*
 4950. *Maja b'i ki chuch,*
 4951. *Maja b'i ki qajaw.*
 4952. *Xa u tukel achij chiqab'ij.*
 4953. *Ma na ixoq xe'alanik,*
 4954. *Ma nay pu xek'oajolaxik*
 4955. *Rumal ri Aj Tz'aq,*
 4956. *Aj B'it,*
4948. **MERELY framed,**
 4949. Merely **shaped** they are called.
 4950. **There was no their mother,**
 4951. **There was no their father.**
 4952. Merely lone me we would say.
 4953. **Nor surely woman gave them birth,**
 4954. **Nor also were they begotten,**
 4955. By the **Framer,**
 4956. **Shaper,**⁸⁹

Lines 4948 and 4849 of the Popol Vuh are themselves a semantic couplet, as are lines 4950 and 4951, 4953 and 4954, and 4955 and 4956. The “nesting” of couplets within a chiasmic framework, whereby a two-line couplet becomes the first stich of another two-line couplet in the second half of the chiasm, shows the extent to which parallelism is valued and exploited in Maya discourse for aesthetic purposes.

Conclusion

Parallelism forms the rhetorical backbone for Mesoamerican indigenous poetry. There is little doubt, therefore, why chiasmus, or inverted parallelism, has been embraced by Maya narrators for millennia. Pithy AB-B'A' style chiasms, common to cultures around the world, are likewise found in abundance in Mesoamerica. Pre-Columbian scribes, native colonial writers, and modern ritual specialists among the Maya strategically have used longer, more complex or elaborate chiasms. Not always content with a single poetic device, Mesoamerican indigenous

writers often treated chiasmus as first-stage framing, a polished veneer, open to further verbal artistry through “rhetorical stacking.” Chiasmus has now been firmly established as one of the more than twenty poetic figures employed in Maya hieroglyphic writing,⁹⁰ which has confirmed a deep Mesoamerican literary tradition stretching back three millennia.

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Notes

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Chiasmus Criteria in Review

Neal Rappleye

Introduction

As in all academic fields, the discipline of chiasmic studies has had to grapple with persistent questions related to method. Understanding how these questions have been dealt with in the past is critical in knowing how to proceed in the future. In that spirit, I offer a historical review of the criteria or standards scholars have used to judge the merits of chiasmic proposals. Of course, space ensures this will be far from comprehensive, and I make no pretensions of being able to resolve the issues that have plagued the study of chiasmus for the last seventy-five years. In reviewing past efforts, however, I hope I can adequately identify the problems that persist and provide a fair assessment of where things presently stand. Finally, I will suggest some areas that might need further research going forward.

A Quick Criteria Review¹

Chiasmus, as the term is most commonly used today, “describes several types of inverted parallelisms, short or long, in which words first appear in one order and then in the opposite order.”² The earliest use of the term *chiasmus* to describe a literary phenomenon in the Bible appeared in 1742 in the Latin work *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* by D. Johannes Albrecht Bengel. As Bengel used the term, it referred to both alternating parallels (a-b-a-b), called “direct chiasmus” (*chiasmus directus*), and inverted parallels (a-b-b-a), called “indirect chiasmus” (*chiasmus inversus*).³ It would not be until 1820, when John Jebb published his book *Sacred*

Literature, that inverted parallelism was fully recognized as its own form of parallelism in the Old and New Testaments, although Jebb called it *epanodos* rather than *chiasmus*.⁴ Although a handful of other nineteenth-century writers also briefly discussed the use of inverted parallels in the Bible,⁵ it was not until two hundred years after Bengel first used the term *chiasmus* that a serious study of it in scripture was made.

In 1942, Nils Wilhelm Lund published *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, and with it came an early attempt “to describe the laws governing chiasmic structures.”⁶ Lund identified seven such “laws” in total (see table 1).⁷ Lund’s set of laws had a particular focus on the center of the chiasm, with laws 1–4 all dealing in some way with the function of the central elements. While Lund’s laws were a pioneering first step, today it is clear that they offer little help for the reader trying to identify new examples of chiasmus.⁸

Table 1: Lund’s Seven Laws of Chiasmus

1. The center of the system is always the turning point.
2. At the center there is often a change in the trend of thought (the law of the shift at the center).
3. Identical ideas often occur in the extremes and at the center of the system.
4. There are many instances of ideas occurring at the center of one system and recurring in the extremes of another corresponding system (the law of shift from center to the extremes).
5. There is a definite tendency of certain terms to gravitate toward certain positions within a given system (i.e., divine names in the psalms and quotations in the NT tend to be in the center).
6. Larger systems are frequently introduced and concluded by *frame-passages*.
7. There is frequently a mixture of chiasmic and alternating lines within one and the same system.

Another major study of chiasmus was Paul Gaechter’s 1965 monograph, *Literary Art in the Gospel of Matthew*,⁹ published in German, but this work advanced no formal criteria or laws for chiasmus. It would not be until the 1970s that the issue of criteria was taken up more directly. In 1973, Joanna Dewey published a paper arguing for a chiasmic structure in Mark 2:1–3:6 “using formal, linguistic, and content criteria.”¹⁰ Dewey, however, did not formally explicate her criteria, but in 1975 David J.

Clark made an effort to tease out the criteria Dewey used and reflected on their potential for wider application.¹¹ The “criteria” that emerge from Clark’s discussion actually form more of a typology of parallels that might be used in a chiasm (see table 2),¹² although he does provide some assessment of what makes stronger or weaker parallels within each type, such as his suggestion that in linguistic parallels, “Rarer words are more significant than commoner words.”¹³ Clark concluded that “no one type taken in isolation is adequate to establish chiastic parallelism,” and ultimately, “with the chiastic criteria as a whole, the impact is cumulative.”¹⁴

Table 2: Clark’s Criteria Types for Establishing Parallels in Chiasms

1. Content: themes within the passage
2. Form or Structure: type of narrative or dialogue within the passage
3. Language: the repetition of catchwords within the passage
4. Setting: the place or time of the passage
5. Theology: the theological significance of a passage

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a flourishing of chiastic studies, with increasing awareness of questions about method and criteria. In 1980, R. Alan Culpepper suggested revisions on Clark’s criteria, eliminating the final two (setting and theology), because they are not always applicable, and replacing “form or structure” with “conceptual parallels.”¹⁵ The next year saw the publication of *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, an anthology on chiasmus in various literary traditions, edited by John W. Welch, with contributions from some of the giants in the field.¹⁶ In that volume, Wilfred Weston proposed four “controls” for evaluating lengthier examples of chiasmus,¹⁷ and in the preface, David Noel Freedman spoke ever so briefly of the need for chiasms to “satisfy . . . sets of criteria,” but ultimately noted, “A common fund of axioms and assumptions and a single sure-handed methodology are yet to be established.”¹⁸ A more detailed, but still relatively brief, discussion comes in the introduction, where the editor, Welch, noted, “A most important question arises over what criteria must be met before it becomes reasonable to speak of chiasmus . . . within a given text.”¹⁹ Welch suggested:

If any aspect of chiastic analysis is to produce rigorous and verifiable results, the inverted parallel orders, which create the chiasms upon which that analysis is based, must be evidenced in the text itself and not

imposed upon the text by Procrustean design or artifice of the reader. Therefore, one's predominant concern is over objectivity. In striving for objectivity, it is reasonable to require significant repetitions to be readily apparent, and the overall system to be well balanced. The second half of the system should tend to repeat the first half of the system in a recognizably inverted order, and the juxtaposition of the two central sections should be marked and highly accentuated. Longer passages are more defensibly chiasmic where the same text also contains a fair amount of short chiasmus and other forms of parallelism as well. Key words, echoes, and balancing should be distinct and should serve defined purposes within the structure.²⁰

Nonetheless, Welch insisted "the objective criteria alone do not tell the whole story," and even went so far as to say, "where the objective criteria are less than perfect, it may still, in certain circumstances, be desirable to draw attention to ways in which the text tends toward inverted order, or to focus on a particular sense of balance or symmetry which seems foundational to the text itself."²¹ In Welch's view, chiasmus is a literary artform, and like any artistic expression, the ultimate merits of any given chiasm will remain imprecise and to some extent subjective.

Naturally, the 1980s also witnessed the continued practice and refinement of previous methods. For example, Gary Rendsburg's 1986 chiasmic analysis of the patriarchal narratives used a similar methodology as that used and discussed by Dewey and Clark, starting with overall structures that are broadly parallel thematically and then performing closer analysis to illustrate the existence of more detailed "parallel ideas, motifs, and story lines," as well as "theme-words which highlight the relationship between the two units."²² These different levels of analysis are reminiscent of the "formal, linguistic, and content criteria" of Dewey, and like Clark, Rendsburg agrees that it is "the cumulative weight of the data [which] permits us to conclude that we have here a deliberate attempt by an ancient Israelite genius to tighten the web he has woven."²³

By the end of the 1980s, Craig Blomberg published one of the most significant attempts at establishing criteria for identifying the presence of chiasmus. He was dismayed to find that "parts of almost every book in Scripture have been outlined chiastically," and yet he knew of "no study which has mandated detailed criteria which hypotheses of extended chiasmus must meet in order to be credible."²⁴ So Blomberg advanced a set of 9 criteria which he argued were "sufficiently restrictive to prevent one from imagining chiasmus where it was never intended" (see table 3).²⁵

Table 3: Blomberg's Criteria for Detecting Extended Chiasmus

1. There must be a problem in perceiving the text with more conventional structures.
2. There must be clear parallelism between the two "halves."
3. Verbal and conceptual parallelism should characterize most of the corresponding pairs.
4. Verbal parallelism should involve central or dominant imagery or terminology, not trivial words.
5. Verbal and conceptual parallels should involve words/ideas not regularly found elsewhere within the chiasm.
6. The more correspondences between passages opposite each other, the stronger the proposal.
7. The chiasm should divide at natural breaks in the text.
8. The center is the climax, and should be a significant passage worthy of that position.
9. Ruptures in the chiasm should be avoided.

Unlike the previous efforts of Lund and Clark, Blomberg's criteria provided some clear measures that could be used in evaluating the merits of chiastic arrangements and thus marked a significant step forward. Yet Blomberg was careful to note:

These nine criteria are seldom fulfilled *in toto* even by well-established chiastic structures. . . . Granted that some exceptions should be permitted, the more of these criteria which a given hypothesis fails to meet, the more skeptical a reception it deserves. Conversely, a hypothesis which fulfills most or all of the nine stands a strong chance of reflecting the actual structure of the text in question.²⁶

As the 1990s rolled around, several additional studies in chiasmus and the literary structure of biblical texts more broadly were published. Mike Butterworth's *Structure and the Book of Zechariah* (1992), John Breck's *The Shape of Biblical Language* (1994), and Ian Thomson's *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters* (1995) each made important contributions to chiasmic studies.²⁷ Both Butterworth and Thomson sought to establish more rigorous methods for identifying chiasmus. Butterworth did so by arguing for a systematic approach, which analyzed the text for breaks *before* structural considerations, gathered *all* repetitions, sifted them based on their importance, and weighed the conclusions of other scholars.²⁸

Thomson, on the other hand, attempted to revise and add to Lund's laws, rebranding them as "characteristics" and eliminating some and adding new ones in their place. He then further supplemented them with a list of "requirements and constraints" which every chiasm must meet (see table 4).²⁹ Yet Thomson admitted, "As more confidence is gained in the understanding of the nature of New Testament chiasmus, there may be a case for relaxing some of these constraints, since it is possible so to overemphasize them that a new kind of strait-jacket is created."³⁰

Table 4: Thomson's Characteristics, Requirements, and Constraints of Chiasmus

1. Characteristics

- a. Chiasms frequently exhibit a shift at, or near, the center.
- b. Chiasms are sometimes introduced or concluded by a frame passage.
- c. Passages which are chiastically patterned sometimes contain directly parallel elements.
- d. Identical ideas may occasionally occur in the extremes and at the center of a chiasm.
- e. Balancing elements are normally of the same approximate length.
- f. The center often contains the focus of the author's thought.

2. Requirements

- a. The chiasm will be present in the text as it stands, without unsupported textual emendation.
- b. The symmetrical elements will be present in precisely inverted order.
- c. The chiasm will begin and end at a reasonable point.

3. Constraints

- d. Chiasm by headings should be discouraged.
- e. Selective use of commonly occurring words is often a questionable procedure.
- f. Non-balancing elements, if present, must be very carefully accounted for.
- g. Exegetical evidence must be presented to support a chiasm's presence.

