Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis

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Preface

David Noel Freedman

Chiasm in Antiquity is a much-needed and very welcome volume of essays devoted to the study of a single linguistic and literary phenomenon, aptly if not always accurately described by one Greek word, itself derived from the form of the Greek letter chi (= X, i.e., a cross or cross-over). Chiasm occurs to one degree or another in most languages and literatures, though with varying frequencies and effects. A comparative study of this widespread phenomenon, especially in ancient literatures where it occurs in great abundance is highly commendable.

The basic figure of chiasm simply involves the reversal of the order of words in balancing clauses or phrases. Since the cross-over effect is not required in any language, it is an optional and often deliberate practice which serves one or several different purposes. Questions are generally raised, at this level, not about the existence or identification of the device, but rather about its significance and force in the overall structure. Is it more than a trivial inversion, or does it have some arcane or aesthetic validity with palpable or subliminal meaning?

The more extended uses of chiasm raise further questions. As with much of literature, especially poetry, ambiguity and obscurity are inherent in the form and content: chiasm only adds to the uncertainty and mystery. Scholars now recognize chiasms beyond the simple type described above, chiasms which involve passages of verse or prose ranging in length from a few sentences to hundreds of thousands of words. This more complex form of chiasm is not merely grammatical but structural or intentional; it systematically serves to concentrate the reader’s or hearer’s interest on the central expression. The number of such chiastic constructions which satisfy both sets of criteria: inversion and balance on the one hand, and climactic centrality on the other, is substantially less than the simpler mechanical variety. But wherever they are present, these structures may add novel perspectives and unexpected dimension to the texts in which they appear.

There is yet a further extension of the term chiasm. Even more difficult and controversial issues arise when chiasm is defined in terms of thought and theme, rather than the more visible words and patterns. Inevitably a large subjective element enters into these discussions, and the presence or absence of chiasm on this level can become almost a voter’s choice.

Scholars, therefore, may range between separated areas of research in their approach to chiasm. On the one extreme, the phenomenon itself can be described or defined rigorously, so that it is verifiable and often self-evident; while in this sense it is part of a deliberate pattern of composition, it nevertheless leaves the wider world of symbolism and significance to others. At the other end of the spectrum, definitions and limits are hard to determine, and speculation is rife; but large issues of meaning and intention can be raised, and important questions about the nature and significance of extended literary pieces are considered. The study of these great chiasms has enormous implications for analysis and interpretation, but the wider the scope and the more extended the reach, the less certain the results necessarily become. In the end, neither approach will escape if carried to extremes.

Only a book with many varieties of presentation can display the present state of chiastic studies. While a great deal of important work has been done across the many domains of ancient literature, the study of ancient literary techniques is still in ferment and flux. A common fund of axioms and assumptions and a single sure-handed methodology are yet to be established. The present volume reflects accurately both the ferment and the progress which is being made on a variety of fronts, and is all the more to be welcomed for bringing together the results of
research in different literatures of antiquity The editor is to be commended for his catholicity and courage, and for his own original contributions in several domains including a unique treatment of the Book of Mormon. His introduction to the whole work is indispensable.

David Noel Freedman
Introduction

John W. Welch

When Nils Lund, the scholar who has probably done more than any other to bring the study of chiasmus to life in the twentieth century, was first introduced to what was then being designated as the „inverted order” in 1908, he had many legitimate reasons for being initially skeptical. Such studies were not far advanced at that point, and the form itself appeared somewhat unlikely. While forging ahead to apply the principle of chiasmus to the study of the Bible, Lund had no way of knowing where such studies might lead and how they would ultimately be received.

When the present writers were first introduced to chiasmus, over half a century later, at least the need for skepticism had been removed. Directly available was a score of plausible chiastic scriptural analyses, particularly those in Lund’s own volume on *Chiasmus in the New Testament* (Chapel Hill: 1942). Further pursuits did not need to be directed toward answering the threshold question of whether chiasmus exists, but rather to the evaluative questions of what its presence means and how often it can be said to occur.

Without overstating its importance, it can now be said that one of the most salient developments in the study of ancient literature over the past few decades is the growing awareness of the presence of chiasmus in the composition of ancient writings. This development has been especially notable in the field of biblical studies, but it is also manifest in the study of ancient prose and poetry generally. The length of the bibliography at the end of this volume alone is indicative of the vast number of recent treatises and scholarly articles which have employed chiasmus at one stage or another in their analyses of ancient texts. The early trickle of chiastic commentary, beginning with some initial observations by Johannes Bengel, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* (Tübingen, 1742), John Jebb, *Sacred Literature* (London, 1820), Thomas Boys, *Tactica Sacra* (London, 1824), and then by John Forbes, *Symmetrical Structure of Scripture* (Edinburgh, 1854), first grew to a steady flow of productive commentary through the efforts of Nils Lund from 1930 to 1955, and recently has increased dramatically, in both quantity and diversity. One of the primary purposes of the present undertaking is to draw together, consolidate and extend as much of this development as possible. This shall be accomplished partly by means of representative expositions of how chiastic analysis may be employed in the study of selected ancient writings, and further by means of tables, indices and bibliographies to aid in the further examination of chiasmus in antiquity.

Initially, it would seem reasonable to offer a definition of chiasmus. Basically, chiasmus is inverted parallelism. Yelland’s *Handbook of Literary Terms* captures the essence of the form in the following definition:

> A passage in which the second part is inverted and balanced against the first. Chiasmus is thus a type of antithesis. A wit with dunces. and a dunce with wits. (Pope). Flowers are lovely, love is flowerlike.

(Choleridge).  

Critical here are balance and inversion. The „antithesis” involved need not necessarily be more than a formal one, since the second half of a chiasm can be complementary as well as antithetical in content to the first half of the structure. In modern times, chiasmus has been exposited under the names of *epanodos*, introverted parallelism, extended introversion, concentrism, the *chi*-form, palistrophe, envelope construction, the *delta*-form, recursion, as well as simple, compound, and complex chiasmus. But for the most part, each of these titles conceptualizes the same phenomenon described above: namely, the appearance of a two-part structure or system in which the second half is a mirror image of the first, i. e. where the first term recurs last, and the last first.
But chiasmus is also much more than simple inversion or repetition, an A–B–B′–A′ pattern. As the structure expands in number of elements, the abrupt repetition by which the last elements of the first of the system become the first elements of the second half can draw unusual attention to the central terms, which are repeated in close proximity to each other. This is observable, for example, in the case of an A–B–C–D–E–E′–D′–C′–B′–A′ arrangement. An emphatic focus on the center can be employed by a skilful composer to elevate the importance of a central concept or to dramatize a radical shift of events at the turning-point. Meanwhile, the remainder of the system can be used with equal effectiveness as a framework through which the author may compare, contrast, juxtapose, complement, or complete each of the flanking elements in the chiastic system. In addition, a marked degree of intensication can be introduced throughout the system both by building to a climax at the center as well as by strengthening each element individually upon its chiastic repetition.

An instructive illustration of all of this is Psalm 3:7–9 (KJV 3:6–8), following the translation of M. Dahood for the most part:

A  I do not fear the arrows of people Who have set themselves against me round about. B  Arise C  O YHWH, B  Save me, C  O my God! D  May you smite E  All my enemies F  On the cheekbone! F′  The teeth E′  Of the wicked D′  May you break! C′  O YHWH, B′  Salvation! A′  Upon your people is your blessing. Selah

The balance, inversion, and intensication within this passage are at the same time precise, extensive, and elegant. This portion of the psalm follows a development from reassurance in the face of encircling enemies, to a central prayer for victory over them, and lastly turns to exaltation of the power and the blessing which Yahweh provides. The chiastic features of the psalm have reached a noteworthy stage of sophistication, manifesting a sustained inversion and also climactic intensication with each of the six chiastic complements. Not only is the central prayer for relief the focus of attention, but also each term is strengthened and fulfilled by its parallel part. Observe how the “arrows of people” become the “blessing of your people;” “save me,” a personal entreaty, becomes “salvation,” a national triumph; “smite” becomes “break;” “my enemies” become “the wicked;” and the passive “cheekbone” becomes the aggressive “teeth.” With meticulous composition, it is little wonder that this passage, and others like it, convey intense emotions and concise thoughts in a minimum number of verbal expressions.

Psalm 3:7–9, one will readily observe, is both a relatively short passage and also a section of poetry. This immediately raises two significant questions concerning the utility of chiasmus: First, are there limits on how large a chiastic system can become? And second, is chiasmus only a poetical device or does it also operate in prosaic narratives as well? Consider the second question first. Modern minds, particularly ones which have grown accustomed to pragmatic uses of literature and to languages which depend to a large extent upon syntax rather than upon inflected word endings to determine meaning, naturally conceive of a device such as chiasmus as one which functions strictly as a poetical novelty. In antiquity, however, chiasmus was widely employed with equal fluency in both prose and poetry. The functional analysis of chiasmus in either context is essentially the same, as we hope to have amply illustrated below. This holds true despite the fact that in the past, perhaps inadvertently, chiasmus has been studied separately in prose and in poetry. Once it has been recognized, however, that chiasmus operates fluently in prose, it becomes evident that chiasmus may give order to thoughts as well as to sounds, and that it thus may give structure to the thought pattern and development of entire literary units, as well as to shorter sections whose composition is more dependent on immediate tones and rhythms. This implies that the scope of chiasmus is limited only by the size of the unit within which the chiasm occurs. We hope to have shown that chiasmus is therefore a significant ordering principle within, not only verses and sentences, but also within and throughout whole books and extensive poetical units, whose dimensions are indeed virtually unlimited.
Although it must be observed that chiasmus appears in short verses and single sentences as well as in longer configurations, the focus of our attention has not been upon short grammatical chiastic patterns, for several reasons: on the one hand, the shorter passages for the most part speak for themselves, so that once attention has been drawn to the fact that a verse is chiastic, not much remains to be said of the chiasm itself (although this is not to diminish the value of other technical, philological or interpretative implications which often become observable only thereby). In addition, most grammatical chiasmus has virtually no counterpart in any English translation of the same ancient passage, and therefore the simpler types of chiasmus do not always lend themselves to casual display. Simple chiasmus must rather be studied, as a practical matter, in conjunction with a strictly grammatical, syntactical, and stylistic commentary on each particular text. For the sake of completeness, however, the indices provided at the end of this study catalogue, where possible, most chiasms which have evoked comment to date.

The more interesting and challenging observations regarding chiasmus are in respect to complex structural applications of the form. Here the form becomes more than a mere literary device, and more than a skeleton upon which thoughts and words are attached. When chiasmus achieves the level of ordering the flow of thoughts throughout an entire pericope, or of a sustained unfolding of an artistic verbal expression, the character of the form itself merges with the message and meaning of the passage. Indeed what is said is often no more than how it is said. Analyzing this phenomenon and the tendency which certain authors manifest to utilize given forms extensively and naturally is by no means simple. But the task of understanding the meaning of a writing is never complete until its formular aspects as well as its thought contents have been grasped.

Clearly, then, there is good reason for the persistently increasing amount of recent scholarly attention which has been directed toward analyzing chiastic techniques and in proposing ways in which the resultant structural perceptions of ancient writings can be applied in efforts at textual explication. For many reasons chiasmus has held sustained attention: It is significant that the form appears frequently and is often executed with noteworthy precision. The form can be aesthetically very pleasing, due in part to its vast potential to coordinate rigorous and abrupt juxtapositions within a single unified literary system, all while focusing on a point of central concern. The form is exegetically significant, often providing the basis for cogent alternatives to other text critical interpretations which have called for a drastic fragmentation of certain basic texts. But perhaps most of all, the gravamen of chiastic analysis has driven home, in many minds, the penetrating realization that several twentieth-century assumptions (whether expressed or implied) about the state of the ancient mind and about the composition of ancient writings may unwittingly impute too much modern mentality to the ancient author. A similar realization was brought home by the revolutionizing understanding of Homeric composition contributed by Lord and Parry. Despite the barriers which will inevitably prevent us from reconstructing precisely what the ancient mind consciously thought, perceived, intended or designed, we can acutely perceive that their thoughts are not necessarily our thoughts, and our designs rarely theirs.

It should be apparent that ancient rhetoric and modern prose do not strive to achieve the same ideals. Modern style demands, for example, that an author write more or less linearly, following a line of syllogistic or dialectic reasoning, or developing a continuous flow of ideas. Circuitousness and repetitiveness are shunned in most circumstances. In many ancient contexts, however, repetition and even redundancy appear to represent the rule rather than the exception. Parallelism thrived. Indeed, repetition once served several valuable purposes. It had express pedagogical functions, and double structures carried moral implications for the ancient mind as well: ,,For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not” (Job 33:14). Moreover, since the ordering of terms is a helpful tool in memorization, chiasmus conveniently afforded inherent mnemonic capacities. “It is a poetic form which is impressive, which will last, and will be easily remembered and literally remembered,” Hans Kosmala has observed, and Paul Gaechter has for this reason labeled chiasmus “die traditionelle, höhere Lehrform.”

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Memorable writing was also of special significance to the ancient world, where for many people literature was transmitted orally; thus it is not happenstential that ancient art forms developed in accordance with the needs of oral tradition. Furthermore, chiasmus afforded a seriously needed element of internal organization in ancient writing, which of course did not make use of paragraphs, punctuation, capitalization and other such synthetic devices to communicate the conclusion of one idea and the commencement of the next. Finally, ancient religious literature frequently served liturgical purposes, and the structure of chiastic writing made it suitable for use in ritual settings and may well have been affected on certain occasions to facilitate alternate recitation, e.g. by the opposite divisions of the choir in Jewish worship. These practical considerations, along with many other aesthetic and linguistic qualities of the form, seem to have made chiasmus a pleasing, as well as functional, literary form in many ancient contexts.

Since the modern mind is not rehearsed in the use, appreciation or even the recognition of chiasmus, a most important question arises over what criteria must be met before it becomes reasonable to speak of chiasmus, let alone of a particular chiastic arrangement, within a given text. 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 chiastic 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.

Nevertheless, the objective criteria alone do not tell the whole story. Evidence of chiasmus is not entirely objective and quantifiable. For example, chiasmus operates by definition within literary units. Yet defining what constitutes such a literary unit and determining where it begins and ends is often a predominantly subjective matter, especially where multiple structures operate simultaneously or where a single system is composed of separated bicola. Furthermore, wherever synonyms, cognates, antitheticals, or logically proximate terms appear in a chiastic system, substantial subjective judgment is again involved in the process of deciding which terms in the first portion of the system match (if at all) with particular terms in the second portion of the system. One also recognizes that any significant chiasm must embrace each of the predominant words and concepts appearing in the system (for what is omitted from a diagrammed arrangement is often as critical as that which is included, in terms of evaluating both the ancient author’s creative success and the modern exegete’s conceptual clarity in respect to any proposed chiasm). But here again, subjectivity is inevitably involved in deciding which elements are in fact predominant and must, therefore, be judged indispensable.

Recognizing the subjective as well as the objective aspects of identifying chiasmus, our purpose in presenting this collection of studies is not to advance every chiastic arrangement herein displayed as an absolutely rigid demonstration of a mandatory perception of the formal structure of any given composition. In some instances, the chiasmus may approach that degree of certitude. But as for the others, they are proposed as what appears to be the most natural and meaningful analysis of the text under study. In the absence of a more attractive alternative analysis, it is proposed that these arrangements afford the most coherent and effective perspective on these and many other ancient texts.
Where the objective criteria, such as the repetition, the balance, the inversion, the focus or shift at the center, and the density of parallel forms in the setting, are all readily apparent, there is, of course, no difficulty in designating a certain passage as chiastic and proceeding to scrutinize the text in that light. Even 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. Here, too, it is possible to speak of chiasmus in a looser sense of the term, for chiasmus, like poetical or artistic forms generally, lends itself to a variety of applications and arrangements which may on some occasions only approximate its ideal composition. Where the inversion is less than perfect, some might contend that this is evidence that no inversion was ever intended by the writer at all. Rather, this might better be explained as evidence that the author simply took some liberty with the form, not adhering mechanically to the form for its own sake, but still choosing to operate within the general framework of an overall chiastic or related scheme. In such instances, the analysis becomes much more complex and, depending to a large extent on what is to be proved thereby, may become controversial.

This is not the only way in which controversy may arise. Perhaps completely aside from the residual problem of assuring verifiable objectivity in the application of the concept of chiasmus, there may arise other lingering hesitancies which understandably must be confronted before one stakes reliance upon principles of chiasmus. One wonders, for example, how such arrangements could have escaped serious notice for several thousand of years, if indeed they are ancient creations and not merely modern fabrications. Yet upon reflection one realizes that far greater and astonishing bodies of ancient culture have been lost to successive generations than simply the knowledge of chiasmus. In fact, culture is incredibly fragile, requiring only a few neglectful generations to break the continuum of awareness of entire languages and civilizations. More directly, there is significant evidence that inverted parallelism was expressly observed in antiquity, for example by Cicero, Atticus 1, 16, 1 and the Roman commentators Servius and Donatus (under the name of *hysteron proteron*), by the Scholiast Aristarchus, Scholia A on Odyssey 56, and the Scholia Euripides Orestes 702 (*prothysteron*), and by the Scholia Euripides Phoenissae 887 (*hysterologia*).

One wonders, further, how primitive cultures could produce complex literary creations founded upon extensive organizational principles such as those which chiasmus demands. But what is this but a conceit on the part of the modern interpreter! For it is not modern man alone who lays a legitimate claim to being recognized as sophisticated. Indeed, the libraries discovered at Ugarit and now at Ebla and other archeological sites reveal the existence of an acute awareness of languages, of high proficiency with the translation process, of quadrilingual textbooks, and many other indications that the ancient concern for language and its features in many periods may have far surpassed our own modern verbal skills. Whereas the primary concern of an ancient writer, and especially a biblical writer, was certainly not to create chiastic compositions for their own sakes, skilled writers would have no difficulty applying this form and artistic composers would seize upon such an opportunity under suitable circumstances to take great advantage of the powers which the form itself affords. Beyond that we may observe that the general use for formal patterns was far more prevalent in ancient than in modern composition – – witness simply the demanding requirements of epic poetry or of Elegiac couplets and the like. More then than now, beauty was synonymous with form.

Nevertheless, we shall probably never know exactly how many chiasms were intentional and how many are mere accidents (perhaps even unobserved accidents) in ancient writing. In the final analysis, our study ends where it begins: with the ancient text in hand. The features which it ultimately manifests are largely determined by what features the text is observed as manifesting. What a text says, or looks like, or stands for, is fundamentally a matter of what it says to its readers. Certain points of view on the meaning or structure of a given text may be more or
less persuasive. What one ultimately sees in a text is only limited by, not determined by, potential criticisms which render a view more or less attractive.

It is difficult to go much further by way of introduction. These introductory remarks are only that. They do not purport to prove the validity or importance of chiasmus, for its proof is only in its perception and for that we must turn to the demonstrations below.

What is proved by the existence of chiasmus is also difficult to say. Those who see evidence for cultural diffusion in antiquity may find further support for that hypothesis in the similar chiasmic arrangements in the diverse literatures sampled here. Others may see in the widespread use of chiasmus merely a reflection of the commonality of man, as indeed many nursery rhymes and mundane proverbs are chiasmic. But wherever chiasmus demonstrably exists, its potential impact on interpretation and textual analysis stands to be profound. Since chiasmus is studied predominantly in religious texts, its contribution to theological exegesis and the spiritual appreciation of sacred literatures is often highly significant, and the implications here are easily much farther reaching than space or skill will allow the present authors to cover completely.

The scope of this work is therefore necessarily limited, for the most part being confined to the task of defining and demonstrating the presence of chiasmus in selected ancient literatures. Much of the material presented here appears for the first time, although the authors are deeply appreciative especially to the editors of Ugarit-Forschungen, Linguistica Biblica, Beth Mikra, and Brigham Young University Studies for their generous assistance and permission to use materials already having appeared in their publications. While limiting the scope of this work, we can only hope that its full purpose will nevertheless be served by promoting a general awareness of chiasmus among all those engaged in reading, studying and enjoying ancient literature. Since, in principle, chiasmus is relatively easy to apply, our task may well have ended as soon as the reader himself sets out to observe chiasmus on his own.

John W, Welch Los Angeles, 1978

FOOTNOTES

1 Yelland, Jones, and Easton, Handbook of Literary Terms, p. 32.


7 McEvenue, Narrative of the Priestly Writer, pp. 29, 77, 163.

8 Boismard, Prologue de Saint Jean, p. 107.
9 Radday, Beth Mikra, 20-1:48-72.

10 Clark, Linguistica Biblica, 35:69


12 Kosmala, VT, 16:425; Lund, AJSL, 46:112.


14 See Jebb, Sacred Literature, p. 60; Gordon, “Homer and Bible,” Hebrew Union College Annual, 26:65ff.
Chiasm in Sumero-Akkadian

Robert F. Smith

The following remarks do no more than present a preliminary survey of evidence for short as well as extended inversions from a sampling of late Sumerian and Akkadian literary texts. Archaic and Old Sumerian literature are left unexamined (early 3rd millennium B.C.)\(^1\), while much of what is presented here reflects the Neo-Sumerian (Ur III) and Sargonide Akkadian periods – though in versions prepared or copies made when Sumerian had become no more than a literary-scribal tool of Assyro-Babylonian culture. Having invented cuneiform script, the world’s oldest method of writing, and having developed a rich literary tradition, the Sumerians and their culture passed entirely from the scene – leaving mainly an oral and written legacy for the remaining two millennia B.C.\(^2\)

1 The Simple Chiasm

Simple direct parallelism is a well-known feature of Sumero-Akkadian literature,\(^3\) though, as elsewhere, the formulae used differ somewhat between poetry and prose.\(^4\) Syntactic limitations make short, grammatical inversions rare in Sumerian; yet they do occur. The simplest Sumerian chiasms involve nominal bimembral exchanges, as in the following bicolon from the prologue to „Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld“\(^5\) (abc:bac’):

8 After heaven from earth had been moved, 9 After earth from heaven had been separated,

There are more elements, but less variation in the bicolon from the close of Sumerian “Enlil and Ninlil: The Begetting of Nanna,”\(^6\) abcd:cbad,

Lord of heaven, lord of abundance, and lord of earth you are, Lord of earth, lord of abundance, and lord of heaven you are.

This sort of nominal exchange also appears in Sumerian proverbs, such as Nippur 2.137,\(^7\)

Like a lord build– – like a slave live; Like a slave build– –like a lord live

However, there can also be a simple verbal exchange, as in Nippur proverb 1.195,\(^8\)

High he has risen, and does not allow (anyone) else to stay (down); Low he stays, and does not allow (anyone) else to rise!

An exchange of nouns, pronouns, and verbs takes place in a Sumerian tetracolon from “Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta,” where Enmerkar, under siege by Martu in Erech, pleads for help:\(^9\)

If she (Inanna) loves the city, but hates me, Why should she link the city with me? If (However) she hates the city, but loves me, Why should she link me with the city?

More impressive, though, are examples wherein the verb or predicate is displaced from its standard position (characteristic of N. W. Semitic chiasm), as in Nippur proverb 2.133,\(^10\)

Firewood collecting (is) for the strong; The weak on dry land he makes wait for him!
In contrast, and despite heavy Sumerian influence, N. E. Semitic literati instinctively sought for the roots of their own rhythmic syntax in order to create well-balanced chiasms. Lipin provides a couple of Akkadian examples of the variety ab:b’a’,

I shall break the doors, The bars I shall crush!

*My heart* became angry, Inflamed (became) *my liver!*

Atrahasis I, v (A), contains a complete repetitive bicolon (abc:2cba):

366 He spoke with *his god*, 367 And that one, *his god*, with him spoke!

In another complete example there is variety in the parallels—Atrahasis I, viii (A), in abc:c'b’a’,

385 Atrahasis received *the command*, 386 And the *elders* he gathered to his gate!

However, Akkadian chiasms are more often unbalanced and/or incomplete, although they can rise to the level of the climactic tricolon: cf, Atrahasis II, ii, 16-19/30-33 (abc:da'cb':edb'c’),

16 In the morning a mist may he rain down, 17 And may he furtively in the night rain down *a dew*, 19 So that the elds will furtively *grain* bear!

Such patterns, which developed during the 3rd millenium B. C. as part of the generalized hymnal-epic dialect of Old Akkadian, were carried over into Canaanite and Hebrew usage, and one may reasonably suggest that account be taken here, as well as in the extended inversions below, of the purposes or functions of the chiasm as brilliantly defined by Andersen, namely,

a. emphasis on synonymy, contemporaneity, reciprocity, concomitance, or integration,

b. diminution of antithesis (dual aspects of event), or creation of merismus,

c. delay of action and maintenance of suspense or contemplation in epic rhetoric,

d. intensification—specific or climactic,

e. reinforcement of negation or prohibition,

f. description of symmetrical arrangements,

9. synapsis, correlation, or knitting of units, and

h. framing or inclusion.
Moreover, the chiasm is more elegant and of higher style than ordinary parallelism, and is often merely an artistic device. Such functions may, of course, overlap—as one may see below. However, such chiastic applications as I have listed above tend to occur via standard formulae and within set conditions, i.e., the type of parallel and word- or phrase-pairs employed in a given text shows up elsewhere under similar conditions and serve closely related purposes.21

The Inclusion

The frame or ABA-form is usually no more than what Dahood terms “distant parallelism,” and may be chiastic or not in its A–A’ elements since it functions in poetry or prose (or in a combination of the two)22 mainly to enclose or frame units of widely varying size. As McEvenue sees it, a series of discontinuous parallel framing elements can be palistrophic,23 and he refers to a short aba-structure at most as a “short-circuit inclusion,”24 going on to demonstrate the binding effect of numerous inclusions in biblical contexts.25 Yet Andersen has made it clear that when the A–A’ elements are themselves chiastic, the B section may intervene between the clauses of one complete sentence,26 and ordinary parallels strongly unify a section or pericope, though this is one step below “extended introversion.”27

An example of the inclusion in Sumerian hymnal epic may be found in “Enki and Eridu: The Journey of the Water–God to Nippur.”28 It must not be mistaken for part of an anadiploic chain, and that it contains a couple of chiasms is

A The lord of the abyss, the king Enki, Enki, the lord who decrees the fates, B Built his house of silver and lapis lazuli; Its silver and lapis lazuli, like sparkling light, A’ The father fashioned fittingly in the abyss.