For Thomson, exegesis is the ultimate barometer for judging the merits of a chiasm. It is not enough for there to be a chiastic-looking pattern in the text—there must be meaning and purpose to that pattern. Hence, Thomson also laid out what he called a “two-step methodology” for identifying chiasms: (1) “identify a pattern which is potentially chiastic”; (2) “test the suggested pattern at the conceptual level by exegesis in order to validate the hypothesis.”³¹

John Breck also built on Lund’s laws but went in a considerably different direction. Reducing the seven laws to only four, Breck did not seek to create criteria that could be used to identify chiasms with mechanical certainty but rather sought to infuse chiasmus with even greater meaning. To Breck, chiasmus is “a rhetorical helix: a three-dimensional spiral that progresses with increasing intensity about a central axis or focus of meaning.”³² Thus, Breck trimmed Lund’s laws down to four (see table 5)³³ and rewrote what was left so that they would build on one another, culminating in the fourth law, which states: “The resultant concentric or spiral parallelism, with progressive intensification from the extremities inward, produces a helical movement that draws the reader/hearer toward the thematic center.”³⁴ In Breck’s mind, chiastic patterns should produce “a *helical* effect that on the one hand produces the forward or focusing movement from line to line and strophe to strophe, and on the other provides *meaning* to the passage by focusing upon . . . its thematic center.”³⁵

Table 5: Breck’s Four Laws of Chiasmus

1. Chiastic units are framed by inclusion.
2. The central element (or pair of elements) serves as the pivot and/or thematic focus of the entire unit.
3. A heightening effect occurs from the first parallel line or strophe to its prime complement.
4. The resultant concentric or spiral parallelism, with progressive intensification from the extremities inward, produces a helical movement that draws the reader/hearer toward the thematic center.

John Welch continued to more fully develop his criteria over time and in 1995 published a set of fifteen criteria (see table 6).³⁶ Still valuing the artistic aspect of chiastic writing, Welch sought to bring together both the objective and the subjective factors—including the beauty and

aesthetics (criterion 15) of an arrangement. “Most aesthetic forms of literature and art,” Welch reasoned, “do not lend themselves easily to formulaic definition or complete description, and the chiasmic form is no exception.”³⁷ Seeing a need for some flexibility in the analysis, Welch spoke of a “degree of chiasticity,” instead of absolute *is* or *is not* terms.³⁸ A text that meets many or most of the fifteen criteria would have a high degree of chiasticity, while one which meets few of the criteria would have a low degree of chiasticity.

Table 6: Welch’s Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating Chiasms

1. Objectivity: To what degree is the proposed pattern clearly evident?
2. Purpose: Is there an identifiable literary reason to employ chiasmus?
3. Boundaries: Does the chiasmus conform to the literary units of the text?
4. Competition with Other Forms: Are there other literary patterns present?
5. Length: How many keyword pairs are part of the pattern?
6. Density: How many words between the key terms in the pattern?
7. Dominance: Are the key terms the dominant terms in the passage?
8. Mavericks: Are the key terms repeated outside the pattern?
9. Reduplication: Is there frequent, extraneous repetition within the passage?
10. Centrality: Is the center the key turning point of the passage?
11. Balance: How evenly does the passage split from the central element?
12. Climax: Is the central element the focal climax of the passage?
13. Return: Do beginning and end combine to provide a sense of return?
14. Compatibility: Is it compatible with the author’s overall style?
15. Aesthetics: Is there a certain beauty and artistic quality?

Additional considerations came from those who are skeptical of chiasmic analysis, although they do not completely reject the existence of extended chiasms. In 1996, Mark J. Boda produced a list of errors often committed by those proposing chiasms.³⁹ David P. Wright expanded on

Boda's list of errors in 2004, dubbing violations "chiasmus fallacies."⁴⁰ These errors or fallacies are not criteria, per se, but they create a kind of reverse criteria by identifying what chiasms are not, at least in the view of Boda and Wright (see tables 7 and 8).⁴¹

Table 7: Boda's Errors in Rhetorical Analysis of Chiasmus

a. Errors in Symmetry

1. Lopsided Design: patterns are lopsided, with length of units varying from half a verse to several verses
2. Irregular Arrangement: irregular or nearly regular structures
3. Atypical Patterns: unique patterns that differ from common chiasmic patterns

b. Errors in Subjectivity

1. Arbitrary Omission and Inclusion: items are chosen in paired elements, but deemed insignificant when appearing elsewhere in the pattern
2. Questionable Demarcation: section and passage limits are set to fit the pattern
3. Arbitrary Labeling: items are labeled arbitrarily to fit into a chiasmic pattern
4. Metrical Maneuvering: delineation of the meter is susceptible to the individual reader
5. Methodological Isolation: alternative reasons for the pattern are ignored

c. Errors in Probability

1. Frequency Fallacy: alternative reasons for repetition of high frequency or technical terms are ignored.
2. Accidental Odds: gender, number of nouns, parts of speech, etc. often form patterns by accident
3. Metrical Consistency: evenness of line length increases the odds of having matches in meter on each side of the center, giving a false impression of chiasmic structuring

d. Errors in Purpose

1. Purposeless Structure: the structure has no purpose or effect
2. Presupposition That Center Is Important: falsely assuming that the center of the structure is the center of thought

Table 8: Wright's Chiasmus Fallacies

a. Errors in Symmetry

1. Lopsided Design/Chiastic Imbalance: members are of unequal length, or paired elements vary in length from one another
2. Irregular Arrangement: partial chiasms, or inexact or convoluted designs

b. Errors in Subjectivity

1. Omission of Conflicting Evidence: ignoring comparable elements that do not fit the pattern
2. Arbitrary Labeling/Chiastic Harmonization: wording descriptions to establish pattern or hide inconsistencies
3. Ignoring Full Context: using only part of a text while ignoring the rest
4. Arbitrary Division (Chiastic Dissimilation): subdividing a passage that is coherent to provide a correlation with two paired members
5. Dissociation of Like Members: not pairing two elements that could be paired
6. Inconsistency of Pairing Criteria: associating different pairs on the basis of different similarities
7. Non-dominant or Common Elements: using ordinary words or ideas
8. Frequency Fallacy: using necessarily repeated technical terms or genre features
9. Atypical Patterns and Techniques: considering an untypical or unique pattern or element structurally significant
10. Questionable Demarcation: demarcating a chiastic structure that does not fit the range of a passage as determined by other methods
11. Methodological Isolation: ignoring other explanations that may exist for the ordering of material
12. Overlapping Chiastic or Other Literary Structures: proposing a chiastic structure where multiple conflicting or overlapping structures exist
13. Argument from Design: assuming that a structure must be intended

14. Metrical Maneuvering: adjusting metrical analysis to make the structure work
- c. Errors in Probability
 1. Accidental Odds: paired elements and larger chiastic forms may exist by coincidence
 2. Metrical Consistency: coincidence in metrical similarity is possible, especially when line length is similar throughout the composition
- d. Errors in Quantity and Scope
 1. Large Passage: the larger the passage, the greater the chance of finding coincidental chiasms
 2. Simple Structure: an undeveloped structure may occur by chance (for example, a-b-a')
- e. Errors in Meaning and Purpose
 1. Purposeless Structure: not defining or finding a purpose or effect for the structure
 2. False Purpose and Meaning: attributing a skewed purpose or meaning; going beyond the plain meaning of the text

It seems important to note, however, that like many of those proposing criteria lists, Wright includes the caveat, "Obviously these observations cannot be used mechanically to prove or disprove the presence of chiasmus by their absence or presence. They have to be employed as guidelines for consideration in the study of any given passage."⁴²

In 1999, David Dorsey published *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, which included a detailed introductory section, laying out step-by-step how he goes about identifying the structure of a passage.⁴³ While this process is not easily reduced to a simple list of criteria, as part of his larger discussion of methods he does produce a list of ten "guidelines" for identifying the structure of a passage (table 9).⁴⁴ These guidelines ultimately represent only one facet of Dorsey's multi-step, multi-tiered approach. Dorsey's method, however, is driven by a single, overriding concern: "Would people in the original audience . . . have perceived its arrangement as I have analyzed it? If the answer to this question is uncertain, the analysis should be reevaluated."⁴⁵

Table 9: Dorsey's Guidelines for Analyzing the Arrangement of Textual Units

1. Objective Links: Identify (near) verbatim repetition of place, time, characters, genre, etc.
2. Prominent Links: Consider echoes established by features that are prominent in both units
3. Multiple Links: Spot links established by several different shared elements in both units
4. Unique Links: Associate echoes created by features that are unique to the two units
5. Easily Perceived Links: Recognize links that an ancient audience could have easily noticed or recognized
6. Author's Agenda: Identify links that further the author's agenda or intended message
7. Danger of Forcing Loose Ends: Resist the temptation to force loose ends into a perceived pattern
8. Danger of Rearranging Texts: Avoid patterns that require the text to be rearranged
9. Danger of Reductionism: Avoid reducing all units to the same pattern
10. Analyses of Other Scholars: Consider the analyses of others which differ from your own

A year later, Wayne Brouwer's *The Literary Development of John 13–17* paid careful attention to method, providing a review of past approaches to criteria and ultimately adopting Blomberg's criteria in his own analysis.⁴⁶

By the turn of the millennium, inattention to criteria and method in chiasmic analyses had become a far less common problem. Indeed, now, a new kind of problem emerged: the proliferation of varying sets of criteria. Every new graduate student who took up chiasmus in any way in their dissertation would spend some time working out some form of criteria.⁴⁷ Chapter 2 in Steven R. Scott's 2010 doctoral dissertation, for example, engaged in a probability analysis of chiasmic structures which yields seven proposed criteria.⁴⁸

In 2016, doctoral student James Patrick proposed seven criteria adapted from the intertextual studies of Richard Hays (see table 10).⁴⁹ There is a certain brilliance in this approach because chiasmus can be

seen as a type of intratextuality—that is, chiastic patterns are ultimately about the internal relationships within the text. Further setting Patrick’s work apart is his effort to not only establish criteria themselves, but also to establish “stages of assessment,” wherein the *order* in which the criteria are applied is laid out.⁵⁰ He thus gives higher priority to specific criteria.

Table 10: Patrick’s Criteria for Establishing Intratextuality

1. Balance: The two episodes should be parallel with each other alone, at an equivalent position, and of similar length
2. Volume: There should be multiple parallels between the two episodes, both verbal and conceptual, with paralleled elements that do not feature regularly at other points
3. Weight: The parallels should be between weighty elements in each episode rather than inconsequential details
4. Trademarks: Types of parallels at work should be specified, thus building up trademark techniques of the author
5. Integrity: Messages communicated through parallelism between episodes should be consistent with overall structure
6. Agreement: The majority of parallels should be able to be reinforced with reference to the work of other scholars
7. Satisfaction: Parallels should be satisfying to both lay readers and scholars

Can a Consensus Emerge?

Identifying Six Commonly Mentioned Criteria

Clearly, there are a number of challenges within chiastic studies, and the discussion about how to identify chiasms continues.⁵¹ But pointing out the many different lists of criteria floating around overstates the level of disarray and confusion. Even though there is no universally accepted set of criteria, several common threads run throughout the various proposals. Based on my survey of the literature, I have identified some of the most widely agreed upon criteria, shown in table 11.⁵²

Table 11: Six Commonly Agreed on Criteria for Evaluating and Analyzing Chiasms

1. Chiasms should conform to natural literary boundaries.⁵³
2. A climax or turning point should be found at the center.⁵⁴
3. Chiasms should display a relatively well-balanced symmetry.⁵⁵

4. The structure should be based on major keywords, phrases, or themes.⁵⁶
5. Chiasms should manifest little, if any, extraneous repetition or divergent materials.⁵⁷
6. The chiastic order should typically not compete with other strong literary forms.⁵⁸

Does this list represent the very best set of criteria? Perhaps not. It does, however, represent the ideas that have proven to have broad utility in the eyes of several different analysts. As one set of criteria after another gets critically examined and replaced, these six criteria persist again and again in the literature, and some weight stands behind each of these criteria.

Still, this should not be mistaken for an emerging consensus. One or more of these criteria has been challenged in recent years, and no criterion is *universally* accepted. At the very least, these six criteria represent common ground. While no one scholar may agree with the list in its entirety, every scholar probably agrees with *something* on this list—and hopefully two, or three, or more. As such, it may at least provide scholars with somewhere to start moving forward.

What Still Needs to be Done in the Study of Chiastic Criteria?

In light of this review of the literature on chiasmus criteria, a number of persistent issues and questions come to mind, which may need to be addressed at some point in the future, not the least of which is figuring what a chiasm *is*, exactly.⁵⁹ We need to know something of what it is we are looking for, if we are going to be able to evaluate the merits of any criteria proposing to help us find it. A basic definition of chiasmus was introduced above, but some would consider such a definition inadequate, and there are good reasons why. Is really *any* inverted pattern of parallels a chiasm, even accidental or meaningless ones? If so, then those are certainly not the *type* of chiasms we are trying to find. Breck, Thomson, and others contend that chiasms, by definition, have meaning; if that is true, then useful criteria need to reflect that (and many of them do).

Related to questions of meaning are questions of intentionality—and this is usually what chiasmus criteria are most specifically aiming to resolve. The goal is to identify structures that are *deliberate*, not *accidental*. While some authors might sometimes refer to “accidental chiasms,”

I would contend that intentionality should, like meaning, be built into the definition. While random, accidental inverted patterns sometimes occur, these are not what we are seeking to discover and should not be considered true chiasms. Chiasms that are worth studying are intentional, purposeful structures used by an author deliberately to give a passage weight, meaning, and beauty. But questions still arise as to what this means.

Put in terms of intentional vs. accidental, I think most agree that intentional is what we are looking for. But is there a difference between intentional and *conscious* chiasms, or accidental and *subconscious* chiasms? Some have suggested that just as native speakers of a language naturally and unconsciously speak in accordance with many complex and orderly rules of syntax and grammar, so might a scribe immersed in a literary culture which favors chiasmus use it unconsciously.⁶⁰ Is such use accidental? Musicians and artists similarly create beautiful works of art and music in accordance with already existing rules of order, but the person creating the music or art may not be consciously aware of all those rules. Yet, although the rules were followed only subconsciously, no one would assert that the final product was an accident or the result of random chance, and certainly the musical or artistic rendition is often still beautiful and worthy of notice as a work of art.⁶¹ What about chiasmus? Can chiasms be composed subconsciously that are still deliberate, meaningful, and beautiful?

Terminological issues, as well, could benefit from some careful discussion among scholars. A number of terms other than *chiasmus* have been used in reference to inverted parallelism, such as symmetrical parallels, concentric symmetry, antimetabole, palistrophe, envelope structures, and ring form. Are these all merely synonyms for chiasmus, or are there nuances of meaning that differentiate them? It seems to depend on whom is using the term. Some use *chiasmus* as a catch-all term for all forms of reverse symmetry, while others consider it one of many different types of inverted parallels. For example, some would differentiate between inverted patterns that have a single element in the center (a-b-c-b-a) from those with two elements in the center (a-b-c-c-b-a), with only the latter being a chiasm and the former considered a concentric pattern.⁶² There even seems to be disagreement on how to use *chiasmus* vs. *chiasm*, with some treating the terms as synonymous while others use them in distinct ways.⁶³ These terminological issues are not often discussed in the literature, but scholars could benefit from greater terminological precision, which often brings greater clarity to the exposition of any subject.

There may also be a need for clarifying and identifying separate criteria for chiasmus in different cultures. Is the use of chiasmus in the New Testament the same as the use of chiasmus in the Old Testament? What about chiasmus in the broader Greco-Roman or ancient Near Eastern cultures? If there are differences in how chiasmus functions transculturally, does that have any impact on how it is identified? What about the use of chiasmus beyond the sphere of “the biblical world,” such as in the works of Beowulf or Shakespeare?⁶⁴ In the 1980s, Allen Christenson identified chiasmus in the Popol Vuh, the sacred book of the K’iche’ Maya,⁶⁵ and since that time Gretchen Whalen has stated that “chiasmus . . . is the culmination of Maya literary style.”⁶⁶ How might understanding the way chiasmus is used in Maya literature and other cultures from outside the biblical world inform the discussion of chiasmus criteria?

This brings up issues of descriptive vs. prescriptive criteria—something that comes up in the literature, particularly as a criticism of Lund, Breck, and others. Criteria like the “laws” of Lund and Breck are seen as only *describing* how chiasmus works and functions, not *prescribing* its identifying characteristics. For the most part, I agree that this observation is accurate. At the same time, however, *if* chiasmus is known to function a certain way, and a proposed chiasm *does not* work that way, would that not be evidence that it is not a chiasm at all? Do descriptive criteria not then become prescriptive in that case? It would seem that anything which accurately describes chiasmus can help to accurately prescribe chiasmus. But the catch is “accurately”—and this is where a deeper problem surfaces. In order to identify chiasms, you have to know what a valid chiasm is. You can only know what a valid chiasm is, however, if you have identified valid chiasms to study. But you cannot identify valid chiasms without already knowing what a valid chiasm is and what it looks like. A certain amount of circularity exists in this process; greater awareness in dealing with this issue may be called for going forward.⁶⁷

Finally, there is the tension of objective vs. subjective judgments in establishing criteria. This is strongly debated in the literature. Everyone wants to establish “rigorous criteria” that can resolve problems in identifying chiasms. But often, some of those criteria themselves involve subjective or interpretive judgments on the part of the readers, and over and over again analysts note that not all criteria need to be met. Generally, the desire for rigorous methods of identifying chiasms must be tempered with the reality that artistic expression is rarely confined to the rules outsiders wish to impose on it. How to be rigorous in identifying

chiasms while allowing ancient authors the flexibility to use this literary form as they saw fit will no doubt remain a subject of continued discussion and debate as this tool of literary criticism continues to be refined and moves forward.

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Notes

1. I'd like to thank Stephen Ehat for sharing his extensive notes on various scholars and their criteria for identifying chiasmus. These were immensely helpful to me in preparing this short review.

2. John W. Welch, "Chiasm, Chiasmus: I. Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible/Old Testament," in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (ed. Hans-Josef Klauck; vol. 5; Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 78.

3. D. Joh. Alberti Bengelii, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* (2 vols.; 3d ed.; London: David Nutt, 1850), 2:758–60. For an English translation, see John Albert Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament* (trans. Andrew R. Fausset et al.; 5 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1858–59), 5:396–99.

4. John Jebb, *Sacred Literature* (London: T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1820), 335–62.

5. The most significant of the nineteenth-century writers was probably John Forbes, *The Symmetrical Structure of Scripture* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1854), 35–46.

6. Nils Wilhelm Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in Formgeschichte* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 40.

7. This table paraphrases Lund's laws as given in Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 40–41, using Lund's exact verbiage as much as possible so as to represent his ideas accurately. What Lund means by "system" is the chiasm itself, or what most today would call the chiastic structure.

8. Compare R. Alan Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," *New Testament Studies* 27, no. 1 (1980): 6–7; Wayne Brouwer, *The Literary Development of John 13–17: A Chiastic Reading* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 31; Steven Richard Scott, "Raising the Dead: Finding History in the Gospel Accounts of Jesus's Resurrection Miracles" (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 2010), 60. Ian H. Thomson, in *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters* (Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 26–27, attempted to rewrite Lund's laws in developing his own criteria.

9. Paul Gaechter, *Literary Art in the Gospel of Matthew* (trans. Lore Schultheiss; Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2013), <https://chiasmusresources.org/literary-art-gospel-matthew>.

Originally published as Paul Gaechter, *Die literarische Kunst im Matthäus-Evangelium* (SBS 7; Stuttgart, 1965).

10. Joanna Dewey, "The Literary Structure of the Controversy Stories in Mark 2:1–3:6," *JBL* 92, no. 3 (1973): 394–401.
11. David J. Clark, "Criteria for Identifying Chiasm," *LB* 35 (1975): 63–72.
12. This table paraphrases criteria outlined in Clark, "Criteria," 63.
13. Clark, "Criteria," 65.
14. Clark, "Criteria," 65, 66.
15. Culpepper, "Pivot of John's Prologue," 6–9.
16. John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structure, Analysis, Exegesis* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981; repr. Provo, UT: Research Press, 1999).
17. Wilfred G. E. Waston, "Chiastic Patterns in Biblical Hebrew Poetry," in Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 137.
18. David Noel Freedman, "Preface," in Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 7.
19. John W. Welch, "Introduction," in Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 13.
20. Welch, "Introduction," 13.
21. Welch, "Introduction," 13.
22. See Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1986; 2d ed., 2014), 4. Rendsburg does not specifically mention or cite Dewey or Clark, but his approach is nonetheless similar.
23. Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 50.
24. Craig Blomberg, "The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1–7," *CTR* 4, no. 1 (1989): 4, 5. Blomberg felt that Clark "promises more than he delivers" (5n7).
25. Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians 1–7," 5. Table 3 paraphrases the criteria outlined on pp. 5–7, using as much of Blomberg's verbiage as possible to present his ideas accurately.
26. Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians 1–7," 7, capitalization altered.
27. Mike Butterworth, *Structure and the Book of Zechariah* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992); John Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language: Chiasmus in the Scriptures and Beyond* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994); Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*.
28. Butterworth, *Structure and the Book of Zechariah*, 60.
29. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 25–33. Table 4 paraphrases Thomson's characteristics, requirements, and constraints, relying on his own verbiage as much as possible to present his ideas accurately. The lowercase lettering for each criterion preserves the lettering used by Thomson.
30. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 32.
31. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 33–34.
32. Breck, *Shape of Biblical Language*, 58.
33. The criteria in table 5 directly quote the criteria headings used by Breck, *Shape of Biblical Language*, 335–39.
34. Breck, *Shape of Biblical Language*, 339.
35. Breck, *Shape of Biblical Language*, 42.
36. The criteria in this table paraphrase John W. Welch, "Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4 (Fall 1995): 1–14; republished in *Chiasmus Bibliography*, ed. John W. Welch and Daniel B. McKinlay (Provo, UT: Research Press, 1999), 157–74. Welch's own verbiage is frequently used to ensure his views are faithfully presented.

37. Welch, "Criteria" (1999), 172.
38. Welch, "Criteria" (1995), 11. See also Clark, "Criteria," 65: "Parallelism of content . . . is to be seen as a cline with varying degrees of strength and persuasiveness rather than as a feature which is definitely either present or absent."
39. M. J. Boda, "Chiasmus in Ubiquity: Symmetrical Mirages in Nehemiah 9," *JSOT* 71 (1996): 55–70.
40. David P. Wright, "The Fallacies of Chiasmus: A Critique of Structures Proposed for the Covenant Collection (Exodus 20:23–23:19)," *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 10 (2004): 143–68.
41. These tables paraphrase Boda, "Chiasmus in Ubiquity," 56–58; and Wright, "Fallacies of Chiasmus," 166–68, drawing on their own verbiage as much as possible so as to represent their ideas accurately.
42. Wright, "Fallacies of Chiasmus," 168.
43. See David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis–Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1999), 15–44.
44. Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 34–35. Table 9 paraphrases Dorsey, using his own verbiage as much as possible so as to represent his ideas accurately.
45. Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 35. Compare p. 33: "The determining question must always be this: could the ancient audience have perceived and appreciated the echo?"
46. See Brouwer, *Literary Development of John 13–17*.
47. See Matthew Thomas Gerlach, "Lex Orandi, Lex Legendi: A Correlation of the Roman Canon and the Fourfold Sense of Scripture" (PhD diss., Marquette University, 2009), 174–82; David Mark Heath, "Chiastic Structures in Hebrews: A Study of Form and Function in Biblical Discourse" (PhD diss., University of Stellenbosch, 2011), 59–113; Michelle L. Bellamy, "The Elijah-Elisha Cycle of Stories: A Ring Composition" (PhD diss., Boston University, 2013), 56–58.
48. Scott, "Raising the Dead," 53–163, esp. 141–44.
49. James E. Patrick, "The Prophetic Structure of 1–2 Samuel" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2016), 88–98. Table 10 paraphrases Patrick, using as much of his verbiage as possible so as to accurately represent his ideas.
50. Patrick, "Prophetic Structure," 98–99, 238.
51. For example, Joshua Berman recently proposed four criteria, while questioning some of the assumptions previously used in other studies, showing the discussion is indeed on-going. See Joshua Berman, "Criteria for Establishing Chiastic Structure: Lamentations 1 and 2 as Test Cases," *Maarav: A Journal for the Study of the Northwest Semitic Languages and Literatures* 21, nos. 1–2 (2014): 57–69.
52. I have tried to articulate common themes I have noticed in the various discussions cited above; exact wording and nuance of meaning naturally differs from scholar to scholar. I have provided notes identifying some of the scholars proposing or agreeing with these criteria, but these sources should be directly consulted before assuming my summary statement is representative of any given scholar's view. Furthermore, this is not a comprehensive list of criteria with widespread support, and no doubt there are other widely accepted criteria that could be added to this list. These six criteria stuck out to me most prominently during the course of this study, but a comprehensive and systematic analysis of proposed criteria remains to be done in determining exactly what are the most widely agreed upon criteria and methods.
53. Welch, "Criteria" (1995), 6 (no. 3); Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians 1–7," 7 (no. 7); Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 21–25; Butterworth, *Structure and the Book of*

Zechariah, 60 (no. 6a); Berman, "Criteria," 58 (no. 3); Scott, "Raising the Dead," 143 (no. 1); Boda, "Chiasmus in Ubiquity," 57 (no. b2); Wright, "Fallacies of Chiasmus," 166–167 (nos. b4, b10); Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 29 (c, see commentary on "third requirement" on pp. 29–30).