Another example, one analogous to Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a, is evident in “Enki and Ninhursag: A Paradise Myth,” 75–88, in which Enki (A) impregnated Ninhursag, followed by (B) a nine-day period of gestation, and completed by (A’) the birth of Ninmu to Nintu (= Ninhursag).29 A far simpler, yet more rhetorical ABA comes from the prologue of “Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld;”30

1 In days of yore, in the distant days of yore, 2 In nights of yore, in the far–off nights of yore, 3 In days of yore, in the distant days of yore.

In the Sumerian “Dumuzi and Enkimdu: The Dispute Between the Shepherd-God and the Farmer-God,” one finds the arguments of Dumuzi (41-63) enveloped by the following obvious inclusion in the form of questions put to Inanna:31

40 The Farmer more than I, the farmer more than I, the farmer, what has he more than I?
∗ ∗ ∗ ∗ ∗ ∗ ∗ ∗ 64 More than I, the farmer, what has he more than I?

A more ambitious inclusion seems to surround and to emphasize the „Golden Age Passage” (136–55) of “Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta;”32

A 115–135 a 136–40 tripartite “Golden Age Passage,” each part B b 141–6 introduced by u4–ba, “on that day” c 147–55 A 187–207

Knutson recognized the ABA–symmetry of the 19th century B. C. Sumerian Code of Lipit-Ishtar.”33
The century later Akkadian Code of Hammurabi is quite similar, though it maintains an additional poetry-prose-poetry alternation:

Obv. I–V A Prologue (4 1/2 columns of poetry) V–rev. XXIII B Laws (40 columns of prose) XXIV–XXVIII A’ Epilogue (5 columns of poetry)

Observing this Code’s structure, Gordon has made the salient point that when biblical source critics apportion so many chapters, verses, and lines among their favorite well-defined documents according to dialectic, stylistic, and grammatical differences, they seldom take account of such a unified composition employing differing grammar, style, and dialect!

Epistles can also be symmetrical: During the 14th century B.C., King Shuppiluliuma I of Khatti sent an Akkadian letter to Niqmaddu II of Ugarit proposing a treaty or bond:

1–2 Introduction 3–50 Body (history and conditional promises) 51–
2 Conclusion

Niqmaddu’s detailed affirmative reply, also symmetrical, will be dealt with below.

In the Ashur rescension of the Akkadian “Descent of Ishtar to the Netherworld,” one finds a legitimate inclusion in the words of the Queen of the Netherworld:

(rev. 38) “But if she does not pay to you her ransom, bring her back here!” (39–45) Seven articles of apparel returned to Ishtar as she ascends. (46) “If she does not pay to you her ransom, bring her back here!”

Another inclusion or ABBA appears in the same myth. Here on the obverse of the later Nineveh rescension from the library of Ashurbanipal:

obv. 1 To the land of no return, The land of Ereshkigal, 2 Ishtar, the daughter of Sin, turned her attention; 3 Yea, the daughter of Sin turned her attention 4 To the dark house, The dwelling of Irkalla;

There is a probable inclusion in the dual recitation of the exploits of Gilgamesh and Enkidu (Assyrian version):

X, 2 killed the bull 3 Killed the watchman 4 overthrew Humbaba 5 killed lions – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – 7 Kill the watchman 8 overthrow Humbaba 9 kill lions 10 kills the bull

It may be that the Bull of Heaven represented their most important conquest and for that reason was given emphasis here. However, it may as likely have been placed out of sequence by a careless scribe. My analysis of the entire epic, below, favors the former possibility.

There is an ABA-in-common at the center of Atrahasis III and Gilgamesh XI. Research has also disclosed frames or inclusions within these and other Sumero-Akkadian compositions. They will each be treated below as parts of grander designs. La symétrie concentrique
In narrowly maintaining that "the distinguishing feature of Hebrew poetry . . . is the rhythmic balancing of parts, or parallelism of thought," James Robertson was quite wrong. Indeed, Gordon has observed that biblical, Ugaritic, Phoenician, Mesopotamian, Anatolian, and Egyptian poetry all exhibit a similar poetic structure. He has also pointed out that lengthy recapitulation is a common characteristic of "ancient Egyptian, Semitic and classical literatures." For his part, Kramer listed the devices employed in Sumerian (repetition and parallelism, metaphor and simile, chorus and refrain), and noted that most Sumerian literary works are poetic. Whether or not one refers to these common traits as characteristic of a "generalized hymnal epic dialect," one may find them in N. E. Semitic, N. W. Semitic, and in the Ionic (Mycenaean koine) of Homer. Gilgamesh and Odysseus have more in common than might be supposed at first glance.

At the same time, Kramer complains that Sumerian poets ramble on in a disjointed and monotonous fashion without the climax so typical of Semitic literature. Can it be that he has misapprehended his own speciality? Perhaps he ought to have taken a hint from his own observation that some Sumerian compositions begin and end with mythological passages. clues to chiastic structure are often discovered in just such disjointed and enveloping circumstances. It is of course quite true that simple repetitive symmetry can become monotonous, e.g., from the “Descent of Inanna,”

On the other hand, the Western mind might easily miss unfamiliar modes of expressing climax. Kramer scores detailed recapitulation of entire passages "very low in the scale of artistic technique," though he finds it useful in reconstructing fragmentary tablets. Such a situation presents itself when a god or a hero sends out a messenger: The entire message must be repeated twice, i.e., when received and when delivered. This characteristic has been very valuable elsewhere within cuneiform in uncovering chiasmus, and ought to be given wider application. For one thing, symmetrical patterns of repetition could have been of great value in the memorization of hymnal epic. For another, it satisfies aesthetic needs.

It is here, of course, that chiasm enters in its aspect as symmetrical concentrism, the strongest mnemonic device available, and Lenglet finds this literary form in the widest possible range of texts: Biblical, Hittite, Egyptian, Greek, Latin, etc. Lund long ago attempted, without success, to demonstrate the existence of chiasm in cuneiform literature. Welch has since published a well-documented case for chiasmus in Ugaritic. It now remains only to round out the case for its full-blown existence in ancient Mesopotamia. We may begin with a couple of short examples from the Sumerian “Journey of Nanna-Sin to Nippur”:

Open the house, gatekeeper, open the house,

Open the house, O protecting genie, open the house, Open the house, you who makes the trees to come forth, open the house, O . . . , who makes the trees to come forth, open the house! Gatekeeper, open the house,

O protecting genie, open the house! * * * * * * Joyfully, The gatekeeper joyfully opened the gate; The protecting genie who makes the trees grow, joyfully, The
gatekeeper joyfully opened the gate; He who makes the trees grow, joyfully, The gatekeeper joyfully opened the gate; With Sin, Enlil rejoiced.

A more complex example is taken from Sumerian “Dumuzi and Enkimdu: The Wooing of Inanna,” with the Sun-god, Utu, appealing to Inanna on behalf of Dumuzi:

12 O my sister, let the shepherd marry you! 13 O maid Inanna, why are you unwilling? 14 His oil is good, his milk is good; 15 The shepherd, everything his hand touches is bright; 16 O Inanna, let the shepherd Dumuzi marry you! 17 O full of jewels and precious stones, why are you unwilling? 18 His good oil, he will eat with you, 19 O protector of the king, why are you unwilling?

Note the emphasis on Inanna at the center as well as at the outer edges. This comports with biblical examples studied by Lund. Elsewhere, one finds the emphasis only on the fringes. In the Sumerian story of “Enki and the World Order,” for example, the city of Ur and the god Enki seem to be the main focus, although they enclose a listing of the finest qualities of Ur:

He proceeded to the shrine Ur, Enki, the king of the Abyss, decrees its fate: City possessing all that is appropriate, Water-washed, firm-standing ox, Dais of abundance of the highland, Knees open, green like a mountain, Hashur-grove, wide of shade — He who is lordly because of his might (?), Has directed your perfect me’s, Enli, the ‘great mountain,’ Has pronounced your lofty name in the universe. City whose fate has been decreed by Enki, Shrine Ur, may you rise heaven high!

The third song of the “Lamentation Over the Destruction of Ur” likewise has the city of Ur in its flanks (140–3//166–7), while emphasizing the divine Council and the Anunnaki-gods at the center (152–4). Between these extreme elements one finds straightforward parallels (145–51//155–61), all of which adds to chiasm in yet another genre of Sumerian literature, (ABCB’A’).

In Akkadian too one finds such medium-sized chiasms. In answer to the simple ABA–structure from Shuppiluliuma I (laid out above), for example, King Niqmaddu II replied with a letter of fealty and bond in more complex form — though the letter was of the same length as that which he had received:

1–2 Titlature 3–16a Historical prologue 16b–9 Bond (rikiltu) clause 20–42 Tribute list & instructions (stipulations) 43–6a Historical epilogue 46b–8a Bond (rikiltu) clause 48b–53 Tablet clause/god list

Also covering entire compositions and pericopae, but on a much larger scale, one discovers the greatest chiastic achievements in Sumero-Akkadian literature. However, at every point, it must be borne in mind that more than one structural principle may have been simultaneously employed in the work of ancient literati. The overlays and embellishments common in multistructuring, though they can become heavy and confusing, do not invalidate the discernment of basic chiastic structures.

A very early Sumerian example, probably dating from around the close of the reign of Sargon I of Agade (24th century B. C.), claims to have been written by Sargon’s daughter, Enheduanna, high-priestess of Nanna at Ur. Called variously the “Exaltation of Inanna,” “The Adoration of Inanna at Ur,” and the „Hymnal Prayer of
Enheduanna, it is an important theological exposition centering on Enheduanna’s complaints to, and then against Nanna (66–108). Indeed, she finally replaces him with Inanna! Following Hallo and van Dijk,\textsuperscript{66} one can discern chiastic as well as non-chiastic elements. Enheduanna emphasized Nanna and Inanna by means of interweaving two structural techniques, and both of these techniques are placed in unified diagram as follows:

### A. Exordium

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>Inanna and the me’s</th>
<th>1–8</th>
<th>Hierodule of An, me’s</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Inanna and An</td>
<td>9–16</td>
<td>Inanna; si, “give”</td>
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<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Inanna and Enlil</td>
<td>17–25</td>
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<td>IV</td>
<td>Inanna and Ishkur</td>
<td>26–33</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Inanna and the Anunna</td>
<td>34–42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Inanna and Ebih (?)</td>
<td>43–50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>Inanna and Uruk</td>
<td>51–9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>\textit{Invocation of Inanna}</td>
<td>60–5</td>
<td>//112–4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B. Argument

| IX | Banishment from Ur | 66–73 |
| X  | Appeal to Nanna-Suen | 74–83 | Inanna |
| XI | Indictment of Lugalanne (?) | 84–91 |
| XII| Curse of Uruk! | 92–99 |
| XIII| Indictment of Nanna | 100–108 |
| XIV| \textit{Appeal to Inanna} | 109–21 |
| XV | Exaltation of Inanna (theme) | 122–35 |

### C. Peroration

| XVI | Composition of the Hymn | 136–42 |
| XVII| Restoration of Enheduanna | 143–50 | Inanna |
| XVIII| Doxology | 151–53 | \textit{me’s}; Inanna; \textit{ba}, “bestow” Hierodule |

That this hymn is chiastic is based on several observations: It begins and ends with emphasis on the possession of \textit{me’s} by Inanna (I/XVIII),\textsuperscript{67} though in one of the Inanna panels surrounding the central section (VIII) \textit{me’s} are again mentioned. The verbs describing the giving of these \textit{powers} are likewise parallel (II/XVIII).\textsuperscript{68} The name “Inanna” is used just four times: Only in the outer stanzas (II/XVII–XVIII) and in the central section (X).\textsuperscript{69} The “Invocation” and “Appeal to Inanna” share specific parallels (VIII/XIV),\textsuperscript{70} and these envelope the main complaints of Enheduanna, emphasize her bitterness at being banished from Ur, her vain appeal to Nanna (at the physical center), etc. There is a climax in the Curse of Uruk (XII), and the central stanzas conclude in the Indictment of Nanna (XIII).\textsuperscript{71}

Yet Hallo and van Dijk focus their attention on the “Magnificat” of this piece, the “Exaltation of Inanna” (XV), as the climax of the \textit{Argument}.	extsuperscript{72} Another climax comes with the “Restoration of Enheduanna” (XVII), and an “abrupt
turnabout in the mood of the poem is paralleled" there "by a syntactic reversal," i.e., a chiasm.

The Sumerian story of the "Descent of Inanna to the Netherworld" is not chiastic, but the Akkadian version of it is. This is particularly interesting since they each contain essentially the same elements. In the Sumerian version, however, the seven articles of apparel which constitute a major chiastic element in the Akkadian "Descent of Ishtar" are simply repeated in direct parallel before the descent and not afterward (14–25//103–11//125–56). Within the "Descent of Ishtar to the Netherworld" (again, the older Ashur version is superior), one finds numerous points of chiastic pivot. But the major sections may be summarized in ABBA fashion as follows:


Descent of Ishtar

obv. 19 "I will cause the dead to rise that they may eat as the living" 34 the men who had to leave (their) wives behind!" 42–62 Ishtar enters the seven gates of the Netherworld and is relieved by the gatekeeper of her 1) great crown, 2) earrings, 3) necklaces, 4) breast ornaments, 5) birthstone girdle, 6) wrist and ankle bracelets, 7) breechcloth.

68 "Go, Namtar, lock her up in my palace." 69–75 Namtar looses sixty maladies against Ishtar. 76 Ishtar has descended to the land of no return propagation has ceased on earth (animals and man) rev. 2 Papsukkal, vizier of the gods, in mourning (weepes) 5 "Ishtar has descended to the Underworld, but she has not come up (again)."

6 Ishtar has descended to the land of no return propagation has ceased on earth (animals and man)

12–37 the gods send Asnamer (Asushunamir), the eunuch, to the Netherworld to rescue Ishtar:

13 the land of no return 14 the land of no return 21 Ereshkigal enraged 23–8 harsh curse laid upon Asnamer by Ereshkigal 38 (34) Namtar sprinkles Ishtar with the "waters of life." (Ashur) "Go, Namtar, take Ishtar away."

39–45 7) breechcloth, 6) wrist and ankle bracelets, 5) birthstone girdle, 4) breast ornaments, 3) necklaces, 2) earrings, 1) great crown, restored to Ishtar by the gatekeeper (or Namtar) as she ascends from the Netherworld and exits its seven gates. 47 "As for Tammuz her youthful husband, . . . " 58 "Let the dead come up and smell the incense!"

For several reasons, Heidel saw tablet XII of the Epic of Gilgamesh as a later supplement to the original text. Most convincing, however, was the appearance of a feature which he found to be present in biblical literature as well, i.e.,

the concluding passage of Tablet XI returns to the beginning of the epic and closes with almost the same words with which the proem ends, indicating that the wreath of myths and legends is complete.

The physical center and actual climax of the Gilgamesh Epic comes at the end of tablet VI with the slaying of the Bull of Heaven (151–3) and, following aggravated insult to Ishtar, Enkidu’s fortune begins an immediate decline.
Simoons-Vermeer offers a differing bifurcation of the epic. Part one she sees as encompassing everything up to the death of Enkidu (I–VIII, ii), part two being the story of a mourning Gilgamesh searching desperately and vainly for a way to escape the death which had overtaken his dear friend (IX–XI). Her focus being the Flood, one might suggest that this secondary structural view stems from an addition of the flood-story to the epic in the 12th century B.C.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I, i</td>
<td></td>
<td>Enkidu born</td>
<td>Birth</td>
<td>I–III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td></td>
<td>subsequent friendship of Gilgamesh and Enkidu</td>
<td>Encounter &amp; Humbaba (Huwawa) episode</td>
<td>II–III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bull of Heaven episode</td>
<td>VII</td>
<td>Demise of Enkidu; dismal picture of land of no return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII, ii</td>
<td></td>
<td>Enkidu dies</td>
<td></td>
<td>Death</td>
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</table>

I have found, however, that a differing and more detailed approach is warranted, and it is one which has very little (if anything) to do with the Flood. Thus, the chiastic structure of the entire Gilgamesh Epic:

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<tr>
<td>I, i, 16–9</td>
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<td>“Climb upon the walls of Uruk and walk about; inspect the foundation terrace, and examine the brickwork; is not its brickwork of burnt brick? Did not the Seven (Sages) lay its foundation?”</td>
<td>Endeavor</td>
<td>IX–X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX, i</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gilgamesh searching for immortality</td>
<td>Proposal of marriage by Ishtar rejection by Gilgamesh VI, 151–3</td>
<td>long and dangerous journey from Uruk XI, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX, ii, 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>“How did you … obtain life everlasting?” (asked of Utnapishtim) XI, 9–196</td>
<td>Proposal of marriage by Ishtar rejection by Gilgamesh VI, 151–3</td>
<td>long and dangerous journey from Uruk XI, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI, 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>“How will you find the (everlasting) life which you seek?” (asked of Gilgamesh) XI, 256ff</td>
<td>Proposal of marriage by Ishtar rejection by Gilgamesh VI, 151–3</td>
<td>long journey and return to Uruk XI, 287–97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI, 256ff</td>
<td></td>
<td>long journey and return to Uruk XI, 287–97</td>
<td>Proposal of marriage by Ishtar rejection by Gilgamesh VI, 151–3</td>
<td>long journey and return to Uruk XI, 287–97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI, 287–97</td>
<td></td>
<td>Impossible for Gilgamesh to escape death</td>
<td>Proposal of marriage by Ishtar rejection by Gilgamesh VI, 151–3</td>
<td>long journey and return to Uruk XI, 287–97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have found, however, that a differing and more detailed approach is warranted, and it is one which has very little (if anything) to do with the Flood. Thus, the chiastic structure of the entire Gilgamesh Epic:
Gilgamesh (Sum. Bilga-mes, “Ancient-Hero”; Hellenistic Gilgamos) is supposed to have been a post-diluvian king at Uruk/Warka, and there may even have been a ruler of that name there ca. 2700–2600 B.C. His heroic exploits mixed with the activities of quarrelsome gods, his splendid and dangerous wayfaring, the killing of Humbaba, and his return home, remind one of nothing so much as Homeric epic (esp. the Odyssey), which, just incidentally, also partakes of rough chiastic structure. The Mesopotamian myths were certainly known to the Greeks, and it is no more surprising to see similar stories there than among the Canaanites, Hebrews, et alii. The Flood Story is an excellent example, though the Greek versions (Xisuthros; Deucalion) are noted here only in passing. The oldest Flood Story of all, that from Ebla, ought to prove most interesting when published. In recent public lectures, G. Pettinato has been pointing out the Eblaite similarities to the Sumero-Akkadian versions and noting that the Palaeo-Canaanite version has the seven-day flood of the Mesopotamian versions.

I begin here with the latest of the Sumero-Akkadian flood-stories, that contained in Gilgamesh XI, partly because this gives continuity with matters laid out immediately above, but primarily because it is the most complete version. However, as Hartmann has pointed out, tablet XI is “principally dependent on Atra-Hasis, (probably) through a Middle Babylonian version,” and the fragmentary Sumerian version, as Simoons-Vermeer has shown, roughly conforms to the outline of the Akkadian versions. Heidel justifiably goes much further in claiming not only that “the Babylonian and Hebrew versions are genetically related,” but also that “the skeleton is the same in both cases” –– despite obvious differences in “flesh and blood” and in “animating spirit.”

The “flesh and blood” to which Heidel refers ought probably to be extended to include the more complex and symmetrical nature of the Genesis Flood Story when it is compared with its Sumero-Akkadian cousins. Of course, Albright argued that Gen 1 – 9 is largely a mixture of Hurrian and Sumero-Akkadian background, and this combination of Creation and Flood is certainly clear also in Atrahasis and in the Sumerian Flood Story. The reader may make his own comparison of chiastic structure among the various versions of the Flood presented below, and may also want to compare them with chiastic analyses of the Genesis Flood. The source critic will have his work cut out for him! My own documentary analysis shows that the traits usually separately assigned to J and P for Gen 6 – 9 are inextricably mixed in the Sumero-Akkadian flood-stories, and Kessler concludes that, in Gen 7 at least, “there are no ‘seams,’” and that traditional, facile source analyses are not there supported by the evidence.

### Gilgamesh XI Utnapishtim's Version of the Flood

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1–4</td>
<td>Utnapishtim's appearance</td>
<td>20–31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8,93</td>
<td>Embarkation</td>
<td>Warning of Ea (Ae) (dream, cf. Berossus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81–89</td>
<td>Storm begins</td>
<td>113 gods terror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td>gods fled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>gods cowered like dogs &amp; crouched in distress</td>
<td>Ishtar cried like a woman in travail; 117 Lady of the gods lamented:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>because I commanded evil in assembly of gods. 120</td>
<td>How could I have commanded evil in assembly…?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>How could I have commanded war to destroy my people?</td>
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</table>

121
For it is I who bring forth my people!

Like spawn of fish they fill the sea!

Anunnaki-gods wept with her;
gods sat bowed and weeping. Covered were their lips.

Flood subsides, Storm abates, and birds sent out 155 a

Debarkation (155b–61, gods smell offering) (162–9, oath of Ishtar/ lapis necklace as sign) 186–7

Warning of Ea (Ae), dream (cf. Berossus)

189–96 Utnapishtim’s apotheosis (blessing by Enlil)

This and the following outlines have profited somewhat from the analysis of the flood-stories by Simoons-Vermeer, though of course she made no assertions of a chiastic nature. The gods-Ishtar-gods sequence at the center here (113–26) is seen next in Atrahasis.

Atra-Hasis Viewpoint of the Gods

I, 1–197 Igigu-gods angry with Enlil — so man to be created to work in place of Igigu-gods (i–iv). I, 198–305 Creation of man by Enki & Nintu (iv–vi) 1, 358–9 Mankind too noisy (vii); I, 360ff destruction sent by Enlil (vii)

II, 1, 7–8 Mankind too noisy (cf. Enuma Elish I, 21ff); II, i, 9ff destruction

II, vii–viii Tumultuous assembly of the gods—Flood decision made

II, vii, 38–42 Oath binding Enki & Anunnaki-gods (x rev. ii, 46–8; RS 22.421, obv. 10) II, viii, 34 gamertam, “total-destruction” (thrice only in story) III, i Warning of Enki (i, 37, Flood on 7th night) III, ii, 29–42 Embarkation III, iii, 48–iii, 23 Storm begins III, iii, 30–1

The Anunnaki, the great gods, hunger & thirst

III, iii, 32–iv, 13 Mother-goddess, Nintu/Mami, the midwife of the gods, weeps in regret for her agreement with the decision for the III, iii, 38 gamertam, “total destruction” of her offspring reached in the assembly of the gods. III, iv, 15, 19–22 The gods wept and suffered hunger cramps

III, iv, 24 Storm lasts 7 days & 7 nights — — — — — — — — — — — — — (Storm ends?) (III, iv, 28–v, 29) 34-line gap

(Debarkation?) — — — Creatures sent to four winds & offering made III, v, 44 gamertam, “total-destruction” III, v, 46–vi, 4 Oath of Nintu III, vi, 5–6 Enlil angry at Igigu-gods

III, vi, 7–8 Oath of Anunnaki III, vi Warning of Enki (recalled) III, vi, 44 Assembly of gods—instruction to resettle case of mankind Completion of world III, viii Igigu-gods praise Enlil due to hymn on Flood (its destructive-creative gestalt)—(cf. Enuma Elish VI, 33, 47–50, on praise of Marduk, though Enki the creator).

As Simoons-Vermeer points out, the destruction-recreation sequence in Atrahasis is the primary motif, and the whole violent affair is told from the point of view of the gods themselves.
The Sumerian Flood Story is shorter because more fragmentary. Of the four tablets dealing with the flood-story, one can find an 80-line gap (more or less) in a total of about 120 lines. That is over two-thirds of the story! Even so, the story was plainly composed with strong chiastic elements:

(iii) 143–4 An and Enlil–oath of the gods 145–7 Ziusudra–a humble and reverent king 150 Conjured by heaven and underworld … (iv) 154–60 Warning of Enki–sentence of divine assembly … (162–200) (Embarkation?) approx. 40-line gap … (v) 201 All the destructive winds and gales were present, 202 The storm swept over the capitals. 203 Seven days and seven nights 204 The storm had swept the country, 205 And the destructive wind had rocked the huge boat in the high water. 207–10 Debarkation 211 sacrifice of animals … (212-50) (Warning?) approx. 40-line gap … (vi) 251 Be conjured by heaven and underworld, … 252 An and Enlil, be conjured by heaven and underworld, … 255 Ziusudra prostrates himself before An and Enlil 256–7 Apotheosis of Ziusudra

Via Akkadian texts, some of which were from tablets contemporary with the early biblical period, and via Sumerian texts mostly from Nippur of the early 2nd millennium B.C., I have demonstrated herein the existence of chiasm in nearly the full range of genres of Sumerian literature (lexical, mathematical, economic texts, and the like, are not literary), though in a less broadly identifiable grouping of Akkadian texts. It has been suggested above that the existence of such a rhetorical figure served in oral tradition as a mnemotechnique. Yet, as likely as this is, and though McEvenue, Thompson, Dewey, and Radday argue that it is an intentional and conscious creation, Clark asserts that such patterning can as easily be the result of cultural conditioning and psychological stimuli.

Whatever the case, it is clear that some documents place more emphasis on “parallel or concentric patterns,” that a “more careful arrangement” of a text does not bespeak later development, and that linear evolutionary patterns in the development and use of chiasm need not be assumed. If anything, chiastic style and usage varied in a cyclic fashion among the story-tellers and literati of the ancient world, and, as with other types of literary analysis, a comparison of these structures may help us to classify and understand the various sources and traditions.

I conclude from this survey that most of the essential features of chiastic form and function were available to Mesopotamian authors from the late 3rd millennium through the mid-1st millennium B.C., and that chiastic usage in Ugaritic and Hebrew should not be considered unique–except insofar as local eccentricities are exhibited. The cyclic waxing and waning of the strength and style of the epic figure during this long period should not be surprising, but too little evidence has as yet been gathered upon which to base such a generalization.

FOOTNOTES

1 See Biggs, ZA, 61:193–207; Albright, YGC, p. 2.
3 Lambert, Orientalia, 40:93–4, on “The Exaltation of Ishtar,” III, 57–60; cf. Newman, UCSP, I, 1 (1918), 57, 78, on the frequent use of parallelism in much of world literature—not the case, however, for English (pp. 60, 67); E. Gordon, SP, pp. 16–7; C. H. Gordon, UTB, 17.6, pp. 293–4; cf. Fisher, ed., RSP, II, VII & IX.


6 Jacobsen, Toward the Image of Tammuz, p. 344, n. 41, citing Kramer, SM, 43–7, nn. 47–8, and SLTN, 19, rev. 1–10′, with var. from MBI, 4, iv, end (pl. xxxiii), from Ni, UM 9205, etc.

7 E. Gordon, SP, p. 270, var. in UM 29–15–394 used here; Kramer, Sumerians, p. 225, #10; cf. Ni proverbs 1.20 (Gordon, SP, pp. 51, 455), and 1.55 (p. 68), for the same type of simple chiastic exchange of parallel nouns.

8 E. Gordon, SP, p. 147 (in eme-sal dialect).


10 E. Gordon, SP, p. 17, terms it an example of “crossed antithesis”; cf. “Enki and Ninhursag: A Paradise Myth,” 75–6, in Kramer, SM, 56, n. 56, and ANET, p. 39, for abc:bca′, where c is the verb.

11 Cf. also Atrahasis II, iii, 4–6; Lipin, Akkadian Language, p. 155 (cf. p. 159)—in Akkadian prose the verb follows Sumerian syntax by being in final position; lb//kbd, “heart”//”liver,” is a common Ug.-Heb. parallel pair, Dahood, Psalms, III:451.

12 Cf. Atrahasis I, i, 7–8 (A), 18–9 (B); iv, 7–8; v, 10–1; viii, 34–5 (B, D); cf. also Gilgamesh XI, 1–2, as noted in C. H. Gordon, UTB, 17.6.

13 For this and other material from Atrahasis, I modify the translation of Lambert in Lambert & Millard, ATRAHASIS; cf. Ginsberg, Orientalia, 5:161–98, for repetitive tricola in Hebrew and Ugaritic.

14 See Albright, YGC, pp. 4–8, and the literature cited there; it is yet too early to take account of Eblaite.


18 Cf. McEvenue, Narrative, pp. 29, 34–5, 41, 76–8, 114 (citing Lohfink), 157–9, 162–3, 175.

19 Cf. Thompson, Matthew’s Advice, pp. 27, 116, 123, 130, 161, 163 (citing Lagrange and Bonnard), 223.

20 Andersen, Sentence, pp. 39, 55, on chiastic apposition as a feature of “epic.”


30 Kramer, *Sumerians*, p. 199; see n. 5, above.

31 Kramer, *SM*, 102; *ANET*, p. 42.


37 Cf. Heidel, *Gilgamesh*, 2nd ed., p. 127; *ANET*, pp. 107–8; the later (7th cent. B. C.) Nineveh rescension hasn’t the first element of this inclusion, though the numbering here follows that version.

38 Heidel, *Gilgamesh*, 2 p. 121; Ereshkigal = Irkalla; lines 5–11 continue to describe the Netherworld and this leads to asymmetry here.

39 *Gilgamesh*, frag. Sp. 299, etc.


41 C. H. Gordon, *UTB*, 13.107 (p. 31), and n. 2.
42  *Idem*, *Before Columbus*, p. 62.


44  *Ibid.*, and n. 11.


49  Nielsen, *Oral Tradition*, pp. 19ff.; Albright asserted that such texts were being “sung or chanted to the accompaniment of” harp or lyre even before the 3rd millennium B.C. (*YGC*, p. 2).


54  Kramer, *SM*, 48; abc:cab, and abcbc’ba’.


58  Kramer, *SM*, 60; *Sumerians*, p. 178.

59  *Idem*, *ANET*, p. 458; abcba.

60  *PRU*, IV, 17.227 (40), translation and arrangement in Knutson, dissertation, pp. 126, 196–7, noting the “symmetrical” nature of the text, and comparing Ex 34:10–27; in Fisher, ed., *RSP*, II, VI:1 (n), 3; Welch, *UF*, VI:426, n. 35; cf. also RS 17.146 (154), 17.341 (48), 17.369 A (52); here we have abcb’a’.


Hallo & van Dijk, Exaltation of Inanna.

ANET, p. 579–82, for the 15th stanza.


Ibid., p. 49.

Ibid., p. 48; line 14, si, “give”//152, ba, “bestow.”

Ibid., p. 10; lines 12, 83, 145, 153; nu-gig-an-na, “Hierodule of An,” in line 3 would balance this pattern if allowed as an equivalent “name”//“Hierodule,” in line 151.

Ibid., p. 53; lines 60–5//112–4.

Ibid., p. 58; line 99 is climactic.

Ibid., p. 59–60.

Ibid., p. 63; inversion in line 146.

Kramer, ANET, pp. 53–7.

Ibid., p. 54, n. 32, notes the inverted order of lines 24–5//110–1; this is probably scribal error.


Heidel, Gilgamesh, pp. 13, 15–6; Speiser, ANET, p. 96, reached the same conclusion; cf. de Vaux, Bible and the Ancient Near East, p. 35, rightly suggesting that tablets XI and XII were both once separate from the epic.

Cf. Gilgamesh X, i, 2//10.


Ibid., 21–2.

See Speiser & Grayson, ANET, pp. 73–97, 503–7; cf. Kramer, JAOS, 64:7–23; the Old Babylonian is followed here with variants noted.

Sollberger, Babylonian Legend of the Flood, pp. 20–1; Schneider, Gilgamesch, p. 31.

85 Kramer, SM, viii; C. H. Gordon, UTB, 17.14, etc., cited by Welch, UF, VI:428, and n. 42.

86 Hartman, JBL, 91:32, n. 27.


94 Ibid., 24, 26–7.

95 Ibid., 18, 31–4; see also pp. 19–21.

96 Ibid., 28.

97 Here following the translation of M. Civil in Lambert & Millard, *ATRA–HASIS*, pp. 140–5; cf. *ANET*, 3 pp. 42–4; there are really only about 64 readable lines out of the 300 lines of the tablets (so Simoons-Vermeer); tablets i and ii deal with the creation of man, institution of kingship, and foundation of the five main cities -- the collection of tablets probably comes from Nippur of the Late Old Babylonian period (CBS 10673).

98 Kramer, SM, vii, ix, 9–18.


103 Radday, *BM*, 20–1:54; *LB*, 9–10:22.

105 Thompson, Matthew’s, pp. 161, 163 (n. on P. Bonnard).

106 Ibid., pp. 136, 148
Chiasm in Ugaritic

John W. Welch

The tablets from Ras Shamra, discovered beginning in 1929 in Syria, have opened broad avenues into our reconstruction and understanding of civilization in the Northwest Semitic arena in the central periods of the second millennium B.C. Cultural and linguistic roots of the soon to rise classical Hebrew nation are particularly evident in the literary record left by the people who occupied the site at Ugarit from 1400–1200 B.C., making the study of these texts significant to any understanding of the florescence of the civilization which composed the Old Testament. Although it is perhaps impossible to determine exactly what bearing each cultural group had on another during those early periods in Eastern Mediterranean history, it is clear that the library at Ugarit contains some very early precedents which are either directly related to the Hebrew literature which arose in that vicinity or are at least strongly representative of the cultural strata out of which it arose.

One of the most interesting elements of the literature from Ugarit in this context is its chiastic component. Chiasmus, once thought to have been characteristically Hebrew in its more complex manifestations, can now be observed in this and its neighboring civilizations at some relatively early dates. Judging by their skillful execution of this and other rhetorical figures, it can certainly be said that these early peoples were attentive to literary constructs and were apparently pleased by the utility and variety which chiasmus gave to their predominantly poetic literature.

Parallelism afforded the fundamental literary technique with which the vivid epics and elegant hymns written at Ugarit were embellished. And thus it is no wonder that a simple turn to chiasmus on all levels—within single verses as well as throughout entire compositions—was found to be an attractive, accessible rhetorical figure in this body of literature. How it is used here, and how successfully, will necessarily enter into the critic's estimation of the levels of literary success achieved by the writers at Ugarit generally. In any case, chiasmus must be seen as part of a much wider epic milieu.

In addition to affording one ground upon which to criticize the literature of Ugarit itself, the presence of chiasmus and similar literary techniques in this body of literature help explain many literary phenomena in succeeding generations. Many have marveled that the literature of the Old Testament— and one may as well include the epics of Homer too—seem to arise out of nowhere, fully developed and completely conversant with the styles and techniques which they employ from their earliest dawning. No “hesitation or experimentation with form” can be detected in even the earliest sections of these remarkable works. They seem to have perfected a sophisticated form of poetic and narrative expression which can scarcely be explained except by presupposing a long and deliberate familiarity with the medium. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to look now to literature such as that from Ugarit to explain the development and excellence of expression in successive literatures which have inspired Western readers for centuries. To these ends, chiasmus in Ugaritic will be examined first in its simple manifestations and then in its role as a complex structuring device, particularly in reference to the Old Testament.

The frequent occurrence of simple chiasmus in the brief two- and three-beat lines of Ugaritic poetry has been observed and detailed by several scholars, Cyrus Gordon and Mitchell Dahood in particular. Simple chiasmus consists of two lines which are written so that the words in the second line appear in the inverse order of the words in the first. Syntactically this amounts to inverting object-verb to verb-object, as noted by Gordon in 2 Aqht:v:10–1,
The walking of Kothar indeed he beholds, And he beholds the fast-gait of Khasis.

Chiasm may also be created by inverting verb-subject to subject-verb, which is the case, for example in RS 24.258:14–5,

Seated is El on his r(egal) th(rone) El sits (enthroned) at his banquet.³

Indeed, so prevalent is simple chiasmus in the stylistic composition of Ugaritic literature that Gordon devotes an entire section in his chapter on Syntax in the Ugaritic Textbook⁴ to displaying instances of such forms as they are created from grammatical elements. Dahood has followed suit with further examples.⁵

Looking beyond grammatically created chiasmus, other simple and compound chiasms can occur in the presentation of lists, catalogues and the like. Such is illustrated in 'nt:V:38–9 (=51:IV:41–3a),

Your command, O El, is wise, Your wisdom sagacity everlasting, A life of good-fortune is your command.

The construction of this passage may be represented as ab:bc:ca, granting that “eternity” and “life” are cognate ideas—as in fact some juxtapositions or collocations might lead us to believe.⁶

Where these simple chiastic verses are compared with the short chiastic verses of the Old Testament, it becomes apparent that stylistically the distance between the two is not great:

(1) Ugaritic and Hebraic grammatical chiasms are similar in that their elements are commonly verb-object or verb-subject.⁷ Thus, Genesis 7:11b,

Burst forth all the fountains of the Great Deep, And the sluice-gates of Heaven were opened,

compares well with UT 1003:5–7,

The two tongues lick the heavens, Swish in the sea the two tails.

By contrast, the majority of chiastic lines in Homer are patterns of nouns and adjectives, giving Classical chiasmus a much different flavor from the Semitic.⁸

(2) Incomplete chiasms appear in both Ugaritic and Hebrew texts, but are more characteristic of Ugaritic:

2 Aqht:V:10–1 (ab)c:c(a'b')
2 Aqht:V:31–3 abc:b'ac'
RS 24.258:1–2 abc:cb'
RS 24.258:14–5 (ab)c:(ba)c'

In Hebrew, however, chiasmus often becomes more complete, even within very short verses, e. g., Genesis 9:6a,

Whoso sheds the blood of man, By man his blood shall be shed.

In this case, all three elements participate in the inversion, abc:cba.
While chiasmus is far less common in Ugaritic than in Hebrew, the presentation of parallel word-pairs is at the same time more rigid.9

When the length of poetic lines increases in Hebrew or in Ugaritic, so the complexity of chiastic sections also intensifies, as may be seen first from UT 68:7b–11b,

A Then spoke Kothar-w-Khasis: B ,,Did I not tell you, O Majesty Baal, Nor declare, O Mounter of Clouds?"
C Behold, your enemies, O Baal,

Behold, your enemies, shall you smite, Behold, you shall annihilate your foes! B You shall take your kingship eternal, Your dominion everlasting." A Kothar carved a mace, 10 And proclaimed its name.

While often cited as containing a typical Canaanite climactic repetitive tricolon comparable to the one in Psalm 92:10 (KJV 92:9),11 it should also be noticed that this declaration of Kothar-w-Khasis (AA') begins in a mood of reassurance (B), shifts to its central promissory statement (C), and then resumes the thought of B with two lines proclaiming the exalted reign of Prince Baal (B'). Basically similar is Psalm 3:7–9 (KJV 3:6–8), examined elsewhere herein (p. 10), although the Hebrew is more intricate.

The nature of simple chiasmus, thus far observed, allows us to conclude initially that simple Ugaritic chiasmus resembles Hebraic chiasmus in respect to its components and in its affinity to the general form of parallelism prevalent in both literatures; the Ugaritic forms, however, seem more primitive when judged on the criteria of complexity, completeness, intensification, and length. Simple chiasmus is, to be sure, only a point of departure in anticipation of the identification of more complex structures. Now it is natural to look another step ahead.

A near-chiastic form in ancient literature is the inclusion or A-B-A pattern. Whether structural chiasmus grew out of the A-B-A symmetry or arose simultaneously with it, it is clear that both are compatible with a literary mentality which enjoyed the well-balanced framing-effect which could be achieved by positioning the central idea of an inscription at the midpoint of its physical configuration, though in some cases emphasis is on the flanks.

Any system, it seems, which is constructed from three parts, such that the first and third are in some significant respect identical to the each other, may be said to exemplify the A-B-A pattern. Needless to say, instances of this phenomenon are not particular oddities, nor are they difficult to discover and verify. Examples may be found throughout this volume in legal texts, epistles, covenant (bond), and literary texts, etc.12

Among the literary and religious texts of Ugarit, we encounter an interesting instance of the A-B-A pattern in Text 2. As Gordon observes, this text accompanies a ritual

whereby the women (:10–17 and :27–35) and men (:18–26) of Ugarit atone for their sins by offering sacrifices and libations to the father of the gods (="II) and the assembly of the gods via their official attendant(s) Tukamuna-and-Snm.13

In A the women's rituals are presented and in B the men's. It would appear, therefore, that the climax of the ritual takes place with the central line at 2:18 where the men recite ,,offer a bull, msr-msr, O son of Ugarit:" – a line which has no counterpart in the two female sections.
Gordon has also noted that Text 52, "The Birth of Dawn and Dusk," employs a ritualistic A-B-A pattern in that the women first address 'El as his wives, then as his daughters, and finally as his wives again. Yet we shall find below that the structure of this myth even exceeds the limits of this basic, though central, A-B-A alternation.

Text 49 + 62 of the Baal-'Anat cycle begins and ends with a contest for the throne, while Gordon mentions a couple of economic texts carefully framed with temporal prepositional phrases. The A-B-A overview, which we can detect in such passages, provides us with strong evidence for a well disciplined yet broad perspective enjoyed by ancient authors as they commanded the execution of their literary works. The counterbalancing shifts in style and subject matter were performed intentionally and served a valuable purpose in unifying and framing the message of the passage as a whole. It would be hazardous to argue that the duplications which occur in the second A passage, or the abrupt shifts which are necessarily found in all such texts are attributable to corruptions, since this would have vast consequences indeed on a large number of solid texts and would have to assume a very unlikely regularity in textual variation. Repetition was, rather, a commonplace in the literature of the second millennium B.C. Stylistically, these repetitions blend well into the many symmetrical, balanced units which have come down to us from this period. The artistic ideal appears to have been to create a text which could frame the body or central purpose of the writing like the border around a tapestry or the wings at the sides of a triptych. Thus the artistic success of the A-B-A technique must be judged in terms of its effectiveness in uniting, circumscribing, and giving a feel of completeness to the encircled text, and by this standard many Ugaritic texts fare impressively well.

Developing beyond the simple chiastic arrangements of lines, or the A-B-A inversion of blocks of composition, Ugaritic literature rises to a final stage of chiastic complexity. It has been frequently shown that a strong tendency exists in Hebrew literature to place ideas, events, or key phrases around an emphatic centerpoint in an order which ascends to a climax and then descends in the opposite order. It is evident that this pattern is fluently executed in the Ugaritic texts as well. Text 68 – not an intricate text – relates how Baal defeats Yamm and expels him from his dominion through use of a "mace" fashioned by Kothar-w-Khasis. It manifests the following structure:

A  ‘Athtart and Baal intend to destroy His Majesty Yamm (68:1–7)
B  Kothar-w-Khasis assures Baal of victory (7–10)
C  With the mace named "Expeller," Baal is unsuccessful (11–8)
C' With the mace named "Driver", Baal is successful (18–27)
B'  ‘Athtart praises Baal (28–30)
A'  ‘Athtart declares Baal the ruler instead of vanquished Yamm (31–40).

Despite the fragmentary nature of the beginning and ending of this text, and even apart from debate over whether ‘Athtart is shaming or praising Baal in B, the well-balanced structure of this episode is overtly visible through its repetition of thematic material. Indeed, chiastic parallel structure is a helpful tool here and elsewhere in restructuring mutilated portions of text. In this case, the success of the figure achieves a climactic parallelism at the center, where the god’s initial failure (C) shifts to success on his second assault (C'). The B sections balance each other as speeches by other deities, the second of which speaks in fulfillment of the former promissory statement. This rhetorical arrangement of the text is further established by a constellation of parallel word pairs, a central five of which are shown by Dahood to be standard in both Hebrew and Ugaritic (C/C'). In addition, standard Ugaritic-Hebrew pairs of vocative lameds are present only in lines 8 and 28–9 (B/B'). Though this particular example is but one level above the A-B-A pattern observed in Text 2, chiasmus already lends this text strong elements of containment and completeness.
From the foregoing relatively simple chiastic patterns, much more complex structures also developed. A readily available variation on the chiastic theme was to be found in the juxtaposing of the issuance of a command against its execution. Ugaritic Text 137 demonstrates a multi-leveled application of this technique.

The outline or format of this myth contains six balanced sections:

A  Baal threatens Yamm (137:1–6)
B  Yamm demands Baal's death (7–11)
C  Yamm instructs his messengers (11–7)
D  The messengers depart (18–21)
E  The gods lower their heads (22–3)
F  Baal rebukes the gods and orders the tablets read (24–5)
F’ Baal commands the gods and accepts responsibility (26–7)
E’ The gods lift their heads (28–9)
D’ The messengers arrive (30–1)
C’ Messengers deliver Yamm’s message (31–5)
B’ El declares Baal a captive of Yamm (36–7)
A’ Baal attempts to assault Yamm’s messengers and threatens Yamm by message (38–47).

Without examining Text 137 in its entirety, consider the significant semantic parallels which exist between its first and second halves. Yamm’s demand in B (7–11) is constructed as a tricolon, the third colon being climactic; so is El’s delivery of Baal to Yamm B’ (36–37), and in addition the latter contains a chiasm.

May Horan break, O Baal, (137:7–8; cf. 127:54–7) May Horan break your head, May Splendor-of-the-Name-of-Baal, your skull! Your slave is Baal, O Yamm, (137:36b–7a; cf. 68:9–10 Your slave is Baal, O Yamm, The son of Dagan your captive!

This repetition of climactic form is credential enough for itself. It would be hard to discount the claim that this effect was not the product of a conscious literary effort. So too it is difficult to explain the delayed reference to the arrival of the messengers in D’ except in terms of its position in the larger design of the episode as a whole; that is, the god’s catching sight of the messengers in E is the cause of their lowering their heads, but the arrival and entry of the messengers is withheld until D’ in order to balance the messengers’ departure in D. In fact, dischronology can be an important clue to the possible presence of chiasmus. Finally, C and C’ are easily identified as a pair by the presence, noted by Gordon, of the same chiastic, elliptical bicolon in each:

The message of Yamm, your lord, (137:17//33–4) Of your master, Judge River.
The standard Hebrew-Ugaritic parallel word-pair configuration here is conclusive evidence, if any doubt remains, and the interesting hapax legomenon, pdh, studied by Sasson, is included in the symmetrical pattern:

Your lord//your master (137:17) give up!/give up! (18) his gold (19) gods//holy-ones (20–1)

their heads//upon their knees (23)

your heads//upon your knees (24–5) your heads//upon your knees (27)

their heads//upon their knees (29) your lord//your master (33–4) give up!/give up! (34–5) his gold (35) gods//holy-ones (37–8)

Certain patterns seen in Text 137 extend to other texts as well. Note, for example, that an assembly/banquet scene is also central in Text 67, and in the Epic of Kirta:


Chiasmus makes this epic rich in antithesis and fulfillment. Note that it also makes it possible for the poem to end on an anticlimactic threat to the throne without making that anticlimax the real outcome of the story. Indeed, the climax, turnabout, and „theme of the whole text” is to be found in the center at 128:III:16, the very climax of the promises made by El and separated from the other promises by an inclusion lauding Kirta. The second of the three tablets of the epic clearly focuses on this line, suggesting that the „last shall be the first”:

seven/eight (128:II:23–4) Asherah (26) the Virgin, 'Anat (27) Greatly exalted be Kirta (III:2) Amid the congregation of the land, (3) In the assembly of the tribe of Dotan! (4) And she will conceive and bear (5) She will bear a maid (7–12) Greatly exalted be Kirta, (13) Amid the congregation of the land, (14) In the assembly of the tribe of Dotan! (15) I shall make the youngest of them the first-born! (16) The gods give their blessing as they come, (17) The gods come to their tents, (18) The pantheon of El to their dwellings. (19) Then she conceived and bore a son to him, (20) And she conceived and bore (two) sons to him, (21)? Behold, in seven years, (22) The sons of Kirta were as promised, (23) Yea, the daughters of Hurriya even so. (24–5) Asherah (25–6) the Goddess (26) seventy/eighty (IV:6–7)

A careful analysis of this epic discloses a sometimes confusing multistructural array of direct and chiastic parallels throughout. However, by plotting the occurrence of Ugaritic-Hebrew parallel pairs (and a hapax legomenon) in all three tablets, it is possible to say with certainty that the first and third tablets have far more in common with each other than with the second tablet. Some of the pairs most likely indicating chiasmus may be listed as follows:

Along with the variety of expression here used by the composer, there is an interesting reversal in the order of some of the combinations – though yet in keeping with regular A- and B-word order through a slight change in the combinations.

In order to give a further indication of the complex multistructural elements employed in this long epic, Text 125, which is chiastic in its entirety, will be outlined here:

Elhu speaks formula A (125:6–10, continued from 2–5) Elhu enters presence of father and weeps (11–3)
Elhu speaks formula B (14–23). . . . your sister, the Eighth (29–Thatismitu)

. . . . vault of the heavens (35). . . . the Lady Sun (36). . . . shining of the light of the myriads (37). . . . your sister, the Eighth (38) Our Kirta is slaughtering a sacrifice (39) The King is holding a banquet (40) Hold your left-hand over your nose, (41) Your right-hand over your throat, (42) etc.

. . . the lad Elhu (46) Grasped his lance in his left-hand (47) His javelin in his right-hand (48) Crisis in which Elhu faces his sister with the bad news of their father’s illness (50–3) Is the King sick? (56) Kirta, your lord, ill? (57) . . . the lad Elhu (58) The King is not sick. (59) Kirta, your lord, is not ill. (60) Our Kirta is slaughtering a sacrifice (61) The King is holding a banquet (62) (lacunae, 63–79) How many moons has he been sick? (81)

Three moons has he been sick (84) Four has he been ill (85) . . . fashion a grave (87) Fashion a grave, yea, build a sepulchral chamber . . . (88) Like a treasury with a gate . . . 89) Even as an enclosure . . . (90) Her brother, seven (94) Thatismitu weeps over her father (96–7) Thatismitu speaks formula B (98–106) Thatismitu speaks formula A (106–13)

It is quite possible that we have herein several examples of what Dahood calls “distant parallelism,” e. g., the standard Hebrew-Ugaritic pair, “sun”//“moon,” seems to appear in lines 36, 81, 84, a pair present also in the following text.