54. Welch, "Criteria" (1995), 8–9 (nos. 10, 12); Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians 1–7," 7 (no. 8); Breck, *Shape of Biblical Language*, 336–38 (no. 2), 339–41 (no. 4), 341–42 (no. 1); Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 31 (no. 4), 40–41 (nos. 1–4); Patrick, "Prophetic Structure," 88; Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 40–41 (nos. 1–2); Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 27 (a, f).

55. Berman, "Criteria," 58 (no. 2); Welch, "Criteria" (1995), 6–7 (no. 6), 8 (no. 11); Patrick, "Prophetic Structure," 89 (no. 1); Boda, "Chiasmus in Ubiquity," 56 (no. a1); Wright, "Fallacies of Chiasmus," 166 (no. a1); Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 27 (e). Although not specified as a criterion, Butterworth, *Structure and the Book of Zechariah*, 18–60, strongly critiques others for unbalanced elements in their proposals.

56. Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians 1–7," 6 (no. 4); Welch, "Criteria" (1995), 7 (no. 7); Patrick, "Prophetic Structure," 90–91 (no. 3); Clark, "Criteria," 65; Butterworth, *Structure and the Book of Zechariah*, 59–60 (compare no. 6b–c); Boda, "Chiasmus in Ubiquity," 57–58 (no. c1); Wright, "Fallacies of Chiasmus," 167 (no. b7–8). Although not discussed as part of his criteria, Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 41–42 (b), also mentions the importance of key words or "catchwords."

57. Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians 1–7," 6 (no. 5); Berman, "Criteria," 58–59 (no. 4); Welch, "Criteria" (1995), 7–8 (nos. 8–9); Patrick, "Prophetic Structure," 90 (no. 2); Scott, "Raising the Dead," 143 (no. 2); Boda, "Chiasmus in Ubiquity," 57 (no. b1); Wright, "Fallacies of Chiasmus," 166 (no. b1); Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 31–32 (e, f). Although not specified as a criterion, Butterworth, *Structure and the Book of Zechariah*, 18–60, strongly critiques others for cherry-picking only a few occurrences of certain words that are frequently repeated throughout a passage.

58. Welch, "Criteria" (1995), 6 (no. 4); Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians 1–7," 5 (no. 1); Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 35 (nos. 9–10); Wright, "Fallacies of Chiasmus," 167 (no. b11–12). Butterworth, *Structure and the Book of Zechariah*, 18–60, frequently critiques others for not checking for other proposed structures in the passage, and his criteria to "consider the conclusions of other scholars" appears to be intended to remedy this problem. Butterworth, *Structure and the Book of Zechariah*, 60 (no. 6d).

59. See Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 25–26.

60. For example, see Breck, *Shape of Biblical Language*, 325–29, which argues for a modern chiasm in an op-ed. on medical research in the *Boston Globe*, from an author who "was not at all aware of the chiastic shape she gave to this piece" (p. 325). Breck argues that "the writer, although making no conscious effort to create balance and concentric symmetry, nevertheless 'sensed' or intuited a chiastic movement or flow as she composed her column" (p. 328).

61. See Welch, "Criteria" (1995), 10–13; Clark, "Criteria," 71–72.

62. See, e.g., Jerome T. Walsh, *Style and Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 13–34; Patrick, "Prophetic Structure," 87–88.

63. For my part, I see the relationship as similar to the terms *poem* and *poetry*. *Poetry* is a style of writing, and a *poem* is a specific piece of literature within the style. Likewise, as I use the terms, *chiasmus* is a literary technique, and a *chiasm* is a specific passage using chiastic form.

64. To see all the different literary eras and cultures in which chiasms have been proposed, see <https://chiasmusresources.org/chiasmus-index> (accessed June 18, 2018).

65. Allen J. Christenson, "The Use of Chiasmus by the Ancient Maya-Quiché," *Latin American Literatures Journal* 4 (Fall 1988): 125–50. See, more recently, Allen J. Christenson, "The Use of Chiasmus by the Ancient K'iché' Maya," in *Parallel Worlds: Genre, Discourse, and Poetics in Contemporary, Colonial, and Classic Period Maya Literature* (ed. Kerry M. Hull and Michael D. Carrasco; Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2012), 311–36. See also Kerry M. Hull, "Mirrored Poeticity: Chiastic Structuring in Mayan Languages," this volume.

66. Gretchen Whalen, "The Power of the Paradigm: Continuity in Yucatec Maya Narrative" (delivered at meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, Guadalajara, Mexico: 1997), 12.

67. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, 33–34, shows this kind of awareness in admitting that his own method is "unavoidably circular" and attempting to address the circularity.

Truth or Cherry Picking

A Statistical Approach to Chiastic Intentionality

Boyd F. Edwards and W. Farrell Edwards

Chiasmus is an ancient inverted-parallel literary form that states a number of literary elements and then restates these elements in reverse order. For example, Matt 10:39 is a simple two-element chiasm:

Example 1: Matt 10:39

A He that **findeth his life**

B shall **lose it**:

B' And he that **loseth his life** for my sake

A' shall **find it**.

This verse has two appearances of element A [“find(eth) his life (it)”] and two appearances of element B [“lose(eth) his life (it)”], arranged in the inverted parallel form, ABBA. Examples of chiasmus can be found in many ancient and modern works.¹

Chiasms can be separated into two groups: “intentional” chiasms whose authors intentionally applied the chiastic form during composition and “inadvertent” chiasms whose authors did not. Intentionality is important because without evidence of intentionality, conclusions drawn from the chiastic analysis of a text might not reflect the meaning intended by its author.

The only way to know for sure about the intentionality of a chiasm is for its author to state whether he intentionally applied the chiastic form during composition. In many cases of interest, no such statement exists, and scholars are left to assess intentionality using only the text of the chiastic passage itself. To this end, several scholars have proposed

criteria for evaluating chiasms,² and we have introduced statistical tools for such evaluations.³

In this paper, we apply these tools to a chiasm in a physics abstract to demonstrate the importance of including all repeated literary elements in the analysis.

The following chiastic structure can be found in the abstract of a physics research publication written by one of us (B. F. Edwards).⁴

Example 2: Physics Abstract, Take 1

A Poiseuille **flow** between parallel plates advects

B **chemical reaction fronts**, distorting them and altering their

C **propagation** velocities.

D Analytical **solutions** of the cubic reaction-diffusion-advection equation

E resolve the chemical concentration for narrow **gaps**,

E' wide **gaps**, and small-amplitude flow.

D' Numerical **solutions** supply a general description for fluid flow

C' in the direction of **propagation**

B' of the **chemical reaction front**,

A' and for **flow** in the opposite direction.

Example 2 shows two appearances of element A [“flow”], two appearances of element B [“chemical reaction front(s)”], two appearances of element C [“propagation”], two appearances of element D [“solutions”], and two appearances of element E [“gaps”]. Example 2 is an example of a “simple” chiasm, that is, a chiasm in which each repeated element appears exactly twice in the passage, and in which each pair of elements fits the chiastic form. For example 2, the chiastic form is ABCDEEDCBA, which states five elements in a particular order and then restates these five elements in reverse order.

Statistics can, in some cases, shed light on the intentionality of proposed chiasms. To do so, we consider random rearrangements of the repeated literary elements in a chiasm and calculate the likelihood L that one such rearrangement will be chiastic. Such likelihoods are expressed as numbers between 0 and 1. Values of L that are smaller than 0.01 can be considered to give strong evidence of intentionality because fewer than 1 in 100 rearrangements will be chiastic, on average. Such likelihoods are small enough to give reasonable confidence that the chiasm resulted not by chance, but by design. Values of L that are larger than 0.1 can be considered to give no evidence of intentionality because more

than 1 in 10 random rearrangements will be chiastic, on average. Values of L between 0.01 and 0.1 can be considered to be inconclusive. Sometimes, this inconclusive range is replaced by a single cut-off value of 0.05, with L values smaller than this cut-off considered to give evidence, and L values larger than this cut-off considered to give no evidence.⁵ Whatever system is adopted, the smaller the L value, the stronger the confidence that the chiasm resulted not by chance, but by design.

For example 2, the likelihood that random rearrangements (such as the non-chiastic arrangement DAEBCEDCAB) will be chiastic is $L = 0.0011$.⁶ This value is well below 0.01 and therefore provides strong evidence of intentionality.

The problem is that this chiastic structure was not actually intentional! B. F. Edwards asserts that he did not consciously, intentionally, or deliberately apply the chiastic form in writing this abstract.

Some suggest that writers who know about the chiastic form, as B. F. Edwards did when he wrote this abstract, might incorporate this form subconsciously into their writing.⁷ To be successful, such a process would need to be powerful enough to modify the conscious process of writing and rewriting in search for a logical organization of ideas, so that the end result would be chiastic. B. F. Edwards doubts that such a subconscious process was at work.

A simpler explanation for the chiastic structure of this physics abstract is revealed by accounting for all repeated elements in the text:

Example 3: Physics Abstract, Take 2

- A Poiseuille **flow** between parallel plates (*F*) *advects*
- B **chemical reaction fronts**, distorting them and altering their
- C **propagation** velocities.
- D Analytical **solutions** of the cubic reaction-diffusion- (*F*) *advection* equation
- E resolve the chemical concentration for narrow **gaps**,
- E' wide **gaps**, and small-amplitude (*A*) *flow*.
- D' Numerical **solutions** supply a general description for fluid (*A*) *flow*
- C' in the (*G*) *direction* of **propagation**
- B' of the **chemical reaction front**,
- A' and for **flow** in the opposite (*G*) *direction*.

Besides the appearances of elements A, B, C, D, and E that fit the chiastic form (in bold face, also shown in example 2), there are two extra appearances of element A that do not fit the form (in italics). In

addition, there are two other element pairs, F [“advects / advection”] and G [“direction”], that could have participated in the chiasitic structure, but do not (also in italics). Thus, in example 3, ten elements fit the chiasitic form (five pairs of chiasitic elements, in bold face) and six elements do not (in italics). Because of these elements, the case for intentionality for example 3 is less compelling than for example 2.

When the elements that do not fit the chiasitic form are included in the statistical analysis, the evidence of intentionality disappears. Because of these elements, example 3 is not simple and its likelihood does not equal $L = 0.0011$ (for example 2). Instead, we must calculate the likelihood that chiasitic structure with five elements could appear in random rearrangements of all of the elements in example 3. This calculation gives $L = 0.044$.⁸ This value falls between 0.01 and 0.1, the inconclusive range, and therefore erases the strong evidence of intentionality drawn from example 2.

Values of L that are larger than 0.1 say nothing about intentionality. They do not say whether or not the author applied the chiasitic form in composing the text. Statistics cannot *prove* that a chiasm was inadvertent but can provide evidence of intentionality when the likelihood of appearing by chance is below 0.01 and when all repeated elements are included in the analysis.

In the case of the physics abstract, we have more information than statistics can provide. We know that its chiasitic structure was inadvertent because its author asserts that it was. And a careful statistical analysis including all repeated elements is consistent with this conclusion.

There is no need to invoke the subconscious mind to explain how chiasitic structure with five elements made its way into the physics abstract. Why? Because once all repeated elements are accounted for, this structure has a reasonable likelihood ($L = 0.044$) of appearing by chance, that is, of appearing in random arrangements of the words in the abstract. The chiasitic structure of the abstract appeared not by design (conscious or subconscious), but by chance. Cherry picking only those elements that fit the form would give a small likelihood ($L = 0.0011$) of appearing by chance and strong (but erroneous) evidence of intentionality.