Text 77, “Nikkal and the Moon,” is a brief but charming wedding hymn. It begins and ends with lyrical chiastic verses, “I sing of Nikkal-w-lb” (77:1), “To Nikkal-w-lb do I sing.” (38). Though the refrain-effect created by this chiastic repetition caught the eye of Goetze, the influence of chiasmus upon the overall structure of the poem escaped his notice:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>X</th>
<th>Chiastic prologue (77:1–17)</th>
<th>17 lines Y</th>
<th>The conditions of the marriage (18–23)</th>
<th>6 lines Z</th>
<th>Permission to marry obtained (24–30)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 lines Y'</td>
<td>The stipulations fulfilled (31–36)</td>
<td>6 lines X'</td>
<td>Poetic epilogue (37–50)</td>
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X' Poetic epilogue (37–50).
The entire system may be detailed as follows:\textsuperscript{32}  

\begin{tabular}{llllll}
X & Poetic Prologue (77:1–17) & I sing of Nikkal-w-lb (daughter of) A & Khirikhbi, King of Summer  
 & (Songstresses) Daughters of praise, (Swallows)! & Behold, a maid will bear a son . . . C & Will give birth a virgin . . . (5) O Kotharot!  
 & (= Songstresses) Daughters of praise, (Swallows)! & Behold, a maid will bear a son . . . D & Look, lo, for his use . . . . . furnish for his flesh, blood, that . . . And wine as for a betrothal feast, that . . . (10) 
 & Of Nikkal-w-lb do I sing & Let shine the Moon; & And may the Moon shine for you! I sing of the goddesses Kotharot (40) Daughters of praise . . . Swallows Daughters of the New Moon . . . Lord of the Sickle Going down among the flowers  
 & & Let her dowry and her trousseau be . . . with (her) shouts of applause, In the presence of Prbht, The fairest, the youngest of the Kotharot. (50) 

Daughters of praise, (Swallows)! B’ & Sends the Moon, Illuminator of Heaven, A’ & To Khirikhbi, King of Summer; Y & The Conditions of the Marriage (77:17–24) & “Give Nikkal! Moon will bring wedding gifts, That lb may enter his house. And I shall give as her bride-price-dowry to her father (20) A thousand (sheqels) of silver A myriad of gold I’ll send gems of lapis lazuli I’ll make her fallow-eld into a vineyard The field of her love into orchards.” Z & Permission Granted (77:24–30) & Then replied Khirikhbi, King of Summer: “O Gracious One among the gods (25) Be a son-in-law of Baal! Offer a bride-price for Pidraya, daughter of light! I’ll introduce you to her father, Baal. Will agree ‘Athtar To marry off to you Ybrdmy, the daughter of his father (30) The Lion will exchange (her).” Y’ & The Conditions Fullled (77:31–6) & Then replied the Moon, Illuminator of Heaven, and he answered: “With Nikkal is my wedding!” After Nikkal Moon had wed . . . Her father set the beam of the scales, Her mother, the pans of the scales, (35) Her brothers arranged the ingots, Her sisters indeed “stone” the scales. X’ & Poetic Epilogue (77:37–50) & Of Nikkal-w-lb do I sing Let shine the Moon; And may the Moon shine for you! I sing of the goddesses Kotharot (40) Daughters of praise . . . Swallows Daughters of the New Moon . . . Lord of the Sickle Going down among the flowers Among the plants of . . . To Luzpan, God of Mercy (45) Behold, in my mouth is their number, on my lips, their counting Let her dowry and her trousseau be . . . with (her) shouts of applause, In the presence of Prbht, The fairest, the youngest of the Kotharot. (50)  

Consider just a few of the chiastic elements of this elegant poem. The relationships between the chiastic prologue and the poetic epilogue are secured by many links. First, these two sections delicately balance the beginning of this myth with its ending. Simply in terms of length and weight, X and X’ form mirror reections of each other. Second, the predominance of repeated thoughts and formulae in the epilogue bind it of necessity to the prologue. Duplicated lines, e. g., “Daughters of Praise, Swallows;” (77:5b–6, 77:15, and 77:40b–2a); recurring words, e.g., “Moon” (77:4, 37), “Kotharot” and “goddesses” (77:11, 40), as well as the chiastic introversion of 77:1 at 77:37–8, work together to effect an intimate interrelationship between this prologue and its epilogue. 

The meaning of the prologue, however, must be contrasted with that of the epilogue. At the first, the poet appears to sing of Nikkal’s relationship to the Moon: Her childbearing, and her nurturing of his son (with the help of the seven divine handmaids, the Kotharot) are specifically mentioned. In the epilogue, however, the poet sings of the Moon’s blessings to Nikkal: “May Moon shine for you” (77:38c–9), as here he places flowers and plants bounteously in her dowry and trousseau. These reciprocal complementary benefactions between Nikkal and Yarikh thus form a delicate scheme. 

In the central panels, each stipulation is fulfilled with precision. The request “Give Nikkal, Moon will bring wedding gifts” (17b–18), finds its equivalent response in the affirmative statements, “ ‘With Nikkal is my wedding!’ After Nikkal the Moon had wed” (32b–33). The four lines (20–23) naming the bride-price-dowry stand in contraposition to the four lines (33b–37a) depicting the weighing and receipt of the bride-price-dowry. And in keeping with the full chiastic structure of the poem, reference is made at the center to the two gods, Baal and Athtar, thus marking
the turning point of the poem. Chiastically arranged are the complementary marriage offers: “Wed Pidrai, daughter of light” (eldest daughter and consort of Baal), and “Ybrdmy, daughter of his father” (sister of ‘Athtar, the Lion and morning star god).

The total effect of this poem is very pleasing because of the precision with which, and the full extent to which, chiastic balances and complements are incorporated into the text. But still, the technique visible here is related to the basic A–B–A pattern (in this case, the sections X–YZY–X’ appear to be poetic-narrative-poetic) and to the command-response epitaxis. Nevertheless, “Nikkal and the Moon” has achieved a great height of literary sophistication by transferring rudimentary repetition into a very subtle work of artistry.

The ‘Anat section of the Baal–‘Anat cycle is aptly named. For, at the very center of the complex chiasm therein, ‘Anat herself lists her greatest conquests as goddess of war par excellence. The formulae and key phrases are laid out here with the Hebrew-Ugaritic parallel pairs in italics:

A  a thousand//ten-thousand (nt:1:15–7) B  gates of the house (II:3–4)? house//two-tables (II:29–30) C  She draws some water and bathes;//Dew of heaven//Fatness of earth, (II:38–9) D  Take away from the earth war, Banish from the soil all strife; (III–IV:11–2) Pour peace into the midst of the earth, Much amity into the midst of the field’s bosom; (13–4) Converse of heaven with earth, Of the deeps with the stars; (21–2) E  “What enemy has risen against Baal, (34) (What) foe against the Cloud-Rider? (34–5) Behold, I crushed El’s beloved, Yamm! (35) I destroyed El’s River, Rabbim. (36) Behold, I muzzled the Dragon, yea, I muzzled him! (37) (Ps 68:23) I did crush the Crooked Serpent, (38) (cf. Isa 27:1) (UT 67:I: 2) Shalyat, the seven-headed. (39) I did crush El’s beloved, Ar. . . , (40) F  Cut off El’s Bullock, ‘Atak. (41) I did crush the Divine Bitch, Fire, (42) Destroyed the daughter of El, Flame, (43) Who fought you and seized the gold; (43–4) Who drove Baal from the Heights of Zaphon, (44) Without frontlet, his ear pierced through; (45) Chased him from his throne of kingship, (46) From the dais, the seat of his dominion. (47) E’  What enemy has risen against Baal, (48) What foe against the Cloud-Rider? (48) No enemy has risen against Baal, (49) No foe against the Cloud-Rider! (50) D’  (I’ll) take away from the earth war, (I’ll) banish from the soil all strife; (52–3; 67; 72–3) Pour peace into the midst of the earth, Much amity into the midst of the field’s bosom; (54; 68–9; 74–5) Converse of heaven with earth, Of the deeps with the stars; (60–1) A’  a thousand//ten-thousand (82) C’  She draws some water and bathes;//Dew of heaven//Fatness of earth, (86–7) B’  No house has Baal like the gods’, Nor a court like Asherah’s children’s (V:11–2) Unless he give a house unto Baal like the gods’, And a court like Asherah’s children’s, (46–7) A”  a thousand//ten-thousand (VI:4–5) a thousand//ten-thousand (17)

Note the intensification in the second half. This is due partly (from A’ to A”) to another, smaller chiastic structure which focuses on a mutilated conversation between El and ‘Anat, which is enclosed by the repeated Hebrew-Ugaritic word-pair, “seven”//“eight” (V:19–20a//34–5).

As asserted above (p. 159), Text 52, “The Birth of Dawn and Dusk,” also exhibits a more substantially complex and complete chiastic substructure, featuring at its center (52:40–9) a triad of speeches made by the women addressing El: First they speak to him as his wives, but declare him unable to impregnate them; second, they approach him as daughters; and third, they revert to their appeal to him as his wives, whereupon he does impregnate them. Seen in overview, here are the major repetitions and their sequence in this text:

The structure of this text requires but little further comment. Its complex chiasmus is created by the repetition of certain themes, augmented by the precise recurrence of words and phrases in consecutively corresponding sections. Around the central climactic speeches, the writer has positioned several well-balanced, complementary passages in a perfectly concentric geometric style. The chiastic structure here is further corroborated by known Hebrew-Ugaritic word-pairs, and this is most appropriate in a text named for the divine pair, Shahar and Shalem. Indeed, here we find a clear instance of reversal of standard A- and B-word sequence:

food//drink; food//wine (52:6) walk//range (16) eight//seven (19–20) heaven//heaven (38) fire//coals (41) fire//coals (44–5) fire//coals (48) heaven//heaven (62) seven/eight (66–7) walk//range (67–8) food//wine; food//drink (71-2)

There is disagreement, however, as to whether this text should be viewed as a fertility text, as a celebration of surfeit following seven years of famine, as an integration text fusing divine and human spheres, or merely as a ritual text for a banquet in honor of the gods Dawn and Dusk. Although this debate cannot be easily resolved, the chiastic emphasis here on the regeneration of fertile potency would lend credence to the view that the text is fundamentally a fertility text.

In conclusion, the examinations presented here are just a beginning, but they indicate that the literary elements of these early epics and poems are far more progressive than one had previously suspected. Not only is the body of early Canaanite literature formally noteworthy in itself, but extensive roots of the literary techniques which we will next see manifest in the Hebrew Bible clearly find their precedents in this era of ancient Near Eastern composition. What further research at Ugarit or other ancient cultural centers such as Ebla will reveal is impossible to predict. But as the awareness of chiasmus expands, it should at least become ever clearer that the figure itself was extensively employed, making its significance in any given body of literature greater than early twentieth century presuppositions about the composition and transmission of ancient literature ever entertained.

FOOTNOTES

1 Much of the material appearing here was first presented by the author in UF, VI:421–36.

2 Gevirtz, JNES, 20:41.

3 Following Margulis’ rendering in UF, II:133, 136.

4 AnOr 38, 13.117; see also 13.50, 107 (n. 2), 118, 14.4, 17.5–6.

5 U-HP, 13.117, 123; UF, I:24–6, 32–6.

6 Cf. Gen 3:22, Zech 1:5, Dan 12:2, 7, Neh 2:3, Job 7:16; other parallels may exist here—see Cross, Theologisches Wörterbuch zum alten Testament, I:262–3, II.2.b; Dahood, Psalms, I:xxiii, xxv; Albright, YGC, p. 139, and n.75.

8 Cf. II 3, 179; 16, 224; 24, 720; Od 3, 310; 24, 340 (which I discuss in a later chapter in this volume).

9 Dahood, *RSP*, I, II: Intro 4c, n. 30; more will be said of word-pair order, below.

10 See note 21, below.


12 Treated above are the Sumerian Codex Lipit-Ishtar, the Akkadian Codex Hammurabi, a letter in Akkadian found at Ugarit (Knutson, *RSP*, II, VI:4), while below may be found biblical examples such as Deut 5–28 (Knutson, *RSP*, II, VI:2gh), Job, Daniel, II Ki 18–23, etc.

13 *UL*, p. 108.


15 As in the more complex Epic of Kirta and in the Iliad; cf. also Texts 68 and 137.


17 To the contrary, A–B–A or chiastic patterning can often be used to account for dischronology – cf. Martin, *VTS*, 17:179–86.

18 And even earlier in the rhetoric of general hymnal epical dialects – Albright, *JPOS*, 2:69–86; *YGC*, pp. 4–5, 8–9.


20 Lund, *CNT*, pp. 131–4, suspected chiasmus in this text, but was unable to demonstrate it.


26 *RSP*, I, III:97.

27 *ANET*, 143–9.
Gray, The KRT Text, 2 pp. 1–2, 4–5, 60, 67; cf. I Sam 16:6–13, with the very same promise at or near the center of the chiasm of I Sam 1–31; cf. also the promise in Ps 89:28 (KJV 89:27), the entire Psalm likewise being chiastic, Boys, Key, pp. 105 ff.; Schoors, RSP, I, I:42.


Psalms, III:483; cf. RSP, I, II:6; there is also a hint of the pair „seven” „eight,” though in reverse (94/29, 38) – cf. Text 52, below.

Goetze, JBL, 60:354, wrongly considering lines 40–50 as an independent composition (pp. 353–4).


See ANET, 3 135–8; Cassuto, The Goddess Anath (esp. p. 137, where he noted the parallel of III:6ff./IV:52ff.).

Lund, CNT, pp. 34, 44; cf. Ps 3:7–9.

See Driver, Canaanite Myths and Legends, pp. 120–5.

The climactic center of this text is observed by Tsumura in his „The Ugaritic Drama of the Good Gods” (dissertation); parallels between the first (more ritual) part of this text and its second (more mythic) part are also analyzed by Xella, Il Mito di Shr e Slm.


Accord, Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, pp. 22–4; Schoors, RSP, I, I:23h, citing Kosmala.
Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative

Yehuda T. Radday

Very few will dispute that the Hebrew Bible, except for several undistinguished parts such as genealogies, is literature of the highest rank. Its excellence might even have served the Jews in their past polemics as a welcome argument for the incomparable uniqueness of their book, but, surprisingly, this argument seems never to have been advanced. To be sure, they always felt their book to be exceptional, but they never based their case on its literary superiority. It is therefore paradoxical that the first evidence of such appreciation is probably not older than two hundred years and due to R. Lowth, a Gentile.¹ Lowth drew specific attention, among other things, to the phenomenon of parallelism in biblical poetry, which accounts for much of its beauty and for which he coined the term parallelismus membrorum. When classifying the various forms of parallelism, however, he overlooked the inverted or chiastic form, i.e., whose sequence of members is not ABC: A'B'C', but ABC: C'BA' or some variation of this grouping. Nevertheless, such literary structures in ancient Hebrew poetry have recently evoked a steadily increasing amount of scholarly interest and comment.

A glance at this scholarly literature, however, discloses that it has almost exclusively been concerned with chiasm in poetry, and indeed only as it occurs in single verses or very short passages. One fundamental reason for this reluctance to search for chiasm in prose can be attributed to the attitude of many literary scholars that prose lacks the artistic sophistication of drama and poetry. Patterns and stylistic idiosyncrasies so effectively evinced in poetry are often thought to be absent or insignificant in prose. To wit Thackeray: ,,Novels are the sweets,” not the meaty course of a literary diet. In addition, biblical scholarship in the nineteenth century, and until quite recently, concentrated either on Lower Criticism, i.e. reconstructing an allegedly corrupt Massoretic text, or on Higher Criticism, i.e. differentiating the sources from which the Massoretic text was thought to be composed. Lower Criticism, as it would be, finds little need to attend to matters of structure, while Higher Criticism, which takes any repetition in the flow of a narrative as evidence of separate source materials, is by definition bound to overlook the very essence of chiasm, namely the fact that such repetitions may have been employed in a given composition as an intentional stylistic device. The result, in the final analysis, is that both approaches, and indeed the somewhat myopic scholarly fixation on detailed and minute analysis generally, can combine to preclude even the most dedicated scholar from perceiving the overall structure of many compositions which reveals the presence of chiasm in longer passages and entire books.

But scholarly attitudes are changing. The general attitude toward biblical exegesis has become less text-critical, especially as the discoveries of Ugaritic and Essene literatures frequently sustain the Massoretic text against its major detractors. Furthermore, disillusionment with the crass rationalism of the last century has brought about a more cautious posture vis-i-vis ancient literatures than the confident attitudes which spawned much of Higher Criticism. These changes in the intellectual climate have slowly enabled scholars to agree that several techniques other than the naturalistic manner of telling a tale may exist in the Bible.

Nevertheless, the question whether longer pericopes in the Bible are or are not chiastically built still generates a great deal of heat. First, if these texts are indeed so constructed, this may well undermine the validity of certain other hypotheses concerning the composition of the Hebrew Bible. In addition, most readers, laboring until this day under the notion that a story should be related in a straightforward fashion, find it odd that ,,doublets”, inconsistencies, pro- and parachronisms should serve any deliberate literary purpose. The contemporary mind, nurtured on and believing in scientific publications, is disinclined to acknowledge that an artist should intentionally deviate from the ,,logical” sequence of narration in order to follow another pattern of his own. That this may
happen in the visual arts is slowly being recognized by the general public, but some are still reluctant to treat literature in the same light. As it becomes more evident, however, that particular forms of structuralism are deliberately employed in modern literature – witness works of Faulkner, Kafka, Huxley, Hemingway and Joyce – why should it seem unlikely that the same was true of ancient literature as well?

Proving that this is exactly what happened in the Hebrew Bible is the purpose of this study. It will make three claims:

First, that many narrative sections of Scripture are chiastically built. This proves to be equally true for entire libraries such as the Torah, for single books, for many pericopes, and especially for those chapters that occupy positions in the text of paramount importance. In short, chiasm was *de rigueur* in Biblical times. The investigation will proceed on the assumption that the Massoretic text is essentially intact and will disregard all variants and conjectures regarding possible additions and omissions to the text. Text criticism which proceeds by postulating rearrangements sheds little light on literary structure.

Chiastic structure, it will be seen, is more than an artificial or artistic device. If it were nothing else, it would hardly warrant more than a passing illustration of a few exemplary passages. It is rather, and most remarkably so, a key to meaning. Not paying sufficient attention to it may result in failure to grasp the true theme.

This leads to the second claim, that biblical authors and/or editors placed the main idea, the thesis, or the turning point of each literary unit, at its center. This fact has been recognized before by certain biblicists such as Lund, who, however, have failed to take this to its necessary conclusions.

If true, the significance of this salient feature cannot be overestimated. As they stand, for example, the books of the Bible are silent as to the express purposes for which they were written. For instance, we know nothing of the reasons which induced an anonymous writer to write the Book of Samuel. Is it an autobiography, a court chronicle, or a treatise disguised as a story? If the importance of the central passage is properly recognized, however, all we have to do in order to find the answer to this question is open the book to its middle and read. This reveals the book’s focal concepts. As soon as the fundamental purpose of a book is known, all the rest of it will become readily comprehensible.

It will be shown that these first two claims apply to all pre-exilic books, the prominence and elaborateness of the chiastic pattern varying. But these two literary conventions seem to have gradually fallen into disuse in the course of the centuries.

Third, it is therefore observed that the beauty and completeness of the chiastic construction bears a direct correlation to age: the older, the more chiastic. Close to the termination of biblical Hebrew literary activity, practically nothing survived of the former literary constraints, except, in certain creations, the bi-partition of a book into two halves. The incidence of chiasm may therefore also serve in roughly dating a book as pre- or post-exilic. That its perfection is an indicator of the author’s skill goes without saying.

The members making up a chiastic pattern will be marked by A, B, C, etc., and their „echoes” in the palistrophe by A', B', C' etc., and displayed in diagrams. The diagram of a perfect chiasm will therefore show the sequence to be ABC–D–C'B'A'. Such perfection however will not emerge everywhere. Not infrequently, we shall find the sequence to be ABC–D–B'C'A' or even less ordered and more scrambled, particularly when the number of members is large
May such a pattern still be called chiastic? Does it perhaps even approach direct parallelism? Or is its second half a mere random rearrangement of the members of the first?

Routine statistical tests are available for providing answers to such questions. For a more detailed explanation of how to apply them, the statistical note to this essay (p. 252) should be consulted. At this juncture, it should be mentioned only that all diagrams demonstrating chiastic patterns (except those that do not deviate at all from the paradigm sequence) will be assigned two numerical values, \( r \) and \( r^* \). Values of \( r \) may fluctuate between \(-1.00\) and \(+1.00\). Whenever \( r \) is negative, the pattern is an inverted one, and the closer \( r \) lies to \(-1.00\), the more complete is the inversion. Thus, \( r \) measures the degree of chiasm. Whenever \( r \) is greater than \( r^* \), there is a 95 percent probability that the chiastic alignment of the scheme members is not a product of chance, but of the author’s intent. If \( r \) exceeds \( r^*_{-1} \), then this probability is as high as 99 percent.

The narrative books of Scripture are:

(a) Torah: Genesis, Exodus (parts), Numbers (parts); (b) Early Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings; (c) Latter Prophets: Jonah; (d) Writings: Ruth, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles.

We shall deal with each of them (and also treat Leviticus and Deuteronomy passim), the post-exilic ones first, the pre-exilic later and the Torah last.

The RSV translation will serve for quotations except where it fails to reflect the structure of the original composition. References to scholarly publications will be limited, as the scholar will not need and the layman not read them. Further discussions of the problems posed by particular biblical books may be easily consulted in any introduction to the literature of the Old Testament. On the other hand, references to Jewish classical sources will be frequently supplied, since they are less known, less accessible, but not less instructive.

**Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles** The consensus of scholars is that Chronicles was composed around the year 400 B.C.E., the chronicler using much older source material. With regard to Ezra and Nehemiah, opinions differ somewhat, but not substantially; whether they are two separate biographies, one single book, or constitute part of Chronicles, they too must have been written at approximately 400 B.C.E. If they represent attempts at autobiographical writing unlike the didactic historiography of the First Commonwealth, harmonistic structuralism such as chiasm would have no place in them, and if they were part of Chronicles, even less so. Accordingly, these books are not chiastic and thus it appears that when they were written, chiasm was no longer *en vogue*.

**Daniel** The Book of Daniel is probably the most recently composed book in the Hebrew Bible, though not the most recently incorporated in it. H.L. Ginsberg has convincingly shown that its composition should be dated to the sixties of the second century B.C.E. Although much of the book is written in narrative prose, as were many of the earlier canonical works, we search in vain for elaborate chiastic construction here. Unlike the earlier texts in which chiasm flourished, all that remains of its early splendor and prevalence here are a few elementary features.

The book divides first into two equal parts: Chapters 1–6 recount a string of courtier stories, told in the third person; chapters 7–12 relate four apocalyptic accounts, cast in the first person. The book also opens (1:1–2:4a) and closes (8:1–12:13) in Hebrew, while the balance is written in Aramaic. By combining these two shifts, a chiastic pattern \( A-B-B'-A' \) emerges, where \( A \) and \( A' \) stand for the Hebrew sections and \( B \) and \( B' \), for the Aramaic, and, in addition, where \( A \) and \( B \) contain the court stories and \( B' \) and \( A' \), the apocalypse.
A further chiastic characteristic may be identifiable in chapters 1–6, which relate three instances testing and proving the loyalty of Daniel and his friends to the God of Israel. They first refuse to eat unclean food (ch. 1), then to bow to an image (3:1–30), and finally to refrain from praying (ch. 6). The wondrous interpretations of dreams and ominous writings fill the interstices (chs. 2 and 4) creating an alternating A–B–A–B–A pattern.

Looking at Daniel from yet a different angle, it is possible that the book also draws upon ancient source material which may originally have shown chiastic features. This seems to be Lenglet’s view, who proposes that chapters 2–7 form just such „une symétrie concentrique,” as follows:4


Even further traces of chiasm may be identified in the four visions (chs. 7–12).5 Chapter 7 and 12 each speak of three and a half time units and of white color; Chapters 8 and 11 each contain parades of rulers down to one by whom probably Antiochus IV Ephiphanes is meant. The principal visions are placed in the central chapters 8 and 9 where the same number of time units recur and where in climax, the two angels Gabriel and Michael communicate with Daniel.

The structure of Daniel is admittedly confusing, yet the four different analyses advanced are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Without arriving at a clear and unambiguous verdict, we may tentatively conclude that certain chiastic tendencies are present in its structure.

ESTHER Most critics of the Scroll of Esther readily assign it to the early years of the Greek period, around the late fourth or early third century B.C.E. Its purpose is also readily manifest: to explain the origin of the Jewish Feast of Purim. Thus, two basic questions posed by most of the canonical books are easily answered in the case of the Scroll of Esther.

The structure of the book is equally obvious. Its ten chapters divide into two parts, one progressing from a propitious beginning to a situation of mortal danger, the other from near catastrophe to a felicitous ending. The seemingly casual event, that on one certain night a king suffered from sleeplessness, turning imminent disaster into salvation, is aptly set at the middle:


\(r = -0.929, r^* = -0.643, r_1^* = -0.833\)

This diagram shows the general sequence of the episodes here to be chiastic. However this far from exhausts all chiasm in the book, for its second part replicates its first in terms of the idioms, figures of speech, keywords and details repeated en masse, so to say, but to the opposite effect. The author himself brings this fact to the reader’s
notice by remarking in 9:1, „the opposite happened.” There is an embarras de richesses of concentrically arranged items expressed in rather simple contrapositions and substitutions: Haman's „up and down,” Mordecai's „down and up,” three days of fasting stand opposite three days of revenge, the killers are killed, long festivities must be paid for by new taxes, etc. So many of the expressions occurring in chapters 1–5 are echoed in chapters 6–10, sometimes without the plot necessitating their repetition at all, that one is impressed that these dislegomena are introduced simply because the author delighted in so doing or because his listeners and readers responded favorably to such repetitions. There is also a touch of humor, and even irony, in this device. Here is a partial list of such twice repeated words and phrases:

from India to Ethiopia 1:1, 8:9

army 1:3, 8:11

days 1:5, 9:27

the garden of the king's palace 1:5, 7:7

fine linen and purple 1:6, 8:15

to do as desired 1:8, 9:5

near 1:14, 6:13

the anger of the King abated 2:1, 7:10

welfare 2:11, 9:30

Mordecai's/Esther's command 2:20, 9:32

wailing 4:1, 9:31

fast 4:3, 9:31

mourning 4:3, 9:22

the city square 4:6, 6:11

full account 4:7, 10:2

all that happened to him 4:7, 6:13

make supplication 4:8, 8:3

keep silence 4:14, 7:4

at this/that time 4:14, 8:9

the inner/outer court 5:1, 6:4
standing in the courtyard 5:2, 6:5
quickly 5:5, 6:10
multitude of sons/brethren 5:11, 10:3

Several word pairs, e.g. white (cotton) and blue (1:6), kindred and people (2:20), request and petition (5:3,6), are reiterated in their reversed order (8:15, 8:6 and 5:7, respectively). Similar cases of metathesis will be found below.

A number of rather unusual idioms occurs thrice: not only on either side of 6:1, but also approximately in the middle, for instance:

- glory 1:4, 6:3, 10:2
- the book of chronicles 2:23, 6:1, 10:2
- promote 3:1, 5:11, 10:2
- advance 3:1, 5:11, 9:3
- it is not of any profit 3:8, 5:13, 7:4

All are more or less symmetrically concentric. Perhaps not entirely by coincidence, the name Mordecai occurs thirty-five and the name Shushan, nine times in each half of the book.

Moreover, several verses in the third chapter (3:10–15), too long to be quoted here in full, reappear in chapter 8, the third from the end (8:2, 7–15). They tell of the appointments of the two different viziers vested with the same signet ring, of the King’s gifts to them, of summoning the same secretaries for the writing of two almost contradictory decrees, and of promulgating the letters by couriers to every province in its own script and language. In the latter retelling, a few special touches are added: the Jews’ script and language are mentioned now, although they had no province of their own, and the letters were not sent by ordinary but mounted messengers who were instructed to make haste. The postscript of the first account says, „the city of Shushan was perplexed,” while the one of the second reads, „the city of Shushan was jubilant and rejoiced.”

The following diagram details these repetitions in the book’s diction. Words in italics point to instances where a sequence is repeated in reversed order.

A the chiefs of Persia and Media (1:3) B the King’s splendour, pomp and glory (1:4) C it may not be altered (1:19) D Mordecai . . . Esther (2:5,7) E a remission of taxes to the provinces (2:18) F the King took his signet ring . . . [see above] . . . Shushan was perplexed (3:10–15), and in every province wherever the King’s command and decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and lamenting, and many lay in sackcloth and ashes (4:3) G [the King] held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand (5:2) H so the King and Haman came to dinner . . . and the King said to Esther, „What is your petition? It shall be granted to you. Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.” But Esther said, „. . . if I have found favor and it please the King” (5:5–8) I Haman went out . . . joyful and glad of heart (5:9) J he went home (5:10) K he fetched his friends and his wife Zeresh (5:10) L and Haman recounted to them (5:11) M „so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King’s gate” (5:13) N then his wife Zeresh
and his friends said to him (5:14) O  „Let a gallows fifty cubits high be be made… to have Mordecai hanged upon it” (5:14) P  On that night, the King could not sleep (6:1) M „and do so to Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King’s gate” (6:10) J ‘Haman sneaked off to his home (6:12) I  mourning and his head covered (6:12) L  and Haman recounted (6:13) N to his wife Zeresh and all his friends (6:13) K  ‘his counsellors and his wife Zeresh said to him (6:13) H’ so the King and Haman went to dinner … and the king said to Esther, „What is your petition? It shall be granted to you. And what is your request? Even to
the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.” And she said, „If it please the King and I have found favour” (7:14)
O „the gallows… fifty cubits high”… „Hang him on that” (7:9,10) G  ‘the King held out the golden sceptre to Esther (8:4) F  I have given Esther Haman’s house… seal it with the ring [see above]… Shushan
was jubilant and rejoiced… and in every province and in every city, wherever the King’s command and his
edict came, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, a feast and holiday, and many … declared
themselves Jews (8:7–17) C ‘it may not be altered (9:27) D  ‘Esther … Mordecai (9:29) E  ‘the King… imposed a tax on the land (10:1) B ‘[Mordecai’s] power, might and glory (10:2) A  ‘the kings of Media and Persia (10:2)

$$r \approx -0.847, r^* \approx -0.425, r_{1}\approx -0.601$$

There is one further interesting feature in the pattern. Haman plays the main role in the first five chapters while Mordecai assumes that role in the last, both rising from humble origin to highest honor. Now the first half numbers ninety-one verses, the second seventy-five. On both sides of the critical night (6:1), the triumphs of Haman and Mordecai, respectively, are placed in the exact middle: the forty-sixth verse of the first section (3:1) says, „… the King… promoted Haman… and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes,” while in the thirty-ninth verse of the second section (8:15) it is written, „Thus Mordecai went out from the presence of the King in royal robes of blue and white, with a golden crown and a mantle of fine linen and purple.”

To be sure, in comparison with the chiastic constructions which we shall presently meet in other books, Esther’s is somewhat crude. In more sophisticated chiastic writing, the climax will often contain an expression of the fundamental theological tenet or a basic moral lesson, but here it is a case of sleeplessness, seemingly a chance occurrence. After all, drunkards like King Ahasverus are notoriously good sleepers. Nevertheless, his sleeplessness was the turning point of the narrative. In its way, it was a miracle. Classical Hebrew has two nouns for the word „miracle”: nes and pele. Medieval Jewish philosophers differentiate between the two and define nes as an entirely natural phenomenon which is extraordinary only by its timing. A nes is not an event which goes against the laws of nature, but is of very low probability. God intervenes in human destiny not by a means that nullifies the laws of physics, but by what is, statistically speaking, rather improbable. The Rabbis understood 6:1 precisely the same way:

„On that night, the King’s sleep was disturbed” – said R. Hamma bar Gorion: all who were supposed to sleep tasted no sleep on that night. Esther was busy preparing Haman’s dinner, Mordecai in his sackcloth was busy fasting, Haman was busy erecting the gallows. At that hour said the Holy One, blessed be He, to the angel in charge of slumber: My children are in trouble, and this good-for-nothing should sleep? Go down and disturb his slumber! (Yalqut Shim’oni 1057)

So there is ample theological justification for the central position of the King’s sleeplessness in the Book of Esther, despite its apparent lack of profundity.
JOSHUA The Babylonian Talmud (Baba Batra 4b) ascribes the Book of Joshua to Joshua himself. This view is untenable, the more so as it never says so itself, and the three passages in 8:32, 18:9 and 24:26 are not sufficient evidence. While most scholars agree that the book contains ancient material dating back as far as the tenth century B.C.E., most (except Kaufmann) assume various later editors who were at work in the seventh and sixth centuries. Since the book is said to betray traces of such composite compilation from sources of different periods, Pfeiffer is induced to call the result „utter confusion“. Dischronisms, stories overlapping with those of the Book of Judges, and similar difficulties compel the reader to ask indeed what principle guided those responsible for creating the internal order of this narrative. The answer to this question may be found when the text is examined for chiastic construction.

The book consists of two equal halves of twelve chapters each. The first deals with the conquest of the Land of Canaan; the second, with the apportioning of the tribal inheritances according to the lot cast at the central sanctuary at Shiloh. The first half recounts the following incidents:

A Preparatory: Joshua in charge of the people (ch. 1) B Outwitting the King of Jericho by spying (ch. 2) C Crossing the Jordan waters (ch. 3) D Laying down stones in the River (ch. 4) E The stone monument at Gilgal (ch. 5) F The covenant of circumcision (ch. 5) G The fall of Jericho (ch. 6) B’ Outwitting the inhabitants of Ai by ambush (chs. 7 and 8) E’ Building a stone altar on Mount Ebal (ch. 8) F’ The covenant with the Gibeonites (ch. 9) D’ Setting up stones at Makkedah (10:27) C’ Victory at the Waters of Meron (11:1–15) A’ Concluding: summary of conquests (11:16–12:26)

\( r = -0.607, r^* = -0.714, r_1^* = -0.893 \)

The symmetry, it is true, is not perfect, but to some extent it is there. In disregard of chronology, the fall of Jericho is put in the middle, although it only occurred a few weeks after the crossing of the Jordan, while all the other events subsequent to the crossing stretched over a period of full seven years, according to Jewish tradition (TJ, Hallah 2).

Since the second half of the book consists of a rich collection of geographical source material proceeding roughly from the South to the North, a strict chiastic order is naturally precluded. In spite of this, there are traces of chiasm here too. The erection of the sanctuary at Shiloh must, because of this city’s proximity to Jericho, and in order to make the casting of the lots possible at all, have occurred before any of the conquered land was alloted. It is noteworthy, though, that establishing the Tent at Shiloh is not related until 18:1, the exact middle of the second half, a sign of the author’s (or editor’s) wish to balance his material symmetrically. We observe, for example, that the tribes are listed here in an order different from anywhere else in the Bible. The south-north and Transjordania-Cisjordania sequence would have demanded the series: Reuben, Gad, Manasseh, Judah, Simeon, Benjamin, Ephraim, Issachar, Zebulon, Asher, Naftali and Dan. What may have caused the author to deviate from it and to mention them as follows: (1) Reuben, (2) Gad, (3) Judah, (4) Ephraim, (5) Manasseh, (6) Shiloh, (7) Benjamin, (8) Simeon, (9) Zebulon, (10) Issachar, (11) Asher, (12) Naftali, (12) Dan? First of all, Naftali and Dan, two tribes of the Rachel group, are left to the end because these settled their land much later, probably after Joshua’s death. The remaining tribes are named, in accordance with an ABB’A’ scheme:

A Three of the Leah Group (Reuben, Gad, Judah) B One of the Rachel group (Joseph, comprising both Ephraim and Manasseh) C ‘Shiloh’ B’ One of the Rachel group (Benjamin) A’ Five of the Leah group (Simeon, Zebulon, Issachar, Naftali, Dan)
The imbalance between A and A’ was unavoidable: the tribe of Levi, of the Leah group, would have had its proper place in A, and would more or less thus have balanced the five tribes mentioned in A’. However, Levi, instead of receiving any tribal portion, was given forty-eight cities dispersed all over the country: including them under A would not have restored, but rather disturbed the equilibrium.

While the chiastic structure of both parts is far from complete, the author, in the best tradition of biblical historiography, does not hesitate to sacrifice accurate chronology and actual geography where necessary to center his account on the two most significant details which, in his opinion, carried the spiritual message of the book: the fall of Jericho and the founding of the Shiloh sanctuary.

It is the explicit promise of the Torah (Deut. 9:3–5), and again the explicit conviction of the prophets (e.g. Amos 2:9–10), that the Land of Canaan has been or shall be, respectively, conquered through Divine intervention by the twelve tribes. The land should, therefore, be considered a gift rather than a territory acquired by might of arms (Lev. 26:34–43). This eventuality could hardly be demonstrated to the reader more vividly than by the miraculous fall of Jericho, the proper place of which is consequently in the middle of the first part.

But the essential purpose of this gift is not to improve the precarious physical conditions of Israel sojourning in the desert: it is the granting of the optimal opportunity for the fulfillment of the obligations which the tribes took upon themselves at Sinai. This task has an essentially religious character. There is no better symbol for the religious raison d’être of Israel than the sanctuary, and it is therefore most fitting that the account of the erection of the latter should occupy the prominent central place in the second part of the book.

Later accretions to the original may have obscured a former and perhaps more fully developed chiastic pattern. But in any event, the book’s narration of the events of the seven years of conquest and of the seven years of settlement in its present fashion is anything but confused writing, pace Pfeiffer.

JONAH

Because of Aramaisms, anachronisms, mythical elements and parallels conflicting with other books, opinions vary greatly concerning the date of the composition of the Book of Jonah. It is quite probable that it recounts an early story first orally transmitted and only later committed to writing (around the fifth century B.C.E.?). Jonah’s psalm (2:3–10) raises additional problems because it is a thanksgiving prayer rather than a plea for deliverance, but since it is poetry, we shall disregard it here. The argument sometimes voiced in favor of considering it an integral part of the book on the ground that its removal would destroy the symmetry between the first two and the last two chapters is unsound. The division of the Bible into chapters is not original, but was devised as late as the twelfth century C.E. (by Stephan Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury). Moreover, with the psalm removed, the book naturally falls into two equal parts of nineteen (chs. 1 and 2:1; 2:11) and twenty-one verses (chs. 3 and 4). This fact, just as the book begins and ends with the word of God, points in the direction of possible chiastic structure. Its first part presents indeed a well-developed chiasm:

A  Narrative; the sailors’ fright (1:4–5)  B  The sailors’ prayer to their gods (1:5)  C  Narrative (1:5–6)
D  The captain’s speech (1:6)  E  The sailors’ speech (1:7)  F  Narrative (1:7–8)  G  Jonah’s confession (1:9)
F’  Narrative; the sailors’ great fright (1:10)  E’  The sailors’ speech (1:10–11)  D’  Jonah’s speech (1:12)
C’  Narrative (1:13)  B’  The sailors’ prayer to the Lord (1:14)  A’  Narrative; the sailors’ great fright of the Lord (1:15–16)

\( r = -0.997, r^* = -0.714, r_1^* = -0.893 \)
The tale progresses from the sailors’ undefined “fright” at the start and their “great fright” in the middle towards the proper “great fright of the Lord” at the end. The quite unusual word besel is found in the middle between A and F and again in the middle between F’ and A’. Attention should also be given to the use and frequency of the Divine names: YHWH occurs four and Elohim two times from A to F, and YHWH alone six times from F’ to A’, with YHWH Elohim,” equating the two names, occurring once in Jonah’s confession.

Chapters 3 and 4 are to be viewed as one unit. The scenes alternate: in the countryside (3:1–3), in town (3:4–4:4), in the countryside (4:5–11). Nineveh is called “the great city” at the beginning and at the end. More minute scrutiny of the text reveals the following chiastic construction (omitting 3:1 as introductory like 1:1):

A The Lord’s speech (3:2) B Nineveh, the great city (3:3) C Jonah enters the city (3:4) D The King sits in ashes (3:6) E Voluntary sufferings (3:7) F The people go back on their sins (3:8) G God repents of the evil (3:10) H “which He said He would do to them, and He did not” (3:11) G’ God repents of the evil (4:3) F’ Jonah prefers the people to continue sinning (4:3) C’ Jonah leaves the city (4:5) D’ Jonah sits in the shade (4:5) E’ Involuntary suffering (4:8) B’ Nineveh, the great City (4:11) A’ The Lord’s speech (4:10-11)

\[ r = -0.905, r^* = -0.643, r_1^* = -0.833 \]

The repetition here is evident at the center, yet it is less smooth overall than in the first part of Jonah, and we can only guess the cause of this. It may be that in addition to original inverted parallel characteristics, the book was also endowed with extensive directly parallel complements as well:

### Part One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Arise, go to Nineveh” (1:2)</th>
<th>„Arise go to Nineveh” (3:2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jonah evades his mission by fleeing to the West (1:3)</td>
<td>Jonah fulfils his mission by going to the East (2:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God’s intervention by means of (a) a storm (1:4) and (b) a huge animal (2:1)</td>
<td>God’s intervention by means of (a) a tiny animal (4:7) and (b) a sultry wind (4:8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„So Jonah rose” (1:3)</td>
<td>„So Jonah rose” (3:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sailors pray (1:5)</td>
<td>The people believe (3:5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Captain’s speech (1:6)</td>
<td>The King’s decree (3:7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shall all perish so that one be punished?</td>
<td>Shall all perish so that one be vindicated?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He prays for his life (2:2)</td>
<td>He prays for his death (4:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three days (2:1)</td>
<td>Three days (3:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Divine names 17 times repeated</td>
<td>The Divine names 18 times repeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YHWH Elohim (once, 1:9)</td>
<td>YHWH Elohim (once, 4:6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The presence of dual structures, parallel and chiastic, may then have impaired the elegance of both. Nevertheless, enough chiasm remains to help expose the purpose of the book. Its message has been explained by others in various ways: as a product of universalistic opposition to Jewish particularism, as an essay dealing with the prophet’s profession, even as a parody on prophetic clichés. What does a chiastic analysis yield?

At the center of Part One, Jonah proclaims the Lord to be the God of heaven, sea, and dry land, who punishes the disobedient; at the center of Part Two His grace and mercy („and He did not”) are affirmed. The two parts correspond to the two aspects of God’s essence as known in Jewish tradition by the terms middat ha-din, His justice, and middat ha-rahamim, His mercy. That the latter outweighs the first is thus the message of the book, giving Jonah a prominent place among the many other books, episodes and messages in the Bible dealing with God’s apparently contradictory attributes and with theodicy. And it stands to reason that this is a more probable purpose for the composition of a biblical book than any of the other themes alluded to above.

KINGS The Book of Kings is a composite work. Scholars have carefully and ingeniously, though not always convincingly, disentangled its sources and dated them over a period of 400 years (950–550 B.C.E). The integration
of the material was the work of a compiler who cannot have lived later than shortly before the accession of King Cyrus in 538 B.C.E. Since our approach is synthetic, we need not delay here to identify the types of material at the disposal of the ultimate compiler. Much rather, our concern is merely to clarify the principles which guided his composition. Since his sources were ancient in any case, we might expect to find strongly pronounced chiastic features in it. Indeed, multiple chiastic alignments of the material overlaid upon each other will perhaps emerge from the analysis precisely because of the multiplicity of sources, each of which may have been chiastically built in itself.

The division of the Book of Kings into First and Second Kings is due to the way it was treated by the Septuagint. This division was unknown to the original author(s) and editor(s). At the time of its canonization, the book consisted of a single and uninterrupted narrative of certain length.

The First Book of Kings presently consists of twenty-two, and the Second, of twenty-five chapters, i.e. forty-seven chapters in all. Since the first two chapters (I Kg. 1–2) are a continuation of the preceding Second Book of Samuel (see below p. 77), they serve here as introductory material. The Solomon Cycle (I Kg. 3–11) is obviously an autonomous and homogeneous work. It is followed by the history of the divided Kingdom (I Kg. 12–II Kg. 17). Six chapters (II Kg. 18–23) are then devoted exclusively to the Southern Kingdom of Judah, which survived after the downfall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C.E, and two more (chs. 24–25) to its final decline.

The original collection, therefore, appears to have begun with Chapter 3, when Solomon is firmly established as king (I Kg. 2:46) and seems to have continued up to and including the finale of praise of Josiah, Solomon’s counterpart. The subsequent portions (II Kg. 24–25) are usually viewed as accretions, with one part added after Josiah’s death in 609 but before the first capture of Jerusalem in 597, another added after the destruction of the Temple in 586, and a final one after Jehoachin's amnesty at the hand of the Babylonian king Ewil-Merodach in 562 B.C.E. The overall structure of the Book of Kings can thus be represented as follows:

A  Two chapters (I Kg. 1–2): Introduction and Rise
B  Nine chapters (I Kg. 3–11): A Single Kingdom,
Solomon
C  Twenty-nine chapters (I Kg. 12 – II Kg. 17) : The Divided Kingdom
B' Six chapters (II Kg. 18–23): A Single Kingdom, Josiah
A’ Two chapters (II Kg. 24–25): Conclusion and Fall

This indicates that the final editor intended and achieved a balanced chiastic structure and that the book in its present form is not a haphazard conglomeration of various additions obscuring its original form. On the contrary, it is well organized and resembles a triptych with a centerpiece and two lateral panels. Consider the following:

R. Pfeiffer’s contention is that the Solomon Cycle „has suffered in transmission.”⁹ He even claims to be able to apportion passages, verses and half-verses to various writers. In short, he views these nine chapters as a chaotic collection of disconnected and disjointed segments. Porten has analyzed the structure of these nine chapters in extraordinary detail, to such an extent that their overall design hardly became more intelligible.¹⁰ But this design can easily be distinguished as chiastic:

A  Solomon’s justice and wisdom (3:1–15)  B  Solomon’s wisdom exemplified concerning two women  
E  Negotiations with Hiram (5:15–20)  F  The building of the Temple foretold (5:21–25)  G  The corvée  
with Hiram (9:10–14)  C’ Fortification of the realm against external attack (9:15–19)  G’  The corvée
Granted that deviations from perfect symmetry occur. Still the only substantial one concerns the corvée in the lower half of the diagram; but since the corvée explains the building of fortifications, it had to follow rather than precede the latter, as it does in the upper half with regard to the construction of the Temple.

The Temple is of course, for the author and/or editor, the climax of the Solomonic era. It is placed in the middle and occupies one-third of the nine-chapter section with three chapters leading up to it and another three completing it. Wellhausen too draws attention to the way in which the center of this section focuses on the erection and description of the Temple. And indeed this is noteworthy, for the centrality of the building of the Temple is by no means dictated by chronology. Chronologically, it should have been placed in the first quarter of the narrative because the building was already finished in the eleventh year of Solomon's forty-year reign.

The counterpart to the Solomon Cycle is formed by a final set of chapters (II Kg. 18–23). Here we do not find a unifying chiastic pattern. Yet this last part of Kings equals the first approximately in size, and, like it, deals exclusively with the Kingdom of Judah. This, generally speaking, is evidence of chiasm. In addition, forty years are covered by the Solomon cycle, roughly three hundred by the central portion of the book, and about forty (609–561 B.C.E.) by the „Last Additions.” This, too, corroborates the claim that whoever was finally responsible for the extant edition of the entire book may have been led by considerations of internal literary harmony which dictated the length and contents of the respective segments of the text.

The central part of the book extends from I Kg. 12 to II Kg. 17. Achieving any degree of unity in this material could not have been an easy task for the composer, since his subject matter involves separate yet interacting scenes of concurrent historical action: the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms. At times, these two states led fairly independent existences; at others their ruling dynasties were alternately warring or intermarrying with each other. Under the circumstances, it is a testimony to the skill of the author that he succeeded in sustaining any internal structure at all, and, where this structure is found to be chiastic, the persistence of this particular literary convention to which he adhered is reinforced.

It is apparent, of course, that the book was never intended to be a political history. Important political events are either omitted entirely (e.g. the battle of Qarqar) or only hinted at (e.g. the supply of water to the City of Jerusalem in II Kg. 20:20), and the writing of a political history was obviously superfluous, since one already existed in the no longer extant „Book of Chronicles,” very frequently referred to in Kings itself. To discover the author’s central intentions, we turn again, in accordance with the chiastic principle, to the central passages of the work.

At the center, no less than six chapters are devoted to the wicked King Ahab and to his protagonist, the prophet Elijah. No other king received such detailed treatment, and none is condemned in such severe terms (I Kg. 16:31–34). And among all prophets mentioned in the book, Elijah towers above the rest. The main „religious” precept embodied by the book is thus the confrontation between seemingly successful diplomacy and seemingly unsuccessful religion, or, in other words, between the expedient and the principled, ultimately showing the futility of the first when the latter is abandoned. Victory, „progress,” popularity at home, and prestige abroad are, at least in the case of an Israelite king, crimes and follies. The only true and reliable lodestar for Israel and its king is found in fulfilling its historical task as commanded by God.
Whether this thesis is true or not, is not the point: it was doubtlessly true for the author, who chose to illustrate this lesson by pitting the most successful of kings against the most unsuccessful of prophets, the most gifted ruler against the most unrelenting preacher. Yet in relating the clash between the two, the author found himself in a dilemma: his real heroes were Elijah, his forerunners and successors, whereas the kings merely serve as their foils. Nevertheless it could not be denied that Ahab emerged victorious in battle while Elijah was pushed to the brink of despair. Thus, while the theory was correct – as it had to be – the facts were wrong, and the least the author could do was to disregard Ahab’s greatest success in war at Qarqar and to turn Elijah’s temporary failure into victory *sub specie aeternitatis*. How the author achieved *volte face* transpires from a review of the Elijah Cycle.