Inadvertent chiasitic structure in an INFORMIX-OnLine Database Administrator's Guide Introduction provides another example. Including only the elements that fit the form gives $L = 0.000000029$ for a simple chiasm with nine elements, which would give strong (but erroneous) evidence of intentionality. Correctly including all repeated

elements gives $L = 0.66$, which gives no evidence of intentionality.⁹ In this example, eighteen elements fit the chiasmic form (nine pairs of chiasmic elements) and thirty-nine elements do not. It is these extra elements that provide the flexibility needed to easily find chiasmic structure with nine elements, which would have been extremely unlikely otherwise.

In our analysis of hundreds of chiasms in various works, we have seen this scenario played out time and time again: Someone proposes a chiasmic structure that looks compelling at first glance (like example 2), but closer inspection reveals many repeated elements that do not fit the structure (like in example 3). After accounting for these elements, the evidence of intentionality disappears.

We have never found a chiasm for which the subconscious explanation is necessary.

Some chiasms enjoy strong evidence of intentionality that survives close inspection. Two examples are Lev 24:13–23, a simple chiasm with seven elements and $L = 0.0000074$; and Alma 36:1–30, a simple chiasm with eight elements and $L = 0.00000049$.¹⁰

Our results refute simple rules of thumb that favor intentionality above some minimum number of chiasmic elements, such as four or five.¹¹ Chiasms with large numbers of chiasmic elements have small likelihoods of appearing by chance only when the number of elements that do not fit the chiasmic form is small or zero.

Enthusiasm for chiasmus has led to the discovery of stunning examples of chiasmus. But this enthusiasm has also produced many chiasmic proposals of dubious intentionality. As shown above, accounting for all repeated elements can help to distinguish compelling examples from weak ones. To promote integrity, chiasmic analysts should account for all repeated elements in their assessment of each new chiasmic discovery.

In conclusion, cherry picking only those elements that fit the chiasmic form gives misleading chiasmic patterns and meaningless statistical results and can lead to false conclusions regarding intentionality. On the other hand, including all appearances of all repeated literary elements gives truthful chiasmic patterns, valid statistical results, and reliable conclusions regarding intentionality.

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We acknowledge insightful correspondence with David Clark and Stephen Ehat on chiasmic intentionality and especially appreciate receiving a copy of Ehat’s detailed compendium of writings on criteria for the evaluation of chiasmus.

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Notes

1. John W. Welch and Daniel B. McKinlay, *Chiasmus Bibliography* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship 1999), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/book/chiasmus-bibliography/>.

2. David J. Clark, “Criteria for Identifying Chiasm,” *LB* 5 (1975): 63–71; Craig Blomberg, “Structure of 2 Corinthians 1–7,” *CTR* 4, no. 1 (1989): 3–20; John W. Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4 (Fall 1995): 1–14; Mark J. Boda, “Chiasmus in Ubiquity: Symmetrical Mirages in Nehemiah 9,” *JSOT* 71 (1996): 55–69; David P. Wright, “The Fallacies of Chiasmus: A Critique of Structures Proposed for the Covenant Collection (Exodus 20:23–23:19),” *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 10 (2004): 143–68.

3. Boyd F. Edwards and W. Farrell Edwards, “Does Chiasmus Appear in the Book of Mormon by Chance?” *BYU Studies* 43, no. 2 (2004): 103–30; Boyd F. Edwards and W. Farrell Edwards, “When Are Chiasms Admissible as Evidence?” *BYU Studies* 49, no. 4 (2010): 131–54.

4. Boyd F. Edwards, “Propagation Velocities of Chemical Reaction Fronts Advected by Poiseuille Flow,” *Chaos* 16 (2006): 043106.

5. Anthony Hayter, *Probability and Statistics for Engineers and Scientists* (4th ed.; Boston, MA: Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning, 2012), sec. 8.2, pp. 351, 352; Boyd F. Edwards and W. Farrell Edwards, “When Are Chiasms Admissible as Evidence?” 141.

6. Edwards and Edwards, “Does Chiasmus Appear in the Book of Mormon by Chance?” 115.

7. Clark, “Criteria for Identifying Chiasm,” 71–72; Blomberg, “Structure of 2 Corinthians 1–7,” 20; Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus,” 12.

8. The value $L = 0.044$ was obtained using a computer program to make ten million random rearrangements of the elements of example 3, with the result that 4.4 percent of these rearrangements show five-element chiasmic structure. This is the data entry for this program, and its output:

Number n of chiasmic elements: 5
 Number of appearances of each chiasmic element: 4, 2, 2, 2, 2
 Number m of non-chiasmic elements: 2
 Number of appearances of each non-chiasmic element: 2, 2
 Number r of rearrangements: 10000000

```

Number of duplicate levels (normally 0): 0
Calculating... Type command-. to quit.
|-----|-----|-----|-----|
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
Reordering likelihood L =0.0440820000000000
Margin of error (+ or -) =0.0000663942768618
    
```

Readers interested in using this program to analyze chiasms are invited to write to B. F. Edwards, boyd.edwards@usu.edu, for a free copy. Versions for Macintosh and PC are available.

9. Edwards and Edwards, "Does Chiasmus Appear in the Book of Mormon by Chance?" 125.
10. Edwards and Edwards, "Does Chiasmus Appear in the Book of Mormon by Chance?" 110.
11. Blomberg, "Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7," 7.

The Roles of Words, Phrases, and Ideas in Macro-Chiasms

Stephen Kent Ehat

What roles do *words*, *phrases*, and *ideas* play in large-scale chiasms and in the analysis of their form? Just as words and phrases play different roles in language generally, so too they may play different roles in their contributions to chiasmic forms. In the analysis of the criteria used in evaluating a text for the presence of phrase-based chiasms and conceptual, idea-based chiasms, the analyst may see different roles played by words and phrases, depending on whether the pattern is a word-based or clause-based chiasm or a conceptual, idea-based chiasm. Analysis of texts in light of the general criteria for detecting a chiasm—evaluating the likelihood of its existence and weighing the strength of its form—thus needs to allow latitude for words and phrases to play different roles and to manifest various levels of importance in the form.

This paper will analyze and compare six large-scale chiasms found in the following works: (1) Psalm 23; (2) the book of Genesis; (3) Luke's Travel Narrative; (4) Lev 24:13–23; (5) Ezek 20:3–31; and (6) Alma 36. The discussion aims to shed light on the interrelated roles that words, phrases, and ideas play in chiasmic analysis, especially when implementing the criteria of “density,” “dominance,” and “mavericks.”¹ First, it will be shown that Ps 23 manifests repetition of only one substantive word (stated once at the beginning and once at the end, with a related word uttered once at the center), forming a chiasm based on the reversed repetition of other linguistic features (such as meter²) and constituting a *conceptual* chiasm—even without repetition of any other words, dominant or otherwise. Next, the book of Genesis will be discussed, where a few words and phrases manifest a chiasm within a very large text, which may have

resulted either from the original composition or from later editing. Third, in Luke's Travel Narrative, it will be seen that two or even three chiastic patterns may be simultaneously evidenced in this text. In this example, words that are generally considered dominant may be dominant for one of the patterns and not for the other. Finally, this paper will explore the three additional large-scale chiasms found in Lev 24:13–23, Ezek 20:3–31, and Alma 36. These examples demonstrate that macro-chiasms based on reversed repetition of phrases and ideas may exist in a text with dominant phrases appearing elsewhere in the text outside of the pattern but which neither detract from the existence of the pattern nor constitute mavericks challenging its existence. The discussion of the large-scale chiasm of Alma 36, which is based on reversed repetition of phrases, may be seen to co-exist with and, of course, serve as a foundation for a conceptual chiasm of overarching ideas.

Psalm 23

W. Creighton Marlowe argues that Ps 23 is a conceptual chiasm formed by the repetition of parallel *ideas* stated in reversed order,³ enhanced by a most important inclusio (demarcating the opening and closing of the chiastic pattern with references to “the Lord” in vv. 1 and 6),⁴ and complemented by the central “thou” (*attah*)—referring to the Lord—in v. 4. Interestingly, in the text of Psalm 23, there is otherwise virtually no repetition of identical words. Indeed, only four words are repeated identically in the entire psalm—all other words appear only once. Two of those four repeated words, however, are of utmost significance. *Yahweh* appears in verses 1 and 6 and those two appearances in the extremes are complemented by the word *attah* in the middle—*attah* meaning “thou” or “you” (referring to Yahweh)—part of the central phrase “for thou art with me.” Indeed, the phrase “for thou”—*kî attah*—is the very middle phrase of the entire psalm. “For thou” appears only one other place, also in verse 4 (part of a smaller concentric structure within the central element of the overall chiastic structure). The only other two words that repeat are *lo* (meaning “not”) in verses 1 and 4 and the word *yom* (meaning “days”) in verse 6. The chiasm is structured mainly on ideas instead of on words. The following is Marlowe's proposal:

- A **Complete provision:** “Yahweh is my shepherd; [therefore] I shall not want. . . . He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters.” (vv. 1–2)

B Purposeful restoration: “He restores me: He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake.” (v. 3)

C No need for fear:

a **Our need for rescue:** “Even though I walk through the darkest valley,”

b **How to wait for rescue:** “I fear no danger, for you are with me;”

a’ **His ability to rescue:** “your rod and your staff—they comfort me.” (v. 4)

B’ Purposeful renewal: “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.” (v. 5)

A’ Continual provision: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of Yahweh my whole life long.” (v. 6)⁵

Genesis

Yehuda T. Radday has identified a conceptual chiasm encompassing the entire book of Genesis (A B C D B’ D’ C’ B’ A’) and reports having discerned a further chiasmic pattern underlying and co-existing with the conceptual chiasm (1 2 3 4 5 . . . 9 9 . . . 5 4 3 2 1).⁶

A Poetry (ch. 1)

1 “his daughter-in-law” (Tamar) (11:31)

B “Descent” into Egypt (12:10–20)

2 “the land could not support both of them dwelling together” (13:6)

3 “the Canaanite and the Pherizite” (13:7)

4 “which cannot be numbered for multitude” (16:10)

C Solemn change of name: “no longer shall your name be . . . but . . .” (17:5—Abram-Abraham)

D Circumcision (17:23)

5 “the firstborn daughter” (19:31)

6 “last night” (19:34)

7 “seize by force” (21:25)

8 “be a witness” (21:30)

B’ “Ascent” from Egypt (22)

9 “the Lord . . . grant me success” (24:12)

9’ “the Lord . . . grant me success” (27:20⁷)

8’ “be a witness” (31:52)

6’ “last night” (31:29)

5’ “the firstborn daughter” (29:26)

7’ “seize by force” (31:31)

4' "which cannot be numbered for multitude" (32:12)

3' "the Canaanite and the Pherizite" (34:30)

D' **Circumcision** (34:14 ff.)

C' **Solemn change of name: "no longer shall your name be . . . but . . ."**
(35:10—Jacob-Israel)

2' "the land could not support both of them dwelling together" (36:7)

B' **"Descent" into Egypt** (37:36)

1' "his daughter-in-law" (Sarah) (38:24)

A' **Poetry** (ch. 49:1–27)

The reader of Genesis might note that the repeated and reversed phrases (from 1 to 9 and from 9 to 1) do not combine to tell an *account* based on the phrases employed (as also will be seen to be the case with Alma 36, below). Nonetheless, the fact remains that what is repeated and reversed in the repetition are phrases, not ideas. And repetition and reversal of the sequence of the phrases simply cannot be denied: elements 5 and 5' ("the firstborn daughter"), for example, are present both in Gen 19:31 and in Gen 29:6 (and nowhere else in scripture). It should be noted that while the numbered phrases catalogued in the above scheme are repeated and reversed within the text of Genesis as it stands today, that is not proof that the original composition set forth the chiasm so identified, for it may have resulted from later redaction or editing. The point here simply is that the chiasm, based on those phrases, appears in the text as we now have it. The absence of density does not detract from the fact that the chiasm is evident. That is to say, the appearance of hundreds, even thousands, of words between each of the numbered elements constituting the phrase-based chiasm has no impact on the presence of the chiastic pattern. It is manifestly present in the received text.