Only twelve episodes are told of Elijah’s lifetime, held by Jewish tradition to have lasted 120 years. Pfeiffer praises them as „masterpieces” and calls them „brilliant” and „effective.” At the same time, he notices that they are „abrupt” and „incomplete” and compares them to a Greek torso.¹¹ That they are incomplete is a truism, since no biblical „biography” is complete in the modern sense of the word. One can only wonder how Bible scholars of renown can lose themselves in banalities. The twelve episodes are definitely not the remnants of a mutilated piece of art thrown together at random. Fohrer recognized an anecdotal unity in them,¹² but failed, it seems, to observe that the cycle is chiastically articulated:


\[(r = -0.943, r^* = -0.829, r_1^* = -0.943)\]

At first sight, the pairing of the twelve episodes may seem fortuitous. Closer inspection, however, disproves this impression. The conceptual contiguity of these pairs is not solely a matter of convenient nomenclature: each has a common denominator. Pair AA’ relates an abrupt miraculous advent and a startling and equally miraculous departure, the one coinciding with a drought, the other occurring on the bank of a river. Pair BB’ first tells of a flight from, and then the defeat of, Elijah’s persecutors. Pair CC’ demonstrates Elijah’s assistance to innocent sufferers. Pair DD’ juxtaposes Divine deliverance from death and useless recourse to false gods in a case of slight sickness. Pair EE’ deals with two faithful disciples. Most marked is the sixth pair, the events on Mount Carmel (F) and on Mount Horeb (F’). If the Elijah Cycle is the climax of the Book of Kings, then these two occurrences are the climax of the Cycle and, therefore, of the whole book. They thus merit closer attention.

Both take place on mountain tops. Incidentally, other culminating events of chiastically designed biblical books, also came to pass on mountain tops, namely the binding of Isaac on Mount Moriah (Gen. 22), the Revelation of the Decalogue on Mount Sinai (Ex. 20), and Jotam’s fable on Mount Gerizim (Jud. 9). What took place on Mount Carmel belongs to the domain of vision, and on Mount Horeb, to the domain of audition. It goes without saying that seeing and hearing form a complementary pair in the Bible. The events on Mount Carmel underscore Elijah’s highest triumph, when as never before the king and the people broke out in one loud proclamation, „the Lord is God!” So strongly convinced was Elijah of his final and once-for-all victory over the abomination of syncretism that he ran before the king’s chariot until he reached Jezreel, bearing the good tidings that he had saved Israel forever.

Directly, however, he was made to realize how deeply mistaken he had been. In order to escape the queen’s messengers who had been sent to slay him he was forced to flee into the most distant southern tip of Judah. There on Mount Horeb, a theophany unfolds, and we have only to ask what meaning it should have. Allusions to Moses,
of course, abound: the name Horeb, the forty days and nights, the fast and the cave. Elijah, like Moses, his lonely predecessor, feels that he is a failure and that his labor is in vain. „I am no better than my fathers;” he says and asks that he might die. At this moment of abysmal despair Elijah receives an object lesson in prophecy, while the reader receives one in history. In the passage „What are you doing here?” stress must be laid equally on „you” and „here”: „What are you of all people doing here of all places?” Did Moses flee? Do prophets flee for lack of immediate success? Is history an instant process? Where is the place of those who strive to guide mankind: in the solitude of the desert or in the midst of their people? Therefore, „Go, return on your way . . . to Damascus!”

But is no reward at all due to a faithful messenger? Does not the Torah itself say „You shall give him his hire on the day he earns it” (Deut. 24:15)? The answer to this burning question, which must have been asked by all the prophets from Moses who was almost stoned by his people, to Jeremiah who was accused of high treason, lies in this theophany. Storm and earthquake passed Elijah by, but the Lord was not in them, not even in the fire like that which had descended from heaven only a few days earlier. „And after the fire, a still small voice,” that is, a continuous weak rustle or humming: this was the true voice of the Lord.

The lesson is easily understood: Israel and mankind will not be changed once and forever by any single, unique, flashing deed coram populo, but by the gray, day-to-day and thankless activity of men like Elijah over the centuries. Prophets will be victorious at the end of days, but they are not entitled to see, not even to expect to see, their work accomplished and bearing fruit. „It is not thy duty to complete the work, but neither art thou free to desist from it” (M. Abot 2,21).

In the center of the Book of Kings therefore, we read the credo of the author, displayed in vividly contrasting details between the events on Mount Carmel and Mount Horeb. At its heart, resignation follows upon triumph, and reprimand and encouragement follow upon resignation. The message implied is the paramount principle of the history of Israel and the world as the author conceived it. His intentions when writing the book were guided by this central chiastic organization of the narrative and the balance of the book should be viewed accordingly.

It would have been gratifying had it been possible to detect chiastic order in the fourteen anecdotes of Elijah’s successor, the prophet Elisha. Unfortunately, this is not possible, and the following may explain why. First, this cycle is very largely incompatible with the rest of the book, if not with the rest of Scripture. Its factual substratum is less than solid and, with few exceptions, it fails to achieve literary or dramatic power, for it lacks any inner unity or message. Pfeiffer, in this case, is right in calling it „an artificial literary product.” Moreover, its many miracles, bordering on the magical and fantastic, stand in contrast to the restrained and rational treatment given to the titanic personality of Elijah. It is no accident that it was Elijah who captured the Jewish imagination, both among intellectuals (in the Talmud he is expected to solve difficult legal problems upon his „second coming”) and in the popular mind (in folklore, he and no other prophet appears in dreams and comes to the rescue of the oppressed), while Elisha sank into oblivion in the national consciousness of his people. Thus it may be contended that this section is in many respects a foreign intrusion into the book. Although we cannot be sure that such an approach to the Elisha stories is sufficient to explain – and to explain away – their lack of cohesion, and more specifically, their lack of chiastic cohesion, this section of narrative is perhaps the exception that confirms the rule of analysis advanced in this investigation.

There is yet another angle from which the Book of Kings should be examined. Let us first recall that even the most severe critics affirm the historicity of the two dynastic king lists and admit the correctness of the general chronology of the Book of Kings, despite several confusing synchronisms. Yet one of these lists, and the „mysterious numbers of the Hebrew Kings,” display a number of surprising features.
In reckoning the number of years which elapsed from the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem until its destruction, the author of the Book of Kings attempts to make the sum of the regnal years of the Davidic kings equal to a multiple of forty. Now forty was also the number of years in the reigns of Solomon and Joash, not to mention David. The reader feels that the author would have preferred or expected Josiah, too, to have reigned for forty years, for in the author’s historiosophy „good” kings reign for forty years. Unfortunately, Josiah was killed at Megiddo nine years too early. The number forty, of course, has a specific connotative character in the Bible, and in some cases it may have been used intentionally as a numerological device, not to be taken at face value. But even where, as here, the historical evidence appears to be most objective, the number forty emerges with added significance. For example, forty is also the exact number of all the Hebrew Kings whose names are given in this book, twenty of whom reigned over Judah and twenty over Israel! Is it thinkable that Jewish factual history is based on numerology?

And there is more to ponder. It will be remembered that the first edition of the Book of Kings, before additions were attached to it, terminated at II Kg. 23. This edition would have related the history of fifteen Judean kings of the House of David from Solomon to Josiah, commencing and concluding with references to the anonymous prophet from Judah (II Kg. 12 and 23). Bearing in mind that the historicity of the list goes unquestioned, it is all the more remarkable that the sequence of Davidic kings seems to be in accordance with a chiastic scheme:

\[ A \quad \text{Solomon} \quad \text{B} \quad \text{Rehoboam} \quad \text{C} \quad \text{Abiah} \quad \text{D} \quad \text{Asa} \quad \text{E} \quad \text{Joshaphat} \quad \text{F} \quad \text{Jehoram} \quad \text{G} \quad \text{Ahaziah} \quad \text{H} \quad \text{Joash} \quad \text{G'} \quad \text{Amaziah} \quad \text{E'} \quad \text{Uzziah} \quad \text{F'} \quad \text{Ahaz} \quad \text{D'} \quad \text{Hezekiah} \quad \text{B'} \quad \text{Manasseh} \quad \text{C'} \quad \text{Amon} \quad \text{A'} \quad \text{Josiah} \]

\[ (r = 0.930, r^* = −0.791, r_{11}^* = −0.930) \]

Solomon and Josiah (AA'), at the beginning and the end of the list, and Joash (H) in its exact middle are the only ones who, without qualification, receive „good marks of behavior;” these three were the most pious and the most deeply concerned about the building and maintenance of the Temple. Rehoboam and Manasseh (BB') were the most wicked. Abiah and Amon (CC') each reigned for two years only. Asa and Hezekiah (DD') purified the Temple cult, and both Joshaphat and Uzziah (EE') made peace with the Kingdom of Israel in the North and added territory to their kingdom in the South. Jehoram (F) was a faithful ally of the contemporary King of Israel, whereas Ahaz (F') waged war against his Israelite counterpart. Ahaziah (G) married into the family of the Israelite king of his time, in contrast to Amaziah (G'), who rejected an offer of intermarriage; and both were murdered.

Recognizing that certain aspects of the symmetry here are imperfect, in most cases the similarities between the paired kings cannot be denied. The remarkable thing is of course that we are dealing here not with literary, but with a historical concentrism. We may deal with this phenomenon in at least three ways:

First, we may always dismiss the symmetry as being so strained as to not exist at all. But in this case that does not appear to be justifiable in the face of several rather explicit facts which cannot be disregarded simply because they are uncomfortable.

Second, we may view this historical chiastic construction as a literary creation of the historian, who stressed precisely those feats and features of a certain king that would match those of that king’s counterpart. Explaining the diagram in this manner would negate the unwelcome notion of „historical” chiasm, but also lend considerable support to the claim that such structure was a pervasive and compelling literary convention in biblical narrative.

The third possibility is that the chiasm is wrought by history itself. The biblical author would not have been surprised by this fact, nor would be the believer. He who views world history as a process evolving according to a providential Heilsplan will not be astonished when told that this plan is, for unknown reasons, cyclically and even
chiastically conditioned. But at this point, not much more can be said except that ultimately the reader will have to decide for himself how to assess the evidence and how to interpret and come to terms with these peculiar structural features of this particular part of Jewish history.

JUDGES Most scholars will agree that the Book of Judges is one of the most dramatic of the books of the Hebrew Bible, but this is probably the only point on which they will remain in agreement. Was it written in the twelfth century B.C.E., or in the late sixth? There is evidence for both views. Do the events told there precede, follow, or overlap with, those of Joshua? How can the sum of the ,,judgeships” mentioned be 410 years when 480 are said to have elapsed between the exodus and Solomon (cf I Kg. 6:1), especially since this time span would also have to embrace the forty years in the wilderness, twenty years of Samuel (I Sam. 7:2), and forty years of David (I Kg. 2:11)? Why are some of the judges treated at great length while others are given one verse only? What does the title ,,judge” signify, and does it denote the same office whenever mentioned, or two or three different ones?

In addition to these puzzles – and there are many more – we have the Samson Cycle as well as two further independent stories in the book where no ,,judge” or other hero is mentioned by name at all. The first (chs. 13–16) is a beautifully told short story totally unrelated (and in fact contradictory) to everything else in the Bible: it glorifies the physical strength of a Peer Gynt-like hero whose doings have little to do with the national emergency prevailing during his lifetime, whose behavior was uncouth and who lived, intermarried and died with the archenemies of his tribe. The other two tales, ,,Micah's Idol” (chs. 17–18) and ,,The Concubine of Gibeah” (chs. 19–20), are obviously separate additions. Both are horror stories of theft, rape, forbidden worship and internecine warfare.

What these tales and the balance of the book are all about is not less in dispute than their date. Some scholars assert that the book is an appendix to the Book of Joshua, or an apologia for Joshua’s lack of success. Some claim that its purpose was to vindicate the God of Israel who did not keep His promise of a swift conquest; or that it served as a collection of ancient disconnected heroic tales designed to comfort the bewildered Judeans after the destruction of the First Temple; still others maintain that its intent is to show the pros and cons of monarchy. Each of these suggestions, however, fits only a certain part of the book, and all fail to account for the inclusion of another.

Boling recently tried to prove that what we read in Judges is the work of later redactors which grew around an original nucleus. His scheme is more or less the following:


Boling views C, D, D’ and D” as an ancient pragmatic collection, with B, B’ and B” as its seventh-century deuteronomistic framework, and surmises that in the sixth century the deuteronomistic framework A and A’ was attached. This scheme is anything but convincing. It separates the two appendices from each other although they are clearly meant to be mutually supporting. The captions of Phases I and II, if comprehensible at all, are hardly defensible. It even turns the story of the violated, killed and later dismembered concubine (19:1–21:25) into the happy end of the book. Finally, if Boling’s analysis is correct, then the book is probably the most unbalanced and shapeless in biblical narrative literature.
It cannot be within the scope of this investigation to solve the many riddles of the Book of Judges, but maybe a few ideas might be contributed for consideration. They will be set out upon the assumption that nothing is included in the book, or, for that matter, in the whole Bible, that does not serve the didactic aims of the writer(s). They will furthermore test the hypothesis that these aims become conspicuous through the symmetrical succession of details.

Let us start with the two appendices. Their overall theme is obvious: the abominable behavior of an entire tribe (chs. 17–18) and of a few individuals (ch. 19) could have occurred only because of the lack of unified and unifying leadership. This is explicitly emphasized in 17:6, 18:1, 19:1 and 21:25, i.e. at the beginning, in the middle and the end of the first appendix, and at the beginning and at the end of the second: „In those days, there was no king in Israel: every man did what was right in his own eyes.”

In the incident of Micah’s idol, an overt transgression of the second commandment of the Decalogue is reported in 17:4 and of the seventh in 17:2; disregard of the sixth (18:27) and the seventh (18:18–19) commandments is symmetrically recounted in the second part of the story. At the beginning are accounts of individual and collective theft, and at the end of the section appear accounts of individual and collective apostasy. The centerpiece is 18:1–10 where – *incredible dictu* – an entire tribe abandons the inheritance given to it by Divine oracle.

The second incident, that of the Concubine of Gibeah, begins with an individual outrage against one woman (ch. 19) and ends with a tribal outrage against many, namely the rape of the daughters of Benjamin (ch. 21). Its main theme standing at its center is lawlessness and warfare of Israelites against Israelites (ch. 20). No wonder that of the 218 occurrences in Judges of the word Israel (the name of the ideal national unit of the shamefully forgotten amphictyony), sixty are found in chapters 19–21 alone, and of these sixty, forty-two in chapter 20. This chapter accentuates the hoped-for reunification of the tribes by eight circumlocutions for national unity within eleven verses: „all the sons of Israel,” „the congregation as one man from Dan to Beersheba:“ (v. 1), „the chiefs (cornerstones) of the entire people,” „all the country of Israel’s inheritance” (v. 3), „all the tribes of Israel” (v. 10), „all the men of Israel,” „united as one man” (v. 11).

In short, the two accounts each follow a general tripartite scheme, ABA’. The two respective main ideas are found in B and an *inclusio* is formed by the verses deploring the behavior which results from the absence of a king. This is chiasm on an elementary level.

Reading backwards from chapter 17, we reach the Samson Cycle (chs. 13–16). Neither the Rabbis nor the critics have ever offered a satisfactory answer as to why it was included in the book. All that the former have to say on the matter is that poetic justice reigns in the world – had not Samson „gone after his eyes” by courting Philistine women, he would not have been blinded (TB, Sota 9b). This is an insufficient reason for a biblical author to devote four long chapters to the subject of unrequited love, muscular horseplay and ultimate tragedy. Modern criticism is not helpful either: that Samson is a mythical figure or even a down-graded solar deity does not explain why his story is related in the book, but rather precludes that it should ever have been related there at all. We will be in a position to understand the Samson Cycle after examining the main section of the book.

The body of the Book of Judges comprises chapters 1–12. Its major figures are Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Barak, Gideon and Jephthah, with another six minor ones – Shamgar (3:3); Tola, Jair (10:1–15); Ibzan, Elon and Abdon (12:8–15) – mentioned only in passing. Unfortunately, the writer did not see fit to intersperse the „major” judges with the „minor” ones at even distances, but placed Shamgar at one and the remaining five at the other end of the Gideon story. That Gideon is meant to be the central figure is manifestly borne out by the fact that the author
devotes four out of the twelve chapters to him. Gideon stands for the ideal charismatic leader whose courage,
greatness and modesty are forcefully juxtaposed against the meanness, deceitfulness and ambition of his son
Abimelech, who promoted himself to kingship. The comparison is clearly intentional: in all his doings – even in his
speeches – Abimelech tries to imitate his father, but, alas, without any success. Si duo faciunt idem non est idem:
Gideon, worthy of being chosen king, refuses the honor; Abimelech, an upstart, usurps it. The anti-monarchist
tendency is expressly pronounced in Gideon’s answer when he was offered the crown: „I will not rule over you,
and my son will not rule over you. The Lord will rule over you” (8:23), so that Gideon’s declaration, the idée matière,
occupies the central position.

Buber claims that there are similar, though less outspoken anti-monarchist hints hidden in the stories of Othniel,
Ehud, Deborah and Jephthah. Taking these allusions together with the four-times repeated regret (in the two
appendices) over the lack of a central royal authority, Buber reaches the conclusion that Judges is composed of
two parts of two contradictory tendencies: one pamphlet extolling a charismatic leader (chs. 1–12), and another
trying to prove that a kingdom, possibly even a hereditary monarchy, is a preferred form of government (chs. 17–
21). Buber’s hypothesis would be acceptable if it were able to account for the function of the Samson Cycle in
either the pro- or anti-monarchist sections. Nevertheless, the following hypothesis of chiastic construction may
perhaps sustain Buber’s view to a certain extent.

The primary author of Judges wrote the ten chapters (3:6–12:15) of anti-royalist propaganda. He built his case
upon five examples. Why he arranged them as found in the book is a matter of conjecture. It is not impossible that
he was guided by geographical considerations. He started from the South with Othniel of the tribe of Judah and
continued with Ehud of Benjamin and Deborah of Ephraim, those tribes that were located in the center of the
country. Whether Deborah indeed belonged to the tribe of Ephraim as the text appears to believe (cf. 4:5) is
immaterial. The writer finally reached the North with Gideon of Manasseh and Jephthah of Gilead. In order to
balance his opus so that Gideon and his anti-monarchist declaration be found in the middle, he added five „minor”
judges at the end. At some later date(s) chs. 1:1–3:6 were attached as an introduction. Since the book, i.e. its anti-
monarchist part, had thus become lopsided and the second half was in need of further „padding” in order to
restore the equilibrium, the Samson tales (chs. 13–16) were also appended.

This however created one further difficulty, for the Song of Deborah mentions the tribe of Dan as having settled
the farthest North (5:17). How then could the Danite Samson have had his skirmishes with the Philistines in the
southern Shephelah in chapters 13–16? In order to answer this question, at least in part, the author, just before
introducing Deborah and quoting her victory hymn, made brief mention of the Philistines in 3:31, and how they
were defeated by Shamgar, a „minor” judge who may also have been a Danite. Thus, it is possible that Shamgar too
had his original place among the other „minor” judges somewhere in chapter 10 or chapter 12, but was transposed
to chapter 3 in order to resolve this minor geographical complication. This would reflect greater unity in the book
and would again increase the centrality of the Gideon pericope.

The first half of the Book of Judges, it is therefore suggested, consisted originally of ten chapters (3:7–12:15). It
grew gradually to comprise sixteen: two were added at its beginning and four at its end. In sum, the chiastic
structure of the book in its present form appears to be but rudimentary. Nevertheless, its chief thesis remains in
the exact center of those sixteen chapters that advised the reader to reject hereditary kingship in favor of
judgeship, the central passage indeed being „The Lord will rule over you” (8:23).

RUTH As with most books of the Hebrew Bible, there is no unanimity among scholars concerning the reason for
and the time at which the Scroll of Ruth was written. One school is persuaded that its idyllic atmosphere places it
firmly in the early period of the First Commonwealth. It should then be seen as a defense of the Davidic monarchy against those who disparaged the dynasty for its descent, on the maternal side, from a Moabite family. Another school conceives it as a piece of littérature engagée meant to counteract the animosity against non-Jewish women which expressed itself in Ezra’s decree promulgated around 440 B.C.E. and dissolving and prohibiting mixed marriages.

The story of Ruth is told with much compactness, beginning with rural simplicity only to terminate with royal grandeur. It compresses into a mere eighty-five verses deep expressions of love and law, piety and patriotism, charity and chastity. It complies with the Aristotelian unities of time, place and plot: the entire action involves three persons, is located in Bethlehem and occurs on three (or four) days spread over the period of the forty-nine days of „Counting the Omer.” But above all, the book is a superb gem of chiastic composition. Chiasmus in the Scroll of Ruth reaches to many levels, and this overall mastery of literary techniques, in the mind of this author, bespeaks a relatively early date for the book’s composition.

The Scroll of Ruth divides naturally into four chapters, each being constructed as an independent chiastic unit. In addition, however, to manifesting chiastic arrangements within each chapter, the book as a whole has also been artfully created in accordance with chiastic design. Marked similarities between the first and the fourth chapters, coupled with other strong relationships between the second and the third chapters are indicative of the composite chiastic structure of this remarkable and durable narrative. The result produced is extremely pleasing and represents a masterful implementation of parallelism’s inverted form, operating simultaneously in several dimensions. 18

Chapter 1 consists of four parts: the first and the last (I and I’ in the diagrams below) both deal with Naomi’s emptiness, caused by the death of her husband and of her sons who had married Moabites; both also deal with the famine which took the family out of Bethlehem as well as the harvest which brings them back. In addition to paralleling each other, each of these sections is individually chiastic, the pairings in each instance being very distinct. It is noteworthy that the ultimate source of Naomi’s emptiness (I’.C) is not aligned with the death of the men in her life but with the marriage of her sons to foreign women (I.D). The second and third sections juxtapose the unfaithfulness of Orpah (II) against the adamant devotion and resolution of Ruth to remain with Naomi (II’). The text employs the abrupt alternation of distinctly parallel lines in II to accentuate the radical inconsistency between the promise made in 1:10, (II.F) and the departure made in 1:15 (II.F’). On the other hand, Ruth’s declaration of true devotion (II’) is flowingly chiastic, centered emphatically upon her testimony „Thy people are my people, and thy God my God.” The structure of chapter 1 is thus detailed as follows:

I. A Famine in Bethlehem-Judah (1:1) B The move to Moab by Elimelech and his family (2). The arrival in Moab C Elimelech dies; Naomi left (3) D Her two sons marry Moabites, Orpah and Ruth (4) C’ Machlon and Chilion die; Naomi left (5) B’ The move from Moab with her daughters-in-law (6). The news in Moab A’ Bread in Bethlehem-Judah (7) II. E Naomi’s release and her blessing of her daughters-in-law: „the Lord deal kindly;” „may you find rest;” weeping (7–9) F „Surely we will return with you unto your people” (10) E’ Naomi’s release and explanation: „I am too old to have a husband or a son; the hand of the Lord has gone out against me;” weeping (11–14) F’ Orpah returns to her people and her gods (15) I’ G „Entreat me not to leave” (16) H „Whither you go, I will go, where you lodge, I will lodge” I „Your people are my people, Your God is my God” H’ „Where you die, I will die and there I will be buried” (17) G’ Ruth’s oath not to leave (18) I’ A The return to Bethlehem (19) B „Is this Naomi? Call me Mara („Bitter”), for the Almighty hath dealt bitterly with me” (20) C „I went out full and the Lord hath brought me home again empty” (21a) B’ „Why call me Naomi („Pleasant”)? for the
Lord hath testified against me and the Almighty hath afflicted me” (21b) A’ The return to Bethlehem at harvest time (22)

We turn now to chapter 2. Chapter 2 is a three-part arrangement: the first and the third sections (III and III’) being short exchanges between Ruth and Naomi, and the central section (IV) relating the encounter between Ruth and Boaz in the fields. Sections III and III’ both identify Boaz as a kinsman and mention Ruth’s undertaking to glean in his fields and in no others. But central to both of these passages is Ruth’s expression of faith that she will find grace in his sight (2:2) and Naomi’s expression of blessing and gratitude for that graciousness (2:19–20). Of primary attention is the chiastic arrangement from 2:7 to 2:17 in section IV. Its completeness, including the focal acknowledgement by Ruth of Boaz’s worthiness, requires little further comment.

III. A Naomi's kinsman of the family of Elimelech named Boaz (2:1) B „Let me go to the field to glean” (2) C „After him in whose sight I shall find grace B’ „Go,” and she went and gleaned in the field (3) A’ Belonging to Boaz and the kindred of Elimelech IV. D Boaz blesses the reapers (4), the reapers bless Boaz, Boaz asks: „Whose damsel is this?” (5). A servant identifies the Moabitess (6) E Ruth’s request to glean; her presence since morning (7) F Boaz grants permission generously; „Go not to another field” (8) G „I have charged the young men not to touch you” (9) H „Drink when you thirst” I „Why have I found grace in your eyes? I am a stranger” (10) J „I have seen all you have done for Naomi” (11) K „You have left father and mother and land” K’ „And come unto a land you knew not” J’. „The Lord recompense your work” (12) I’. „Let me find favor in your sight though I am not like your handmaidens” (13) H’ „Eat when it is mealtime” (14) G’ Boaz commands his young men not to reproach her (15) F’ Boaz instructs the reapers to let grain fall generously (16) E’ Ruth’s request granted: she gleans in the field until evening (17) III’ A An ephah of barley (17) B Taken to Naomi: „Where have you gleaned?” (18) C „The man’s name is Boaz” B’ „Blessed be he that did take knowledge of you” (19) C’ „The man is next of kin” A’ „Stay until the end of the harvest of barley and wheat” (21–23)

Looking on to chapter 3, it, like chapter 2, has three parts: its first and third sections (V and V’) are again short exchanges between Ruth and Naomi, while its central passage (VI) describes the encounter between Ruth and Boaz on the threshingfloor. Sections V and V’ begin and end, respectively, with Ruth being assured that she will have rest when Boaz rests (3:1,18). Both of these sections focus on strong statements by Naomi: her intervention (3:3) and her interrogatory, „Who (or what) are you?” (3:16). Moreover, both of these sections are recognizably chiastic, due to certain salient recurrences around their centers, e.g. „threshingfloor” and „floor” (V.C and V.C’), „with his maidens” and „with him” (V.B and V.B’), the „six measures of barley” twice (V’. B and V’. B’), and Boaz’ request for silence and Naomi’s instruction to be still (V’. A and V’. A’). The central passage (VI) also appears to be chiastic; especially noticeable are the references to „near kinsman” in 3:9 and 12.

But perhaps even more remarkable at this point is the exquisite balance achieved between chapter 3 and chapter 2: the middle lines (VI.H and VI.H’), which are directly parallel, are synonymous with the middle lines in the preceding chapter (IV.JK and IV.K’J’), which are chiastically parallel. Each case expresses Ruth’s merit to receive the blessing of the Lord. Both chapter 2 and chapter 3 end with references to the grain sent by Boaz to Naomi, „an ephah of barley” (III’. A) and „six measures of barley” (V’. B); in both the action is predominantly in the fields, and finally both begin with the women resolving to seek favor with Boaz. Chapter 3 is analyzed as follows:

V. A „I will seek rest for you that it may be well with you” (3:1) B „Boaz is our kindred with whose maidens you were” (2) C „He winnows tonight in the threshingfloor” D „Wash yourself, anoint yourself and put on your best clothes” (3) C’ „Get you down to the floor incognito” B’ „Boaz will lie down; lie down with him” (4) A’ „He will tell
you what you shall do”; „I will do all you say” (5) VI.

E  Ruth goes to the threshingfloor and lies down by Boaz (6–7) F „Who are you?” „Ruth your handmaiden: Spread your skirt over your handmaid” (8–9) G „For you are a near kinsman” H „Blessed be you of the Lord, my daughter, for you are kind and virtuous” (10) H’ „My daughter, fear not, all the city knows you are virtuous” (11) G’ „Indeed I am your near kinsman, but there is one nearer than I” (12) F’ „Tarry this night; if he will not perform unto you the part of a kinsman, then I will” (13) E’ Ruth lies at his feet until morning, then leaves (14a) V’ A „Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor” (14b) B Boaz gives Ruth six measures of barley (15) C „Who are you?” (16) Ruth tells all that had been done B’ Ruth gives Naomi the six measures of barley (17) A’ „Be still; the man will not rest until the matter is finished” (18)

Chapter 4, like chapter 1, consists of four parts, some of which are chiastic. This chapter as a whole is not chiastic, but its first section (VII) is, as the duplicate references to “the gate” (4:1,11), to the “Elders” (4:2,9), to the public “solicitation for redemption” and public “testimony” (4:4,7–8) indicate. The natural turning point of this section is the changing of the kinsman’s mind from „I will redeem it” to „I cannot redeem it” (4:4,6). The second section (VIII) is an attractively constructed chiastic blessing pronounced by the chorus upon Boaz. Both this section and the last (VIII’) speak of the building up of the House of Israel and of Judah through the seed which the Lord should give unto Ruth. Thus the epilogue parallels verses 4:11b–12 to this extent. Likewise, some continuity exists between section VII and verses 4:13–16 (VII’), in which Boaz takes Ruth and in which Boaz’ redemption of the land parallels the Lord’s restoration of Naomi (4:15).

But once again, perhaps most remarkable here, are the further parallels which exist between this final chapter and chapter 1, both of which focus on activity in town rather than in the field. The unfaithfulness of Orpah parallels that of Naomi’s near kinsman,21 the devotion of Ruth, that of Boaz. In chapter 1, a family is lost; in chapter 4, a nation is gained. At the end of chapter 1, the name Mara is given; at the end of chapter 4, the name Obed is given. And Ruth’s promise to remain with Naomi (II’) is answered by the blessing she brings upon Boaz’ house (VIII’).

While chapter 1 is chiastic (I, II, II’, I’), chapter 4 alternates (VII, VIII, VII’, VIII’), perhaps to balance out the alternating pattern in I. Chapter 4 is thus displayed:

VI. A Boaz sits at the gate (4:1) B The Elders summoned and seated (2) C The kinsman told Naomi will sell land which was Elimelech’s (3) D The public solicitation for the redemption (4) E „I will redeem it” C’ The kinsman told that Ruth also sells the parcel to raise up her husband’s inheritance (5) E’ „I cannot redeem it”; (6) „Redeem your right to yourself”; „I cannot redeem it” D’ The public testimony concerning redemption (7–8) B’ The Elders witness Boaz’ redemption (9–10) A’ The witnesses at the gate (11a) VIII. F „The Lord make G „the woman H „that is come into your house like Rachel and Leah who did build the house of Israel” (11b) I „May you prosper in Ephratah and be famous in Bethlehem” H’ „Let your house be like Perez whom Tamar bare unto Judah F’ „of the seed which the Lord shall give G’ „this woman” (12) VII’ A So Boaz took Ruth and the Lord gave her conception and she bare a son (13) B „The Lord hath not left you this day without kinsman” (14); „His name shall be famous”; „He shall be restorer and a nourisher”; „Your daughter is better than seven sons” (15) A’ So Naomi took the child (16) and laid it in her bosom and became a nurse unto it. VII’ A The name Obed is given (17). The father of Jesse, the father of David. B Genealogy of Perez to Obed (18–21) A’ Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David (22)

The final literary achievement of the Scroll of Ruth, however, is not to be found in the chiastic arrangements within its chapters, or even in the chiasm within specific sections making up those arrangements. Rather it exists in the book’s overall composition. In an ultimate sense, the turning point of the entire story of Ruth is at the center of the book itself, at the end of chapter 2 and the beginning of chapter 3. There Naomi recognizes the goodness of Boaz,
blesses him, and charts the course which Ruth will follow to find rest and wellbeing. Many elements of association between the first and the fourth chapters and between the third and the second have already been identified. To complete the overview, the following thematic organization is now advanced:

A  Progeny lost (I)  B  Orpah’s unfaithfulness (II)  C  Ruth’s devotion (II')  D  Naomi’s emptiness (I')  E  Ruth to Naomi: her faith in finding grace (III)  F  Boaz to Ruth in the fields: „your good works shall be recompensed” (IV)  
G  Naomi speaking with Ruth: blessing Boaz (III')  G'  Naomi speaking to Ruth: instructions in respect to Boaz (V)  F'  Boaz to Ruth on the threshingfloor: „Your kindness and virtue shall bring blessings” (VI)  E'  Ruth to Naomi: her report in finding grace (V')  
B'  The kinsman’s unfaithfulness (VII)  C'  Ruth a blessing to Boaz’ house (VIII)  D'  Naomi restored (VII')  A'  Progeny regained (VIII')

Turning now to the question of why the book was written, consider its prominent chiastic features. The book is clearly divided into two parts, and its turning point is chapter 3:1–3 where Naomi takes the matter into her own hands in order to expedite the „redemption” of her field on behalf of her daughter-in-law. Yet it is hardly conceivable that the book’s message is that mothers should devote themselves to marrying off their widowed daughters-in-law. If accounting for the birth of the future king had been the reason for composing the book, nothing would have been easier for the writer than to put into Naomi’s mouth an allusion, a pious wish or a „prophecy” to that effect in this central passage. Similarly, the opinion that the book was a protest against the Ezra-Nehemiah attitude toward foreign wives finds no basis at all, for were the story intended to express such a protest, this should have found expression in one way or another either in 3:1–3, or at least as a reason in the mouth of the kinsman who refused to marry Ruth. Nothing of this kind is mentioned anywhere. Nevertheless, the raison d’être, or raison d’écrire, may still be found in the middle, especially when conjoined with the middle passages of each chapter.

The account seems to be a natural story where everything moves by the intervention of human agents, and, as it were, without Divine interference. In fact, however, the opposite is true: everything happens in accordance with God’s will and ways. It is He who leads men’s destinies – behind the scene, so to say. Ruth happens to choose, as if at random, the field of Boaz, and the anonymous kinsman has his own good reasons for not marrying her. However, both Ruth’s choice and the kinsman’s reluctance are parts of God’s long-range plans. The righteous comprehend these plans by intuition, inspiration, or prophecy, and further them by walking in His ways, fulfilling his commandments and showing others how to do likewise. This is why Naomi is so eager to remind Boaz of this duty by asking Ruth, with an apology, to do an unheard-of thing: to risk her reputation, meet Boaz alone at night and offer herself to him. Naomi’s action, bold and laudable, is meant to show how the Torah, in the present case regarding the levirate (Deut. 25:5–9) and the „redemption” of a field (Lev. 25:25–28), may and should be promoted by human initiative. Placing such initiative in the center of the booklet is therefore in harmony with our hypothesis. Hence, the purpose of the book is not social nor genealogical, but theological. This, too, has been recognized by the Rabbis: „Said Rav Zeira: This scroll, it does not contain matters of impurity or purity, prohibition or permission – why then was it written? To teach you how great the merit is of good deeds” (Ruth Rabba 2). Accordingly, the central panels throughout the book – all grouped around Naomi’s unconventional intercession – speak uniformly of Ruth’s devotion, her kindness and virtue, and of the blessing of the Lord that was hers because of that goodness.

SAMUEL There is virtually complete agreement among scholars that the first two chapters of I Kings (either up to 2:12 or 2:46) are part of the preceding Book of Samuel. They are written in the style and use the technique of characterization of the latter, and may therefore with certainty be taken as the work of the author of Samuel. The author of Kings attached them to his book as a short introduction, so that they consequently appeared in the biblical canon twice: at the end of Samuel and, immediately thereafter, at the beginning of Kings. To avoid
repetition, they had to be eliminated either here or there. For unknown reasons, they were struck out of Samuel, their original place, and left in Kings. In this inquiry, we shall consider the two chapters as if they had been left in place in Samuel.

Of the many problems posed by the Book of Samuel, only two are of our immediate concern: what is the book’s message, and when may it have been written? It should be remembered that its division into two parts (I Sam. and II Sam.) is late and will be retained here only for the sake of convenience and reference to chapters and verses.

Very few will dispute the view that the author was a contemporary of King David or, at the latest, of King Solomon. In contrast to Joshua, Judges and Kings, the book is said to have suffered little from later additions apart from several harmonisms and some of its poetic sections. The reasons for such rare unanimity concerning the early dating of almost an entire book need not be gone into here, but should chiasm be found to pervade the book, another reason for an early date will be added.

The consensus about the purpose of the book is much more limited. It is allegedly either a biography of the first two Israelite kings, an autobiography, a court history, or the annals and the itinerary of the Ark of Covenant. While a possible chiastic design will, if detected, no more than corroborate the evidence concerning the date of composition, such design would perhaps throw fresh light on the intention of the book’s author.

Most modern commentators are unwilling to accept the idea of a grand design in Samuel. Some incidents are reported twice or three times, and there are differences in viewpoint and style, especially in I Samuel. The term „style,” however, is regrettably used in biblical criticism in a rather loose way, nor is sufficient weight given to the fact that different occasions and literary genres may require different „styles”. As to repetitions, they are the very essence and necessary material of a chiastic design, and may therefore have been intentionally inserted at their befitting places by the author or editor. Let us then disregard „stylistic” nuances and examine the book for the alignment of its narrative material.

Two different patterns can be discerned in Samuel. The one is progressively climactic, the other centrally climactic, i.e. chiastic. We shall first consider Pattern I, in spite of its being the subordinate.

The four chief actors in the narrative are Eli, Samuel, Saul and David. This is the order of their first appearances as well as of their increasing importance and stature. The pattern unfolds as these characters enter the scene and in accordance with the amount of space the author allows each to occupy in his book. A diagram will demonstrate this.

The Climactic Structure of Samuel

(Diagram could not be included; see hard copy)

Here it seems we have a prima facie case for a „planned” narrative, written grosso modo by one single man who presumably was an eyewitness to the events described in the latter part of his work, i.e. the life of David to whom he apportioned three quarters of his book.
Apart from this basic pattern, which reflects the author’s own biographical share in the events narrated, another pattern was devised by him which is symmetric and reflects his political, moral, and religious creed (the three being one and the same). Most obviously indicative are: (a) opening (I Sam. 2) and ending (I Kg. 2:27) the book with the fall of the House of Eli; (b) the three poetic sections placed at the beginning (I Sam. 2), in the middle (II Sam. 1) and at the end (II Sam. 22); and (c) the organic division of the whole story into two equal halves, i.e. the reigns of King Saul (I Sam.) and of King David (II Sam.). An inclusio is formed by (a) and (b).

Taking the reigns of the two kings separately we notice that both are divided into two sections of equal length, though thematically differing from each other. Each initial section records the king’s successes, each second section tells of his failures. The turning points in their lives are placed by the author in the middle: of I Samuel, which contains thirty-one chapters, in chapter 15; of II Samuel, which contains twenty-four chapters (or twenty-six, if I Kg 1–2 are included) in chapters 11–13. In the author’s opinion, the crisis in Saul’s life was accordingly his war against Amalek, and in David’s life, l'affaire Bath-Sheba.

The exquisite symmetry of the entire composition is manifest. Apropos, the three poetic sections (the three small triangles in the scheme) are also chiastically built, but not being in prose, they will not be discussed here.24a

Incidentally, the curious expression yrsia, since it occurs before the breaking point in King Saul’s life (I Sam. 14:27), should be translated in a positive sense as did RaDak (R. David Kimchi, Provence, 1160?–1235?) and RaLBaG (R. Levi ben Gershon, Languedoc, 1288–1344). Consequently the RSV’s rendition of the passage, „he put [them] to the worse,” is sustained as opposed to the usual translation of the word „he did evil,” a good example of how structural analysis is capable of shedding light even on a single word.

After viewing the construction of Samuel comprehensively and having found it planned, we now turn to I Samuel and II Samuel separately.

Let us admit at once that it is difficult to discern a detailed pattern in I Samuel. The sequence of events from the birth of Samuel (ch. 1) to Saul’s anointment (chs. 9–10) and from there to his triumph over the Philistines (chs. 13–14) is consecutive and quite chronological. Samuel’s inconsistent attitude toward the institution of kingship and to Saul himself need not be ascribed to different sources, as it may be explained by Samuel actually having conflicting opinions about both. The apparent „doublet” where Samuel chooses Saul as king on one occasion and on another the choice is by lot, is in line with biblical theology: for even the Land of Canaan was partitioned among the tribes according to three criteria, by size, by taking account of claims, e.g. Joshua’s and Caleb’s, and by lot.

The real difficulties arise after chapter 15 where it cannot be denied that certain incidents are told twice. That David came to Saul’s notice once as a rather insignificant court musician (ch. 16), and again when he slew Goliath (ch. 17), can be explained: in the second case Saul does not ask David’s name, but his father’s, which is plausible, since he had promised his daughter in marriage to the victor and so inquired after his family. But, for instance, the fact that Saul fell into David’s hands and was at his mercy in the same circumstances both in chapters 24 and 26 is not so easy to account for.

That the author knew of the chiastic tradition and tried to adhere to it emerges from the overall structure of the book as shown before and from a number of other indications to be shown hereafter. Perhaps he found his material in I Samuel impossible to press into a chiastic frame and therefore did as well as he could. At any rate, he wanted the war against Amalek (ch. 15) to be placed in the middle. Therefore it is possible that he simply recounted his tale in a more or less straightforward manner until he reached this event, and then filled in the
remaining part of I Samuel by incorporating in it dual traditions of the same incidents so that the two halves of I Samuel were finally balanced. Recall that a similar procedure was hypothesized in Judges (see p. 206).

In spite of the limited leeway the author apparently felt he had when he tried to cast his tale in I Samuel into a chiastic mold, we know for sure by one example at least, which was first discovered by Lund, that he made use of the same mold when he wished to give special prominence to a particular event. Such an event was related in chapter 10. Chapter 9 merely introduces Saul but tells very little about him. Nevertheless, the complexity of his character as a warrior drawn toward prophecy, his suddenly changing moods and ambivalent attitude toward the seer are all foreshadowed in the powerful passage in chapter 10:1–16. We shall see when we reach Exodus that the author of that book similarly foreshadows Moses’ tragedy by devoting an introductory chapter to a very small number of incidents significant for understanding Moses’ later greatness and failure. Graphically represented, 10:1–16 tells its own, and Saul’s, story with sufficient clarity. Its central verses are:

A   Gibeah of Elohim (10:5) „a band of prophets“, „the spirit of the Lord will fall upon you“ (6), „and you shall prophesy with them“ B „,and you shall be turned into another man“, „when these signs meet you“ (7) C „do whatever your hand finds to do“, „go down before me“ (8) D „behold I am coming to you“ E „Seven days you shall wait“ D „until I come to you“ C „,and show you what you shall do“; Saul goes away from Samuel (9) B’ God turned him another heart (10). All these signs came to pass A’ Gibeah, a band of prophets, „the spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them."

The system of 10:5–10 puts Samuel’s command to tarry for seven days in its center. Again, this is no accident. We read later that Saul’s impatience led him not to await Samuel’s arrival (13:8), but rather to rush into battle, the cause of the first rupture between the two men (13:10,14) and the anticipation of Saul’s downfall.

There is, in addition, one peculiarity in 10:2–3. Two localities are mentioned there by name: Rachel’s tomb and an otherwise unknown „oak of Tabor“. While there is no doubt about the tomb being located indeed near the southern border of Benjamin, the name Tabor in this context is puzzling. Only one place is known by this name, mentioned nine times in Scripture, Mount Tabor. That the oak mentioned in v.3 was situated on or at Mount Tabor is altogether impossible since the tree as well as the tomb must be sought close to Bethel, the main city of Saul’s tribe Benjamin, as the text makes clear. It is, on the other hand, not impossible at all that the toponym Tabor was deliberately inserted by the writer into a chapter looking beyond the present time into Saul’s future so that the southernmost and northernmost points of Saul’s kingdom appear in one and the same verse – a sort of geographical inclusio. And if we take Rachel’s tomb to be the starting point of Saul’s career, and Mount Tabor, at the foot of which En-Dor is situated where he spent the last night before his death, then the inclusio is also a biographical one. Farfetched as this explanation might seem, it is quite in tune with other devices of biblical narrative technique. If sesak (Jer. 51:41) and leb qamay (Jer. 51:1) are cryptograms for babel and kasdim (by means of substituting the last letter of the alphabet for the first, the last but one for the second etc. – by the way, a principle in itself chiastic!) – and if by the three hundred eighteen men of Abraham’s retinue his maior domo Eliezer alone is meant because 318 is the sum of the letters of his name, then a slight anatopism coupled with a prochronism is perhaps not incongruous in this instance.

In II Samuel we face an easier task. This part of the book deals with material more homogeneous and contemporary with the lifespan of the author, which perhaps enabled him to master it in a more sovereign, chiastic manner:

\(r = -0.811, \ r^* = -0.506, \ r_1^* = -0.712\)

Lund suggests another and somewhat sketchy outline for the lower part of this diagram:


Lund’s scheme is more elegant than the one suggested previously, but it does not take II Sam. 1–14 into consideration. Both have one thing in common, however: they prove that the writer cherished the chiastic principle.

The historian is basically an artist: he should not only tell, but also interpret what he is telling. By these criteria, the author of Samuel was a superb historian. He grouped his subject matter symmetrically around the two issues that were foremost in his mind, decisive in the lives of his heroes, and of paramount didactic importance for his future readers.

All this bespeaks a single author for the work; it accounts for the presence of repetitions and anachronisms, for the alignment of the incidents was never meant to be entirely chronological; and it offers insight into the Weltanschauung of the author himself. Central are the war against Amalek and the seduction of Bath-Sheba, both told in total disregard for the time sequence: neither incident occurred in the middle of the lives of the two kings. But why did the author choose to focus on these two events? Are their messages indeed so theologically and educationally important as to demand, as it were, that two whole books be written around them?

With respect to David’s transgression, the answer seems clear: does not the Decalogue say „Thou shalt not commit adultery?” However, this answer is far from exhaustive. In fact, David sinned not only against the seventh commandment but the entire second tablet! He also coveted, „stole” Uriah’s mind, as the Hebrew would express it, bore false witness by sending his letter, and murdered. Whereas it is immaterial whether or not these commandments were generally observed in David’s times, it is beyond any doubt that it was generally known that transgressing any of them was a capital crime in Hebrew law. To expound that a married woman must not be
seduced may have been one aim of the author, but this still cannot be sufficient reason for him to write an entire book.

A second and more momentous reason was to give the reader a lesson in the doctrine of retribution. No supernatural punishment fell upon David, no angry Zeus struck him with his thunderbolt. On the contrary, David took Bath-Sheba for his wife and though her first-born child died after some time, she later gave birth to Solomon, a son of whom any father might have been proud. Yet David was punished. His eldest son Amnon did as David had done; he seduced a woman, his half-sister Tamar, and Absalom, David’s second son, also followed his father’s example by murdering a man, the same Amnon, whose existence he could not tolerate. While all this must have happened many years after Bath-Sheba’s marriage to David, the author let Uriah’s death immediately be followed by Amnon’s and Absalom’s crimes. This is more than poetic justice. It is a way of showing that a man is responsible for his actions; that the relation and proportion between crime and punishment are natural and rational; and that there is, in this world, reward and penalty, even though delayed, but again not further delayed than one or two generations (cf. the second commandment of the Decalogue).

Another and still more cardinal moral of the Bath-Sheba incident and its subsequent disastrous results for David is that God (as the author conceived Him) visits transgressions more severely upon kings than upon other people. Not only does an Israelite king stand under the law, he is at least equally subject to it as any Jew, if not more so. Thus, the central theme of II Samuel.

Turning to I Samuel, what is instructive about the war against the Amalekites? Let us first state again what has been established before: the author was less concerned with historical facts than with moral truths. It is therefore either futile or beside the point to search for the factual rationale of this war. All we know is what the author saw in it. The injunctions against Amalek in Exodus 17 and Deuteronomy 25 signify that Israel’s political duty is to fight evil wherever and whenever it raises its head, and Scripture conceives of Amalek – down to Haman the Amalekite – as evil personified. Hence, an Israelite king, as our author views him, is duty bound to exterminate Amalek – one is tempted to say Amalekism – whatever the circumstances and consequences. Significantly, Jewish Halachah, traditionally and notoriously pacifist, differentiates between two categories of war. One is called milhemet-resut, a war for which the king must obtain permission and approval from the High Court (Sanhedrin). The other, milhemet-mizwah, is mandatory. Two wars only belong to this latter category: the conquest of the Land of Canaan, including the deliverance of Jews from their enemies, and the war against Amalek.\(^{27}\) This is the reason for Samuel’s command that Saul should go to war against Amalek before even trying to liberate the people from the yoke of the Philistines which certainly was a more urgent political and military task. Max Weber would have called this an instance of Gesinnungspolitik vs. Verantwortungspolitik.\(^{28}\)

These deliberations have brought us nearer to comprehending the general purpose of the Book(s) of Samuel. The main topic is a dramatized discussion of the questions: What is the ideal course of action for an Israelite king? Is he a law unto himself? Are there two kinds of morality – one standard for him and another for ordinary mortals? Does expediency take precedence over moral ideals and God’s precepts? Is God ever, as Frederick King of Prussia cynically declared, on the side of the bigger guns? The answer ultimately given by the Books of Samuel is fully presaged by the focal verses (I Sam. 2:4–9) of Hannah’s Prayer,\(^{29}\) „The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up."

II Samuel, as we have seen, deals in its central part with a man’s behavior toward his fellow man, or, as the Hebrew idiom will have it, with mizwot beyn adam lahabero. I Samuel is complementary to II Samuel insofar as it stresses obedience to commandments not readily comprehensible in terms of regulating social behavior, but rather those
which are Divinely motivated, in Hebrew mizwot beyn adam lamaqom. It should be noted that this same division of obligations incumbent upon Israelites is evident in the Decalogue, where each tablet speaks separately of one of these two categories of mizwot.30

It has been said that the Book of Samuel is the Jewish Politeia. While there is much truth in this saying, it may be better described as a Jewish anti-Macchiavelli. And just as Macchiavelli wrote in order to instruct a prince in matters politic, so may this book have been written ad usum delphini: for the education of an Israelite heir-apparent of Davidic descent. Its lofty ideals would give us reason to believe that its author was of the prophetic school. An actual example of a prophet educating a prince is II Sam. 12:35 where Nathan is charged by David with tutoring young Solomon. As the greater part of Samuel must have been written by a contemporary of David and Solomon and as this contemporary was probably a prophet, the result of our structure analysis may not only be a clear indication of the book’s message, but also a possible pointer to the identity of its author.

TORAH That chiasm is a stylistic device utilized in particular biblical verses and short passages has been well known for many decades. The foregoing discussion has undertaken to demonstrate that it also occurs in entire books. This raises the further need to investigate the macrostructure of a collection such as the Torah to see whether it too might be chiastically arranged.