Luke's Travel Narrative

H. Douglas Buckwalter's analysis of Luke's Travel Narrative, Luke 9:51–19:27 (see structure below⁸), reveals what he perceives to be an overall seven-element concentric structure for the entire text of those ten central chapters of Luke—A B C D C' B' A'. When we look at each of the larger elements he proposes, we see that Buckwalter also has proposed substructures on lower levels,⁹ such as the directly parallel substructures designated abcd-abcd forming the central element D of his ten-chapter macro-chiasm:

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| A Mission of Jesus, the rejected Lord, turns toward Jerusalem (9:51–10:37) | a 9:51–56 |
| | b 9:57–62 |
| | c 10:1–12 |
| | d 10:13–16 |
| | c' 10:17–20 |
| B Persistent pursuit of God and Christ mandated by gospel (10:38–11:54) | b' 10:21–24 |
| | a' 10:25–37 |
| | a 10:38–42 |
| | b 11:1–13 |
| | c 11:14–23 |
| C Lessons on money, possessions, and faithful service to Master (12:1–59) | d 11:24–26 |
| | a' 11:27–28 |
| | b' 11:29–32 |
| | c' 11:33–36 |
| | d' 11:37–54 |
| D Repentance of sin and submission to Jesus (13:1–14:35) | a 12:1–12 |
| | b 12:13–34 |
| | b' 12:35–48 |
| | a' 12:49–59 |
| | a 13:1–9 |
| C' Lessons on money, possessions, and faithful service to Master (15:1–16:31) | b 13:10–17 |
| | c 13:18–21 |
| | d 13:22–30 |
| | a' 13:31–35 |
| | b' 14:1–6 |
| B' Persistent pursuit of God and Christ mandated by gospel (17:1–18:8) | c' 14:7–24 |
| | d' 14:25–35 |
| | a 15:1–32 |
| | b 16:1–13 |
| | a' 16:14–18 |
| A' Mission of Jesus, rejected client king, nears Jerusalem (18:9–19:27) | b' 16:19–31 |
| | a 17:1–10 |
| | b 17:11–19 |
| | a' 17:20–37 |
| | b' 18:1–8 |
| | a 18:9–14 |
| | b 18:15–17 |
| | c 18:18–30 |
| | d 18:31–34 |
| | c' 18:35–43 |
| | b' 19:1–10 |
| | a' 19:11–27 |

In **b 13:10–17** (in bold above) of Buckwalter's analysis, the text refers to Jesus healing a crippled woman on the Sabbath and in **b' 14:1–6** (also in bold above) the text refers to Jesus healing a man with dropsy on the Sabbath. Both events—and the words associated with them—are

significant to identifying correspondences between elements **b** and **b'** of the abcd-abcd parallel structure (all *within* the central D element of the larger seven-part concentric structure). But those events and the words used to recount those events are not significant to establishing the existence of the overall seven-part A B C D C' B' A' structure that otherwise is proposed to span the entire ten chapters. That second-level, parallel abcd-abcd structure that Buckwalter proposes within D is defined by repeated keywords and key phrases found within the two halves of the abcd-abcd directly parallel structure: **b**, “on the sabbath” (13:10) and **b'**, “on the sabbath day” (14:1); **b**, “behold, there was a woman” (13:11) and **b'**, “behold, there was a certain man” (14:2); **b**, “which had a spirit of infirmity” (13:11) and **b'**, “which had the dropsy” (14:2); **b**, “he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight” (13:13) and **b'**, “and he took him, and healed him” (14:4); **b**, “ought not this woman . . . be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?” (13:16) and **b'**, “Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?” (14:5); and so forth. But those keywords and phrases in **b** and **b'** happen *not* to be the keywords and phrases that figure into the makeup of element D itself, the central element of the longer, overall, seven-part A B C D C' B' A' concentric structure.

This point is seen more clearly when two corresponding elements of the proposed overall, seven-part A B C D C' B' A' concentric structure are compared. Take **A** and **A'**, for example. Buckwalter argues that the concentric structure within element **A** is comprised of the following:

- a Samaritan village refuses to give Jesus lodging because he is traveling to Jerusalem; Jesus graciously moves on to another village (9:51–56)
- b Jesus teaches on discipleship (in three separate incidents) (9:57–62)
 - c Jesus sends out seventy-two disciples, two-by-two (10:1–12) . . .
 - d' CENTER: Jesus pronounces woe upon three unrepentant cities in Galilee—Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (10:13–16)
 - c' the seventy-two return to Jesus (10:17–20) . . .
- b' Jesus teaches on discipleship (in three comparisons) (10:21–24)
- a' Jesus gives the parable of the compassionate Samaritan to show an inquisitive Jewish lawyer that to behave in this neighborly self-sacrificing way toward others knows no ethnic boundaries or racial borders (10:25–37)¹⁰

However, Buckwalter's reliance on “Samaritan” in **a** and **a'**, on “discipleship” in **b** and **b'**, and on “sending” and “return” of the “seventy-two”

in **c** and **c'** is not matched by any reliance on those words or phrases in his analysis of the second-level structure in the corresponding element **A'**, which he argues is comprised of the following concentric structure (which does not mention “Samaritans,” “discipleship,” or the “sending” or “return” of the “seventy-two”):

- a the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector is about how the reign of God works: he will justify those who humbly recognize their sinfulness and cry out to him for his mercy and he will withhold his mercy to all the self-righteous (18:9–14)
- b Jesus’ teaching on little children illustrates entrance into God’s kingdom (18:15–17)
 - ends (with a key teaching): “truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall never enter it”
- c Jesus encounters a wealthy ruler—ends with the ruler not heeding Jesus’ counsel and Jesus’ teaching on the difficulty of the rich entering the kingdom of God (18:18–30)
 - d **CONTROLLING IDEA:** Jesus’ betrayal, suffering, death, and resurrection in Jerusalem will fulfill all that is written by the prophets—but for the time being[,] its meaning is still providentially hidden from the disciples (18:31–34)
- c’ Jesus encounters a blind beggar—ends with the blind man receiving his sight and following Jesus[,] his healer (18:35–43)
- b’ Jesus’ visit to Zacchaeus’ house illustrates the mission of the Son of Man (19:1–10)
 - ends (with a key teaching): “for the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost”
- a the parable of the ten minas is about how the reign of Jesus works: at his return he will honor those who have faithfully been about his kingdom work and judge those who have rejected him (19:11–27)¹¹

In short, keywords and key phrases that help to define the ideas in corresponding elements of the overall chiasm in the longer text apparently are not themselves significant to the second-level chiasmic or parallel patterns that Buckwalter proposes within those elements. Conversely, some keywords and key phrases that help define some of the second-level chiasmic or parallel patterns that are proposed apparently do not constitute keywords and phrases in the makeup of the larger concentric structure. Therefore, it is apparent that the criterion of mavericks has its limits and place.

Leviticus 24:13–23; Ezekiel 20:3–31; and Alma 36

First, I will here set forth depictions of the chiasms that have been proposed for Lev 24:13–23, Ezek 20:3–31, and Alma 36, accompanied by a few preliminary comments, and then I will discuss the interrelated roles of words, phrases, and ideas in those three macro-chiastic texts.

The chiasm identified by Yehuda T. Radday in Lev 24:13–23 manifests repetitions of identical or almost identical *phrases*:

- A “And the Lord spake unto Moses” (v. 13)
- B “bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp” (v. 14)
- C “and let all the congregation stone him” (v. 14)
- D “thou [Moses] shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (v. 15)
- E “the name of the Lord” (v. 16)
- F “as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land” (v. 16)
- G “he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death” (v. 17)
- H “he that killeth a beast shall make it good” (v. 18)
- I “cause a blemish in his neighbour” (v. 19)
- J “breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth” (v. 20)
- I’ “caused a blemish in a man” (v. 20)
- H’ “he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it” (v. 21)
- G’ “he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death” (v. 21)
- F’ “as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country” (v. 22)
- E’ “I am the Lord your God” (v. 22)
- D’ “Moses spake to the children of Israel” (v. 23)
- B’ “bring forth him that had cursed out of the camp” (v. 23)¹²
- C’ “and stone him with stones” (v. 23)
- A’ “as the Lord commanded Moses” (v. 23)¹³

Note that the phrases in B and B’ are identical. So, also, the phrases in elements F and F’, which are *nearly* identical, but not exactly, as are, respectively, H with H’ and I with I’. Yet it can be seen in elements A and A’, for example, that the respective phrases are not precisely identical, though some of the individual *words* in those phrases are precisely identical. So, also, with elements C and C’, F and F’, and so forth. The phrases essentially correspond even if all of the words making up the phrases themselves do not repeat precisely verbatim.

Leslie C. Allen,¹⁴ employing chiastic analysis to discern divisions of a passage in Ezekiel, addresses the question of the division of Ezek 20:5–26 into three, four, or five sections. It is Allen’s view that a fivefold division exists, and he states that an “initial clue” in reaching that view is “the parallel repetition of key *terms*.”¹⁵ Allen further proposes that vv. 30–31 add a sixth section, and notes that Ezek 20:3–31 reveals the following chiasm:

- A “To consult me do you come? As I live, I will not be consulted by you, runs the oracle of the Lord Yahweh” (v. 3ayb)
- B “the abominations of their ancestors” (v. 4b)
- C “I lifted up my hand . . . to (the) land” (v. 6)
- D “detested things” (v. 7a)
- E “Do not defile yourselves . . . I am Yahweh” (v. 7ayb)
- F “And I proposed to pour out my wrath upon them, to exhaust my anger against them within the land of Egypt. But I acted for my name’s sake so as not to defile it before the nations . . . before them to bring them out . . . And I gave them my statutes, and my ordinances I made known to them, which humans may do and obtain life by them” (vv. 8b–11)
- G “Moreover, my sabbaths I gave them to be a sign between me and them, so they might know that I am Yahweh who sanctifies them. But they rebelled against me . . . in my statutes they did not walk and my ordinances they rejected, which humans may do and obtain life by them, and my sabbaths they greatly profaned” (vv. 12–13a)
- H “because my ordinances they rejected and as for my statutes they did not walk in them . . . but after their idols their hearts walked.” (v. 16)
- I “in the wilderness” (v. 17b)
- I’ “in the wilderness” (v. 18aa)
- H’ “‘In the statutes of your parents do not walk and their ordinances do not keep, and with their idols do not defile yourselves” (v. 18aß–b)
- G’ “‘And my sabbaths keep sacred and let them be a sign between me and you, so you may know that I am Yahweh your God.’ But they rebelled against me . . . in my statutes they did not walk and my ordinances they did not keep by doing them, which humans may do and obtain life by them, and my sabbaths they profaned.” (vv. 20–21a)

F' "And I proposed to pour out my wrath upon them, to exhaust my anger against them in the wilderness . . . But I acted for my name's sake so as not to defile it before the nations before whom I had brought them out. . . . Moreover I gave them no good statutes and ordinances by which they could not obtain life" (vv. 21b–25)

E' "And I defiled them . . . I am Yahweh" (v. 26)

D' "when they acted treacherously" (v. 27b)

C' "to the land I lifted up my hand" (v. 28a)

B' "your ancestors . . . their detested things" (v. 30)

A' "And will I be consulted by you . . . ? As I live, runs the oracle of the Lord Yahweh, I will not be consulted by you." (v. 31aßb)

Note that Allen's parallel presentation of Hebrew and English¹⁶ identifies the double appearance of *bammidbar* in verses 17b and 18aα as presenting a precise match at what he proposes to be the chiasmic center of the passage (at I and I'). But, while he identifies other phrases in other matching elements of his proposed chiasm (such as in F and F') as very closely or even identically corresponding to each other in what they convey ("And I proposed to pour out my wrath upon them" appearing in both elements), his presentation shows other words and phrases, in those very same elements, that are either not precisely the same or are not presented in the same sequence ("within the land of Egypt" in F contrasted with "in the wilderness" in F'). His proposed elements E and E', for another example, cite a precisely identical underlying Hebrew phrase, *ani Yhv̄h* (I am Yahweh), in a portion of each of those two elements but non-identical underlying Hebrew in the other portion of those two elements (*al tame* in verse 7, which he renders as "do not defile yourselves," and *waatame owtam* in verse 26, which he renders as "And I defiled them").

No doubt, one of the lengthiest examples of a large-scale chiasm is proposed by John W. Welch for the text of chapter 36 of the book of Alma in the Book of Mormon. That chapter is comprised of 1,226 English words (1981 edition),¹⁷ and the following scheme employs sometimes precisely identical and sometimes nearly identical repeated phrases—comprising a total of about 316 English words (about 25 percent of the words in the chapter). Alma 36 clearly forms an impressive example of macro-chiasmus¹⁸ (with two perturbations, at I' and M', bolded below):

- A "My son, give ear to my words" (v. 1)
- B "inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land" (v. 1)
- C "ye should do as I have done" (v. 2)
- D "in remembering the captivity of our fathers" (v. 2)
 - E "for they were in bondage, and none could deliver them [our fathers]" (v. 2)
 - F "he surely did deliver them" (v. 2)
 - G "put their trust in God" (v. 3)
 - H "supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions" (v. 3)
 - I "I do know [those who trust in God] shall be lifted up at the last day" (v. 3)
 - J "I know . . . of the spiritual . . . mind . . . of God" (v. 4)
 - K "had not been born of God" (v. 5)
 - L "I went about . . . seeking to destroy the church of God" (v. 6)
 - M Alma is struck to the earth and, hearing the angel's voice saying Arise, he arises and stands up, is confronted by the angel (vv. 7-9)
 - N Alma falls to earth for three days and three nights, unable to open his mouth; "neither had I the use of my limbs" (v. 10)
 - O "coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror" (v. 14)
 - P "now . . . was I racked, even with the pains of a damned soul" (v. 16)
 - Q "I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins" (v. 17)
 - R "I remembered . . . Jesus Christ, a Son of God" (v. 17)

R' "I cried . . . O Jesus, thou
son of God" (v. 18)

Q' "I was harrowed up by the
memory of my sins no
more" (v. 19)

P' "my soul was filled with joy
as exceeding as was my pain!"
(v. 20)

**M' Alma, on the earth, unable to use his
limbs, sees "numberless concourses
of angels in the attitude of singing
and praising their God" (v. 22)**

O' "my soul did long to be there"
(v. 22)

N' "my limbs did receive their strength
again" (v. 23)

L' "I have labored . . . that I might bring souls
unto repentance" (v. 24)

K' "have been born of God" (v. 26)

J' "I do know; and the knowledge which I have is
of God" (v. 26)

H' "supported under trials and troubles of every kind, yea,
and in all manner of afflictions" (v. 27)

G' "I do put my trust in him" (v. 27)

F' "he will still deliver me" (v. 27)

**I' "I know that he will raise me up at the last day"
(v. 28)**

E' "delivered them [our fathers] out of bondage and captivity"
(v. 29)

D' "retained in remembrance their captivity" (v. 29)

C' "ye ought to know as I do know" (v. 30)

B' "inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper
in the land" (v. 30)

A' "this is according to his word" (v. 30)

Yet, again, several matching elements use matching words and phrases while others only nearly do. Two observations will be made at this point: (1) In Lev 24:13–23, Ezek 20:3–31, and Alma 36, large-scale chiasms are based on reversed repetitions of *phrases* and may be seen to

exist in the texts while other dominant *phrases* in the chiasm may appear elsewhere in the text but outside of the overriding patterns, and yet these outliers neither detract from the existence of the chiasm nor constitute mavericks challenging the existence of the patterns. And (2) a large-scale chiasm, based on reversed repetitions of *phrases*, can co-exist with and serve as a foundation for a *conceptual* chiasm over the very same text.

The first example examined in this section of this paper is Lev 24:13–23, where it becomes apparent that between the elements of the large-scale chiasm, there are a number of phrases that do not figure into the chiasm. Below, phrases forming the elements of the chiasm are presented in **bold font** and text outside of the pattern in regular font:

- A And **the LORD spake unto Moses**, saying, (v. 13)
- B **Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp**; and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, (v. 14)
- C **and let all the congregation stone him.** (v. 14)
- D And **thou [Moses]** shalt **speak unto the children of Israel**, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. (v. 15)
- E And he that blasphemeth **the name of the LORD**, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: (v. 16)
- F **as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land**, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death. (v. 16)
- G And **he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death.** (v. 17)
- H And **he that killeth a beast shall make it good**; beast for beast. (v. 18)
- I And if a man **cause a blemish in his neighbour**; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; (v. 19)
- J **Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth:** (v. 20)
- I' As he hath caused **a blemish in a man**, so shall it be done to him again (v. 20)
- H' And **he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it:** (v. 21)
- G' And **he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death.** (v. 21)
- F' Ye shall have one manner of law, **as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country:** (v. 22)
- E' for **I am the LORD your God.** (v. 22)

D' And **Moses spake to the children of Israel**, (v. 23)

B' that they should **bring forth him that had cursed out of the camp**, (v. 23)

C' **and stone him with stones**. (v. 23)

A' And the children of Israel did **as the LORD commanded Moses**. (v. 23)¹⁹

Apart from words and phrases like “saying,” “and,” “if a man,” and the like, it should be noted that many of the phrases that appear within the text of Lev 24:13–23, but that are not phrases forming the chiasm, may otherwise be considered to be important phrases: “and let all them that heard him lay their hand upon his head”; “whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin”; “he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him”; “when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death”; “beast for beast”; “as he hath done, so shall it be done to him”; “so shall it be done to him again”;²⁰ “ye shall have one manner of law”; and “the children of Israel.” Surely, all of those phrases are important—one is akin to the Golden Rule. The presence of those nonrepeated phrases, important as they otherwise may seem to be, simply does not detract from the inescapable fact that the other phrases, repeated and reversed, do indeed make for an impressive large-scale chiasm.

Similarly, in the second example, numerous words and phrases appear in the text of Ezek 20:3–31 but do not figure into the large-scale chiasm and do not detract from the existence of that pattern. Once again, a number of otherwise seemingly important phrases of the text appear outside of the chiasmic elements. Here is the full KJV text of the passage, with phrases forming the chiasm set forth in **bold font**, with phrases not part of the chiasm in regular font, and “maverick” appearances of important phrases are underlined²¹:

A **Are ye come to inquire of me? As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you**. (v. 3)

B Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt thou judge them? cause them to know **the abominations of their fathers**: (v. 4)

C And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; In the day when **I** chose Israel, and **lifted up mine hand unto** the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in **the land** of Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying, I am the Lord your God; (v. 5)

D In the day that I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands: Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man **the abominations** of his eyes, (v. 6–7)

- E and **defile not yourselves** with the idols of Egypt: **I am the Lord your God.** (v. 7)
- F But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, **I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen,** among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known **unto them, in bringing them forth out** of the land of Egypt. Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. **And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them.** (vv. 8–11)
- G Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them. **But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted:** then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. (vv. 12–13)
- H But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out. Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands; **Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols.** (vv. 14–16)
- I Nevertheless mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them **in the wilderness.** (v. 17)
- I' But I said unto their children **in the wilderness,** (v. 18a)
- H' **Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols:** (v. 18b)

G' I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; **And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God. Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths:** (vv. 19–21a)

F' then I said, **I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness. Nevertheless I withdrew mine hand, and wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth.** I lifted up mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries; Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols. **Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live;** (vv. 21b–25)

E' And **I polluted them** in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that **I am the Lord.** (v. 26)

D' Therefore, son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed me, in that **they have committed a trespass against me.** (v. 27)

C' For when I had brought them **into the land, for the which I lifted up mine hand** to give it to them, then they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering: there also they made their sweet savour, and poured out there their drink offerings. (v. 28)

B' Then I said unto them, What is the high place whereunto ye go? And the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day. Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; Are ye polluted after the manner of **your fathers?** and commit ye whoredom after **their abominations?** (vv. 29–30)

A' For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and **shall I be inquired of by you,** O house of Israel? **As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you.** (v. 31)

The large-scale chiasm in Ezek 20 is somewhat obscured when one presents the balance of the text of the passage. And yet, a chiastic structure unmistakably is there.²² And while the phrase “in the wilderness” is repeated at the chiastic center (in vv. 17 and 18a), it also appears in vv. 10, 13, 15, 21, and 23. I would disagree with Allen about omitting from the proposed pattern the occurrences of the phrase “in the wilderness” in verses 10 and 23,²³ for they could be both considered to be parts, respectively, of elements F and F'. However, the appearances of that phrase in vv. 13, 15, and 21 could be considered “maverick” appearances, though their appearances in those verses still do not detract from the existence of the chiasm.

In the third and final example, while the chiasm of Alma 36 may at first blush seem to lack density (again, only about 25 percent of the English words in the chapter account for the chiasm), that lack of density is more than made up for by the chiasm's remarkable compliance with the *definitional characteristics* of *repetition* and *reversal*. Constituting what perhaps could be termed an extraordinary example of a large-scale chiasm, Alma 36 cannot be attacked as lacking repetition and reversal. The fact that *seventeen* elements, A through Q (as Welch has proposed), or eighteen elements (as I surmise), are *all* repeated is remarkable. And also remarkable is the fact that the reversal in the sequence of the repetition is precisely from Q' to A' in Welch's scheme, with only one “skew”²⁴ (at element I')—or from R' to A' in my scheme, with only two “skews.” That all elements are repeated and that the reversal is so precise, with only one or two perturbations, simply cannot, as a factual matter, be denied. This one observation alone should be kept in mind when any other analysis of the chapter is performed.

And yet, the phrase-based chiasm of Alma 36 can be seen simultaneously as a *conceptual chiasm*, portraying symmetry and balance as a simple seven-part chiasm of *ideas*,²⁵ the elements of which are introduced by the following:

- 1 “My son” (vv. 1–5)
- 2 “For” (vv. 6–9)
- 3 “And it came to pass” (vv. 10–16)
- 4 “And it came to pass” (vv. 17–20)
- 3’ “Yea” (vv. 21–23)
- 2’ “Yea” (vv. 24–26a)
- 1’ “Therefore” (26b–30)

The overall seven-part conceptual chiasm²⁶ (1 2 3 4 3' 2' 1') can be described either by short, topical descriptions (shown in **bold font** in the scheme below) or by lengthier descriptions employing the repeated phrases of the chiasm itself, with each element of the conceptual scheme identified by a numerical scheme (shown below) and with references to the verse numbers and the elements of the large-scale, phrase-based chiasm—A, B, C . . . to C', B', A'—(using my adaptation of Welch's scheme) appended in parentheses:

- 1 **Alma's word to his son regarding obedience, prosperity, remembering the captivity of the fathers, support in trials, and knowledge from God**—Alma's word to his son is not only that in keeping the commandments of God he will prosper in the land, and that as he himself has done, his son also should remember the captivity and bondage of their fathers, from which captivity and bondage God did deliver them, but also that anyone who puts their trust in God will be supported in their trials, troubles, and afflictions and be lifted up at the last day, all of which Alma knows by revelation from God (vv. 1–5, elements A–K)
- 2 **Alma and the sons of Mosiah seek to destroy of the church of God and are confronted by the angel of God**—Only because he has been spiritually born of God does Alma know these things, for with the sons of Mosiah he had sought to destroy the church of God and with them had been confronted by an angel of God who commanded them to seek no more to destroy the church of God (vv. 6–9, elements L–M)
- 3 **Alma suffers anguish of soul**—Alma falls to the earth, loses the use of his limbs, is racked with eternal torment, fears coming into the presence of God, and is racked with the pains of a damned soul (vv. 10–16, elements N–O)
- 4 **Alma's conversion to Jesus Christ**—While Alma is harrowed up by his many sins he remembered his father's prophecy about Jesus Christ, a Son of God, and crying within his heart, "O Jesus, thou Son of God," Alma pleaded for mercy and was harrowed up by the memory of his sins no more (vv. 17–19, elements P–P')
- 3' **Alma experiences joy in his soul**—His soul having been filled with joy as exceeding as had been his pains, Alma stands upon his feet, receives back the use of his limbs, longs to be in the presence of God, and manifests unto the people that he had been born of God (vv. 20–23, elements O'–M')
- 2' **Alma builds up the church of God**—Alma labors that he might bring souls to repentance that they too might be born of God, and he experiences great joy in the fruit of his labors when many of them are born of God (vv. 24–26a, elements L'–K')

- 1' **God's word regarding obedience, prosperity, remembering the captivity of the fathers, support in trials, and knowledge from God**—According to God's word, Alma states not only that he knows by revelation from God that he has been supported by God in his trials, troubles, and afflictions, and that God has delivered him as he did deliver their fathers from captivity, which captivity he has retained in remembrance, but also that God still will deliver him and that in keeping the commandments of God his son will prosper in the land (vv. 26b–30, elements J'–A')

Two elements of the conceptual chiasm—3 and 1'—each contain what otherwise could be said to be “maverick” phrases (dominant words and phrases falling outside the elements in which they otherwise appear as part of the pattern). Yet when the chiasm of Alma 36 is analyzed as a conceptual or idea-based chiasm, a possible *reason* for the appearance of those phrases in elements 3 and 1' can perhaps be discerned. In element 3 of the conceptual chiasm there appear elements M and N of the pattern, and the large number of words that account for the elemental imbalance of element 3 appear between the phrases of elements M and N of the pattern (namely, in verses 11–14a, italicized below):

10 And it came to pass that I fell to the earth; and it was for the space of three days and three nights that I could not open my mouth, **M** neither had I the use of my limbs. 11 *And the angel spake more things unto me, which were heard by my brethren, but I did not hear them; for when I heard the words—If thou wilt be destroyed of thyself, seek no more to destroy the church of God—I was struck with such great fear and amazement lest perhaps I should be destroyed, that I fell to the earth and I did hear no more.* 12 *But I was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree and racked with all my sins.* 13 *Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell; yea, I saw that I had rebelled against my God, and that I had not kept his holy commandments.* 14 *Yea, and I had murdered many of his children, or rather led them away unto destruction; yea, and in fine so great had been my iniquities, that N* the very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror.

Those words of verses 11–14a may actually represent a further, lower-level parallelistic scheme, superimposed both on the phrase-based chiasm and on the conceptual chiasm of Alma 36. Those words seem to reflect the following pattern, all preparing for the “rack my soul” language of element N:

And the angel spake more things unto me,

- a which were **heard** by my brethren,
- a but I did not **hear** them;
- a for when I **heard** the words
 - b —If thou wilt be **destroyed of thyself**,
 - c seek no more to **destroy the church of God**—
- b' I was struck with such great fear and amazement lest perhaps **I should be destroyed**,
- a that I fell to the earth and I did **hear** no more.
 - d But I was **racked** with eternal **torment**,
 - e for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree
 - d' and **racked with all my sins**.
 - d' Yea, I did **remember all my sins and iniquities**,
 - d' for which I was **tormented** with the pains of hell
 - e yea, I saw that **I had rebelled** against my God,
 - e and that **I had not kept his holy commandments**.
 - e Yea, and **I had murdered** many of his children,
 - e or rather **led them away** unto destruction;
 - e yea, and in fine so great had been **my iniquities**,
 - d' that N the very thought of coming into the presence of my God
did **rack my soul** with inexpressible horror.

Similarly, and perhaps more strongly, in element 1' of the conceptual chiasm there appear elements E' and B' of the pattern, in each of which the large number of words accounts for the elemental imbalance of element 1'. In element E' of the chiasm (v. 29), the following parallelism seems to add emphatic repetition to the central idea of deliverance from bondage and captivity (which is element E' of the chiasm):

- for he has brought our fathers out of Egypt, and
- he has swallowed up the Egyptians in the Red Sea; and
- he led them by his power into the promised land; yea, and
- he has E' delivered them out of bondage and captivity from time to time. Yea, and
- he has also brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem; and
- he has also, by his everlasting power, delivered them out of bondage and captivity, from time to time even down to the present day;

And element B' of the chiasm (v. 30) is coupled with an antithetical parallelism:

B' keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land;

- and ye ought to know also, that inasmuch as ye will *not* keep the commandments of God ye shall be *cut off* from his presence.

So, an argument can be made to the effect that not only does Alma 36, as a phrase-based chiasm, show remarkable repetition and reversal—which cannot be denied—but also, as a conceptual chiasm, it appears to show a deep level of artistic sophistication.

Summary

This paper has demonstrated that some chiasms may be manifest almost exclusively in the reversed repetition of ideas rather than of words or phrases (Psalm 23). Some chiasms may be manifest in the reversed repetition of very few words or phrases appearing within very large texts (Genesis). In a text with several chiastic structures, different patterns may simultaneously be evidenced with dominant words considered dominant only for one pattern but not for other patterns in the text (Luke's Travel Narrative). Furthermore, large-scale chiastic patterns based on reversed repetitions of dominant phrases may exist in a text while occurrences of those dominant phrases may appear elsewhere in the text outside of the pattern, which neither detract from the existence of the pattern nor constitute mavericks challenging the existence of the pattern (Lev 24:13–23, Ezek 20:3–31, and Alma 36). Finally, a large-scale chiasm, based on reversed repetitions of phrases, may be seen to coexist with and, of course, serve as a foundation for a conceptual chiasm of overarching ideas (Alma 36).

Stephen Kent Ehat is a California attorney who has done extensive research identifying chiasmus scholarship and structure analysis for over forty years. His large personal chiasmus collection has been donated to the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University and will become part of the library's Chiasmus Archive.

Notes

1. The criteria of "density," "dominance," and "mavericks" are discussed by John W. Welch in his "Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4 (Fall 1995): 6–7; see Welch, "Criteria," 1–14, for more criteria

for identifying and evaluating the presence of chiasmus. Each of these definitions is concerned with the “elements” of a chiasm. An “element” of a chiasm is a textual, linguistic, or conceptual feature (such as a sound, syllable, word, phrase, clause, sentence, sequence, speech, scene-part, scene, act, section, cycle, book, composition, or idea), generally identified schematically with a letter or number (e.g., “A” or “B” etc., or “a” or “b” etc., or “1” or “2” etc.), with the chiasm consisting of the reversed repetition of two or more elements. The criterion of “density” can be defined as the quality or state of compactness or crowding together of the elements of a proposed chiasmic structure. The fewer the number of irrelevant textual, linguistic, or conceptual features between the textual, linguistic, or conceptual feature that form the elements of the proposed chiasm, the denser the structure and the more likely the structure can be said to exist in a text. The criterion of “dominance” can be defined as the fact or state of “major incidents, unique phrases, or focal words” constituting the elements dominant in the proposed structure. Welch, “Criteria,” 7. A “powerful chiasmic structure,” says Welch, will not rely on “relatively insubstantial or common words and ideas” or “insignificant or dispensable parts of speech,” but instead will “account for and embrace” what Welch calls “dominant nouns, verbs, and distinctive phrases in the text.” Welch, “Criteria,” 7. The criterion of “mavericks” can be defined as the appearance of a word or phrase that appears not only in corresponding elements of a proposed chiasm but also extraneously outside of the proposed structure. Paraphrasing Welch, “The analyst is open to the charge of selectively picking and choosing among the occurrences of this element [a particular textual, linguistic, or conceptual feature to constitute an element of a proposed chiasm] if some of its occurrences [appearing elsewhere] in the text are arbitrarily ignored.” Welch, “Criteria,” 7.

2. W. Creighton Marlowe, “No Fear!: Psalm 23 as a Careful Conceptual Chiasm,” *Asbury Theological Journal* 57, no. 2 / 58, no. 1 (Fall 2002/Spring 2003): 65–80, at 66.

3. Marlowe, “No Fear!” 70–71.

4. Marlowe, “No Fear!” 70.

5. Marlowe, “No Fear!” 70–71, here adapted to include Marlowe’s idea labels, emphasis added. Marlowe also discusses the metrical balance in the psalm, which contributes to the conclusion that the psalm is a conceptual chiasm (actually a conceptual concentric structure).

6. See Yehuda T. Radday, “Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative,” in John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structure, Analysis, Exegesis* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981): 96–97 (formatting here provided along with more accurate scripture citations).

7. At this chiasmic center, the KJV renders the phrase in 24:12 as “send me good speed” and in 27:20 as “the Lord thy God brought it to me.” Other translations, however, more closely reflect the Hebrew. See, for example, Christoph Levin, *Re-reading the Scriptures: Essays on the Literary History of the Old Testament* (FAT 87; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 92, where Levin renders the phrase in Gen 24:12 as “grant me success today” and renders the phrase in Gen 27:20 as “God granted me success.” The English Standard Version for 24:12 reads “please grant me success” and for 27:20 “Because the Lord your God granted me success.”

8. Based on H. Douglas Buckwalter, “The Hike of Hikes—Luke’s Travel Narrative (Luke 9:51–19:27),” *Evangelical Journal* 33, no. 2 (2015): 68–81.

9. This concept of multiple rhetorical levels in longer texts is masterfully displayed by Noel B. Reynolds in his “Chiastic Structuring of Large Texts: Second Nephi as a Case Study,” herein at pp. 177–92.

10. Buckwalter, "Luke's Travel Narrative," 70, emphasis in original. (Buckwalter's notes about disciples under c and c' are omitted here, and letters designating elements are rendered in lowercase to match usage in this present paper.)

11. Buckwalter, "Luke's Travel Narrative," 70, emphasis in original. (Letters designating elements are rendered in lowercase to match usage in this present paper.)

12. Note the reversion to direct parallelism at D', B', C', A'.

13. Adapted from Radday, "Chiasmus in Hebrew Narrative," 87. (Here, I complete the phrases and correct the sequence of elements D' through A').

14. Leslie C. Allen, "The Structuring of Ezekiel's Revisionist History Lesson (Ezekiel 20:3–31)," *CBQ* 54, no. 3 (1992): 448–62.

15. Allen, "Structuring," 452, emphasis added.

16. Allen, "Structuring," 459–60.

17. The Original Manuscript of the chapter has about 1,247 words. See Royal Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Extant Text* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 2001): 319–25; and the Printer's Manuscript has about 1,235 words. See Royal Skousen, *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Part Two—Alma 17–Moroni 10* (The Printer's Manuscript, vol. 2; Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001): 572–76.

18. The scheme portrayed here is my modification of John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," in Noel B. Reynolds, ed., *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins* (Religious Studies Monograph Series 7; Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1982): 49–50. My modification adds elements M and M', which account for the lacuna that otherwise exists in Welch's scheme (which skips the text of verses 7–9). I find the parallels in my proposed elements M and M' account for what is set forth in verses 7–9 and the first part of verse 22.

19. Adapted from Radday, "Chiasmus in Hebrew Narrative," 87. Here, again, I include both the completed phrases of the chiasm and the corrected sequence of elements D' through A' but also add, in regular font, the text of the passage that falls outside of the elements of the chiasm.

20. I differ from Radday by not omitting the phrases "as he hath done, so shall it be done to him" and "so shall it be done to him again" from the proposed chiasm, for those phrases, too, are repeated. I would include those phrases within elements I and I' of his proposed pattern, accounting for them respectively together with the phrases "cause a blemish in his neighbour" in his element I and "caused a blemish in a man" in his element I'.

21. The bold font elements of the chiasm depicted here with phrases quoted from the KJV are based on Allen, "Structuring," 459–60, where Allen depicts the chiasm using his own English-language translation from the Hebrew.

22. Shorter chiasms generally are immune from challenge for lack of other material competing for attention. See David Noel Freedman, "Preface," in John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structure, Analysis, Exegesis* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981), 7. According to Freedman, "Questions are generally raised, at this level, not about the existence or identification of the [chiastic] device. . . ." The same principle could be applied to large-scale chiasms where the phrases are presented as text for each element of the pattern, without any potentially subjective descriptive labeling used to constitute the elements.

23. See Allen, "Structuring," 459–60.

24. The term “skewed chiasmus” was coined by William L. Holladay and refers to “a chiasmus which, after the midpoint, begins its way back, only to plunge forward briefly once more, and then, in the last line, offers a set of simultaneous balances in several media which psychologically brings us all the way home. It is a striking compromise between the chiasitic pattern and sequentiality.” William L. Holladay, “The Recovery of Poetic Passages of Jeremiah,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 85 (1966): 432–33; see also Wildred G. E. Watson, “Chiastic Patterns in Biblical Hebrew Poetry,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*, ed. John W. Welch (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1981), 132 (citing and quoting Holladay and giving examples). Note the “skew” in elements B' and C' (v. 23) in Radday's pattern for Lev 24:13–23 (p. 326 above). I here use the words “skew” and “perturbation” to refer to a reversion to sequentiality or to direct parallelism at some point after the midpoint of a chiasm.

25. The expression of an idea occurs by the expression of words and phrases. Therefore, one could argue that a chiasm based on the reverse repetition of words and phrases could easily account for the existence of an overlaying chiasm based on the reverse repetition of ideas or concepts.

26. I use the word “chiasm” here colloquially. Technically, a pattern with only one central element is a *concentric structure*. The term *chiasm* colloquially is used to include both chiasms (with two central elements) and concentric structures (with one central element). The title of this article similarly uses the word “chiasms” colloquially.

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