From the outset it is clear that the five books constituting the Pentateuch are not arranged chronologically. Genesis serves as an anticipatory prologue and Deuteronomy as a retrospective recapitulation. Exodus and Numbers, second from the beginning and the end, are more like each other than any other parts of the Torah. The central book, Leviticus, stands apart from the rest, being exclusively devoted to legal matters and ritual. All of these are signs of chiasm which call for a more thorough examination.

Genesis and Deuteronomy form a pair. The first is strictly narrative, constituting a preliminary exposition and dramatized demonstration of the main aims to be achieved in the Torah. Deuteronomy, on the other hand, assumes that the reader has passed the propaedeutic stage provided by Genesis and that he has accepted the juridical injunctions of the three central books. It supplies as a natural conclusion to the Pentateuch the paramount ideological guidelines that lie at the root of the pragmatic precepts contained in the previous books.

This technique of postponing the discussion of theory until after that of practice may be logically unsound and has been rejected by philosophers like RaMBaM (Maimonides, Spain-Egypt, 1135–1204), who opens his great code Yad Hazaqah with abstract principles and subsequently derives from them practical implications. But then, the Torah is neither a textbook of philosophy, logic or theology, written for an intellectual elite, nor, as in the case of RaMBaM’s magnum opus, a reference book for those who have already graduated, as it were, from a course in Judaism. Rather, it is a popular guidebook towards the good life. Therefore, its method is pedagogical, and accordingly practice takes precedence over theory. This is in full accord with ancient Jewish educational thought and finds explicit expression in the celebrated declaration: „We will do [first] and understand [later]” (Ex. 24:7).

Exodus and Numbers are also paired. As in many other instances, modern commentators have misunderstood why various accounts given in Exodus are recounted in Numbers. They call them „doublets,” implying that the author of Numbers was unaware of the accounts in Exodus. The contrary is true: Numbers presupposes Exodus and can hardly be understood without it. Thus, for example, the manna is extensively discussed in Ex. 16, together with an obiter dictum about quails (v. 13). The same quails reappear at length in Num. 11:31–34, where the manna is referred to only briefly in 11:7–9, which assumes that it is known from Exodus. Moses was commanded to deposit a jar of manna before the Ark in Ex 16:33–34, which matches Aaron’s rod being placed there in Num. 17:7. The so-
called Second Pesach in Num. 9 cannot be understood without Ex. 12; nor would we know who Joshua is when we read of him in Num. 11:28, unless the man had previously been introduced in Ex. 17:8, and with particularity in 33:11. The fact that Moses struck the rock with his rod contrary to the commandment given in Num. 20:11 cannot be comprehended unless it is remembered that he was expressly asked to do so in Ex 17:5–7. That Hobab took his leave in Num. 10:29–31 rounds out the lengthy account of the arrival of his kinsman in Ex. 18:1–27. Parenthetically, the seventy judges mentioned in Ex. 18 are not identical with the seventy elders in Num. 11:16, 24, but rather form their opposite number. Similarly, Moses’ presentiment in Ex 17:4, „They are almost ready to stone me,” only materializes in Num. 14:10. Finally, Moses raises his hand to secure victory over Amalek in Ex. 17:8–13, and raises a bronze serpent in order to stop the plague of fiery serpents in Num. 21:9, a pairing recognized as early as TB, Rosh Hashanah 29a. All these paired incidents relate to each other: some later passages presuppose the earlier ones, other early accounts look to their later counterparts. As the sages would have it, „There is no earlier or later in the Torah” (TB, Pesahim 6b). In a word: the Torah does not exhaustively treat each of its subjects in one single place but disperses the elements of the narration over specific fields within the library.

The Torah leaves it to the reader to recognize this fact. To aid the reader in this effort, however, the written word points the way by repeating entire passages and numerous expressions at critical junctures. To mention only a few:

„The Lord, [a God merciful and gracious,] slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love [and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands], forgiving iniquity and transgression [and sin], but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children, to the third and fourth generation” (Ex. 34:6–7; Num. 14:18).

„But of you I will make a great nation” (Ex. 32:10; Num. 14:12).

„If I have found favor in thy sight” (Ex. 33:13; Num. 11:15).

„The people quarelled with Moses” (Ex. 17:2; Num. 20:3).

„To kill this whole assembly” (Ex. 16:3); „you have killed the people” (Num. 17:6).

„Why should the Egyptians say” (Ex. 32:12); „the Egyptians will hear of it . . . and say” (Num. 14:13–14).

„Why did you bring us up out of Egypt” (Ex. 17:3); „It is a small thing that you did bring us up” (Num. 16:13).

„Then Moses and the people sang” (Ex. 15:1); „Then Israel sang” (Num. 21:17).

Not only do these two books, Exodus and Numbers, contain internal references to each other, but also they comprise a unified composition. We read, for example, in Num. 14:22: „They have put me to the proof these ten times.” These ten instances are nowhere enumerated, but they surely recall the ten plagues which „put Pharaoh to the proof.” Num. 14:22 can therefore not be a „round” number. It follows that the sages were right when they searched for the „ten times” referred to in this verse, and, moreover, when they searched for them in both Exodus and Numbers. Their answer, found in TB, Arachin 46a, and based on Ps. 106, is a resumé of both books:

A  Lack of faith when facing the Egyptians (Ex. 14:11) B  Lack of faith in the prophet (Ex. 14:31, cf. Ps. 106:7) C  Craving for water at Marah (Ex. 15:24) D  Craving for bread at Sin (Ex. 16:2) E  Hoarding the Manna at Sin (Ex. 16:20) E’ Collecting the Manna on the Sabbath (Ex. 16:27) C’ Craving for water at
The unity of these ten events shows that Exodus and Numbers are closely related to each other, and that the two books are arranged symmetrically around Leviticus. This grouping becomes even more conspicuous when the gradation of the “ten test” is noticed: the “craving” increases from necessities to luxury (water – bread – meat), and only the last three attempts of “putting the Lord your God to the test” (Deut. 7:16) are punished by death: in B’ and D’ the individual transgressors pay with their lives, whereas for A’ the whole generation is condemned to die in the desert. An analogous climactic gradation is present in the sequence of the ten plagues. Is it conceivable that these and many other similar interconnections between these books are due to chance, to a writer’s negligence, lack of imagination, or such insufficient command of language that he is incapable of elegant variation? Is it not, much rather, the hypothesis facilior that this was done intentionally to relate Exodus and Numbers to each other in such a way that they embrace Leviticus, only to be embraced in turn by Genesis and Deuteronomy? Although additional evidence might be offered, these points should suffice to demonstrate the concentric placement of Exodus and Numbers in the Torah collection.

There remains Leviticus. It is the central book in the Pentateuch and contains the Priestly Code of law, cult and ritual purity to the exclusion of all narrative. It occupies the central position in the Torah where, whether or not the modern reader likes it, the commandments occupy the ultimate position of preeminence.

Having taken a synoptic view of the Pentateuch and found that the sequence of its five books manifests chiastic tendencies, we may now investigate each book separately.

DEUTERONOMY Determining what principle governs the arrangement of legal matter in Deuteronomy transcends the limits of this study, but it may at least be said that it does not seem to be entirely chiastic. Nevertheless, this principle could not have been altogether foreign to its author as the book is evidently divided into three parts: (a) chapters 1–11, a general expository and ideological opening oration; (b) chapters 12–25, the main body of laws terminating in 25:17–19 with the injunction to extirpate – be it even by war – evil wherever it may be found (see p. 219); and (c) chapters 26–34, a concluding peroration regarding commitment to the covenant, the appointment of Moses’ successor, a song and a blessing. The introduction, the main part and the conclusion are each approximately of the same length. A second version of the Decalogue of Ex. 20 is found in the middle of the introduction, and a paraphrase of the fearsome „Admonition” (tokhehah) of Lev. 26 is similarly embedded in the middle of the conclusion. Knutson, whom we follow here in part, further posits that the legal material in the main division is also organized under an ABA’ scheme. The structure of Deuteronomy may then graphically appear as follows:

> Some graphics could not be included in this structure; see hard copy

| A | Introduction (1:1–5:5) | 5 chs. | 2,700 words |
|   | Decalogue (5:6–18) | approx. |


| C | Conclusion (26:1–27:26) | 2 chs. |

| D | E | Admonition (28:1–69) | 2,300 words |
|   | D’ | Conclusion, cont. (29:1–34:12) | 6 chs. | approx. |
LEVITICUS While Deuteronomy contains a few passages which are narrative in parts, Leviticus has almost none, so that we would be justified in the present study in passing it over. For completeness’ sake, though, a few examples of chiasm in the legal texts of this book will be given: all but the last, which appears most instructive, follow Lund.\(^33\)

Consider first Lev. 14:49–53:

A cleanse the house (14:49) B kill one of the birds (50) C cedar wood, hyssop, scarlet (51) D the slain bird (51) E running water (51) F sprinkle the house (51) G seven times (51) F’ cleanse the house (52) E’ running water (52) D’ the living bird (52) C’ cedar wood, hyssop, scarlet (52) B’ the living bird (53) A’ the house . . . be clean (53)

Another good example is Lev. 24:13–23:

A The Lord said to Moses (24:13) B ,,Bring out of the camp him who cursed” (14) C ,,stone him” (14) D ,,say to the people of Israel” (15) E ,,Whoever curses his God . . . blasphemes the Lord” (15–16) F ,,the sojourner and the native” (16) G ,,who kills a man” (17) H ,,who kills a beast” (18) I ,,causes a disfigurement” (19) J ,,fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth” (20) I’ ,,he has been disfigured” (20) H’ ,,who kills a beast” (21) G’ ,,who kills a man” (21) F’ ,,the sojourner and the native” (22) E’ ,,I am the Lord your God” (22) D’ Moses spoke to the people of Israel (23) B’ they brought him who had cursed out of the camp (23) C’ and stoned him (23) A’ as the Lord commanded Moses (23).

Note here that the lex talionis is found in the exact middle, which is indicative of a perhaps unexpected level of literary achievement in the structure in the Priestly Code.\(^35\) Lund has perceptively concluded:

,,. . . when there has been little or no sequence in the arrangement of sections, scholars have turned to the hypothesis of dislocation or redaction. But why should logical considerations alone be permitted to determine the organization of the material in the book when we have such abundant evidence that its writers were influenced by a well-developed aesthetic interest? May it not be, after all, that blocks of material were arranged in accordance with chiastic patterns . . . , and that in the mind of the writer and the informed reader similar sections, though far apart in these books, were connected with one another? May it not be also that the language is artistic, although at times it appears to be exceedingly prolix and discursive, the style of ‘a jurist rather than a historian’ in whose interest it is to be ‘circumstantial, formal and precise’? No doubt legal writings are the least imaginative of all prose, but after a close study of some of these structures we are not ready to deny them certain aesthetic qualities. There is repetition, to be sure, but a measured and orderly repetition according to fixed literary patterns.”\(^36\)

In this regard, consider a final important example. Leviticus contains twenty-seven chapters. The Massoretes who counted the verses of the Torah noted that the middle verse of Leviticus is 15:7, although, from the viewpoint of religious subject matter its solemn climax was recognized as being 19:1–37. It is no longer surprising that this climax is chiastically constructed. For comprehending this structure, two technical terms used in Jewish legal thought need be introduced. Since Saadiah Gaon (Egypt, 882–942), the first, huqqim, usually translated ,,statutes,” refers to those commandments that are not rationally explicable, while the second term, mispatim, the ,,ordinances,” denotes the rationally plausible Divine injunctions.\(^37\) The theological and philosophical polarity between the two should be self-evident, and this provides the basis of much of the structure of Lev. 19:1–37.
Furthermore, the postscript „I am the Lord“ occurs here in the following frequencies:

- A: three times
- B: not at all
- C: five times
- D: not at all
- E: seven times.

This pattern is extremely revealing. It proclaims first of all that the Torah itself responds to the question whether intelligible precepts take precedence over seemingly senseless injunctions or vice versa, by affirming that, just as they are interspersed with each other, they are interdependent and hence carry equal weight. The conclusion of the passage in fact expressly names both categories in the same verse (v.37). However, in harmony with later Jewish thought, which attributes to the Gentiles an awareness of „natural law,” i.e. of the ordinances, but sees the Jews’ distinctiveness in keeping God’s comprehensible statutes as well as His unfathomable ordinances, this chapter stresses the statutes by mentioning them alone in verse 19 and by naming them before the ordinances in verse 37.

The climax of the thirty-seven verses is in their exact middle (v.18): „You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” With Leviticus as the central book, with chapter 19, the „Holiness Code,” at its culminating point and with this verse in the midst of the chapter, this commandment is, by means of symmetrical structure, declared the summit of the entire Torah. He may not have arrived at his opinion by the same means as we did here, but R. Akiba (Tannaite, Palestine, 2nd cent. C.E.) concurs with the present conclusion: „It is transmitted: said R. Akiba, ‘You shall love etc.’ – this is the greatest rule in the Torah” (TJ, Nedarim 89,4). Accordingly, Saadiah is quoted as having said, „The best and most important is always found in the middle.”

NUMBERS Whether there is chiasm in Numbers is not certain. Legislation and narration alternate there in a manner which almost precludes any formal structure. It rather seems that the material follows arrangement by association. However, in addition to what has been said of the book above (see p. 219–21), a tripartite division of the book suggests itself:

- A: Events which occurred and commandments which were given at Mount Sinai (1:1–10:11)
- B: The thirty-eight years in the wilderness (10:12–21:36)
- A’: Events which occurred and commandments which were given in the Plains of Moab (22:1–36:13)

Hirsch’s opinion that the principle ideas of Numbers are embodied in chapter 19 may be borne out by the following arrangement:

- A: The census of the tribes (ch. 1)
- B: The camp when stationary (ch. 2)
- C: The tasks and census of the Levites (chs. 3–4)
- D: The vows of a nazir (ch. 6)
- E: Inauguration of the Tabernacle (ch. 7)
- F: The spies in Canaan (ch. 13)
- G: Korah’s death (ch. 16)
- H: Aaron’s and Moses’ authority (ch. 17)
- I: The Red Heifer (ch. 19)
- H’: Aaron’s and Moses’ transgression (ch. 20)
- G’: Aaron’s death (ch. 20)
- F’: Defeat in Canaan (ch. 21)
- E’: Offerings in the Tabernacle (chs. 28–29)
- D’: The vows of women (ch. 30)
- B’: The camp when moving (ch. 33)
- A’: Apportioning the land to the tribes (ch. 34)
- C’: The cities of the Levites (ch. 35)

\( r = -0.950, r^* = -0.600, r_1^* = -0.783 \)
This is anything but satisfying, for the correspondences are tenuous and certain parts of the book are left unaccounted for. Chiasm, however, does exist in Numbers in several short pericopes, so it must have been known to its writer(s). Since our interest lies primarily in entire books or at least in lengthier pericopes, only a single example (again quoted from Lund) will be given here (Num. 15:35–36):

A   And the Lord said unto Moses: B   ,,he shall surely be put to death the man, C   ,they shall stone him with stones,” D   ,,all the congregation without the camp.” E   And they brought him, D’   all the congregation without the camp, C’   and stoned him with stones B’   to death A’   as the Lord commanded Moses.

This is very smooth, with four lines devoted to the commandment and four to its execution. It is therefore not unreasonable to entertain the expectation that further elements of this book will be found to be chiastically fashioned.

EXODUS Many similarities between Exodus and Numbers have already been discussed. Both contain legislative and narrative writing, which precludes their general structure from being chiastic. However, MacDonald is surely wrong when he calls Exodus ,,a chaotic heap of splendid historic narration.” The book is neatly divided into two equal parts: twenty chapters lead up to the theophany on Mount Sinai (20:1–17), followed by another twenty afterwards. The forty chapters culminate on a mountain top, as did the Book of Kings. The pattern of the two halves of Exodus is parallel:

A   Preparations and instructions for the exodus (284 verses) (1:1–11:10)

This parallelism seems to be deliberate, since the members of the respective pairs are also of roughly corresponding lengths: AA’ of eleven and seven, BB’ of two and three, CC’ of five and six chapters each. If the preparations for the exodus are seen to start not in chapter 1 but rather somewhere in chapters 3 or 4, which is quite reasonable, then even the disparity between A and A’ disappears (234 and 214 verses, respectively).

Was the material of Exodus too brittle for enforcing upon it a chiastic shape? Or did other factors play their role when direct parallelism was preferred in this book to inverted parallelism? We cannot know. But we do know that whoever was responsible for the final composition of the book was aware of the chiastic tradition, for he retained it in a number of cases.

Sections A’ and C’, the instructions for and the actual erection of the Tabernacle, both form a literary unit in itself and both are interdependent. They are usually attributed to P, i.e. the Priestly Writer, who is said to be pedantic, boring and lacking in literary skill. For this reason, and also because the two sections do not contain spectacular events or the slightest obvious moral lesson (unless interpreted by Fromm’s ,,forgotten language” of symbolism), they are often treated perfunctorily in modern commentaries and valued, if at all, as a source of information about ancient artisanship only.
Such a negative appraisal is not entirely justified. Describing by means of words and in much detail a complex compound of buildings and furniture cannot be expected to be dramatic. In any case, the author himself must have considered this description sufficiently important to have repeated it twice, especially since the two accounts take up one third of the entire book. Furthermore, what may look like a flat and wearisome enumeration of technical specifications may have been of such high interest to the ancient author and reader that it deserved elaborate literary planning.

This planning, and the internal unity of each of these two sections, is manifest in a highly developed numerology. Three examples should suffice. In A’ where the specifications are given for the construction of the Tabernacle, the word we-asita occurs fifty times, as indeed it should, since the measurements of the building to be erected are based on the numbers five and ten. But in C’ where the directives are put into effect one after the other, the word wa-ya’as is repeated forty times, forty suggesting to the ancient Hebrew reader the idea of gradual ripening toward perfection (see above, p. 202). Finally, since the idea of „perfection achieved“ is understood by the number twelve, the phrase „as the Lord has commanded Moses“ serves as a postscript twenty-four times in C’.

Since the Torah chose to relate the matter of the Tabernacle twice, nothing could have been easier than describing the various parts, objects, utensils, etc., either time in the same order. But this is exactly what the Torah does not do. And why? Critics ascribe these differences to an oversight on the part of the redactor, by dischronism of the text, by later expansion said to have come to pass in one of the two pericopes, and the like. All this is tantamount to taking the easiest way out of a clash between two differing aspects of the same subject. When confronted with a painting by Picasso of a woman half of whose head is en face and whose other half shows her in profile, would anybody dare propose that the painter was forgetful, that he painted the two halves in different periods of his lifetime or that one half was painted by the artist himself and the other by a disciple? Only in biblical criticism does one encounter such theories and one wonders to whom they may make sense. At least one should credit the biblical redactor – assuming that he and not one original writer is responsible for the disparity observed – with a knowledge of what he was doing, and with moderate intelligence and reasonable care. Let us then try to detect what he had in mind when he drew up these two unequal lists.

In the first portion, the „holy vessels“ are enumerated in the following order:

- ark, cover, table, lampstand, curtains, boards, veil, screen, brass altar, court, oil, ephod, breastplate, robe, diadem, tunics, mitre, girdles, breeches, golden altar, laver, oil of ointment, incense,

while their order in the second is

- curtains, boards, veil, screen, ark, cover, table, lampstand, golden altar, oil of anointment, brass altar, laver, court, ephod, breastplate, robe, tunics, mitre, breeches, girdles, diadem.

At first blush, this looks as if in the second list the items were juggled at random. To be sure, it is not easy to fathom whether any method at all, or for that matter the chiastic one, has guided the writer. We notice, however, that the second list omits the oil (for kindling the lights on the lampstand) and also the incense, which is quite understandable because these two had to be prepared anew from time to time, whereas everything else was made once forever. In both pericopes the lists can be simplified by combining several vessels under one heading. We thus obtain for the first list:

A  Three (of the four) vessels located inside the Tent (ark, table, lampstand) B  The four components of the Tent (curtains, boards, veil, screen) C  The brass altar located in the court D  The four components of
The court (curtains, pillars, pegs, screen) E  The eight priestly vestments (four – mitre, tunic, girdle, breeches – for all priests, and four more – ephod, breastplate, robe, diadem – for the High Priest) F  The golden altar (the fourth piece of furniture located inside the Tent) G  The laver located in the court H  The oil of anointment

The list now seems to be fairly orderly, starting from the „Holy of Holies“ and proceeding from there outwards. The description of the golden altar under F instead of A is considered by many exegetes to be improper, since this altar belongs to items inside the Tent, which otherwise belong in A, and therefore it has been thought to be a late addition. This, though, is hardly probable, not only because of the prominent part this incense altar played in the daily, and especially the atonement cult, but also because the number four is dominant throughout this list. If the incense altar is left out, only a total of three vessels are placed inside the Tent. A multiple of four is also the number of materials collected from the people (35:10 ff): three metals, four kinds of colored wool, three kinds of skin, one of wood and of oil – twelve in all. It follows that F is an indispensable piece of furniture in the Tent and cannot be a late addendum. Note also the reference to the golden altar in I Chron. 28:18 and II Chron. 4:19. Excluding F from A must then have been done on purpose, as indeed shown by S. R. Hirsch.44

In the second list, the eight categories appear in another order:

B, A, F, H, C, G, D, E

This order of contents may be said to be more systematic. Whereas the sequence of the first list is governed by the importance and function of the vessels, the second list is compiled in the order of their construction. That considerations of chiasm also played their part is borne out by one small and easily overlooked detail. Moses, in 40:20, at the inauguration of the sanctuary, „took the testimony (i.e. the two tablets of the law) and put it into the ark . . . and set the cover above on the ark;” while 25:21 says „you shall put the cover on top of the ark and in the ark you shall put the testimony;” The latter procedure, the opposite of the former, is clearly impossible to execute: one cannot cover a box forever first and put something inside it later. Unwilling to assume that the writer was negligent, we must conclude that he wished to achieve reversed parallelism.

Similar tendencies, although occasionally hidden among and clashing with others, may be recognized elsewhere in the lists too. Consider the following groupings. The furniture (A) of the Tent and the Tent itself (B) belong together. They head the lists in both accounts, but their sequence is AB in the first and BA in the second. Likewise, the brass altar (C), placed in the court, and the court (D) are one entity. For unknown reasons, Scripture appears to view the vestments (E) as belonging to the same entity. G is a separate unit. Thus, two groups obtain, namely CDE and FH, with G belonging to neither, but with F always preceding H. The overall pattern, with G interpolated once in the midst of the first and once in the midst of the second group, looks as follows:

*Some graphics could not be included in this chart; see hard copy

(1) CDE brass altar, court, vestments (instructions given) (2) F(G)H golden altar, (laver,) oil of anointment

(2) FH golden altar, oil of anointment (instructions carried out) (1) C(G)DE brass altar, (laver,) court, vestments

We hasten to concede that these groupings are strange. Did the Torah not know when to tell of the laver, or that the vestments did not pertain to the court? There is no reply to these questions. While the arrangement of the lists
Returning to the overall organization of Exodus, the ten plagues are placed vis-à-vis the construction of the Tabernacle, C and C’, respectively, in the diagram of p. 226. The plagues begin with the lightest and culminate in the most severe. This is probably the reason why they are necessarily climactically patterned and why we search there in vain for any chiasm. On the other hand, we encounter three good examples of chiasm in chapters 2, 11–12, and 14.

Chapters 11:1–12:36 comprise instructions referring to the Passover night. The passage is seemingly confused but is actually chiastically composed. In order to understand its complexity, one has to keep in mind that the instructions for celebrating the Passover fall into two distinct categories: those applying to the first Passover night only or, as the Rabbis named it, the „Egyptian Passover“ (pesah mizrayim), and those to be kept on all future Passover nights (pesah dorot). They are worked one into the other alternatingly. In the diagram, they are denoted by the sigla PM and PD:


The correspondence between the members of the system is particularly stressed in EGE’ by the word „blood” and in BB’ by the passages „and all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sits upon his throne even to the first-born of the maidservant who is behind the mill, and all the first-born of the cattle” (11:5) and „all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of the Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon and all the first-born of cattle” (12:29). The dramatization of the exodus is located in the middle.

This predominately legal section is immediately followed by the account of the exodus itself (ch. 14). The departure from Egypt, „in defiance” (14:9) of all odds, is Israel’s birthday as a nation (Deut. 27:9), the biblical miracle par excellence and therefore to be daily remembered by Jews by word of mouth (Deut. 16:3). Chapter 14, at least according to Holzinger, abounds in contradictions due to at least four different sources and is consequently labelled and libelled by him to be „amorphous.”45 Pace Holzinger, it is a powerful piece of literature, passing slowly and imperceptibly from narrative to rhythmic prose and from there to superb poetry (ch. 15, which, incidentally, also contains chiastic features, if we accept Freedman’s analysis).46 The stirring event it describes is that the Israelites walked „through the sea on dry ground” and its message is that tyrants ought to „know the Lord.” Its structure follows the chiastic pattern, with the event itself in the center and the historical-theological principle it proclaims at the beginning, the middle and the end:

A  „the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord” (14:4) B  with a high hand (8) C  „the salvation of the Lord” (yesu’ah) (13) D  „the Lord will fight for you” (14) E  „stretch out your hand” (16) F  „on dry ground through the sea” (16) A’  „the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord” (18) F’ „on dry ground through the
sea” (22) D’ „the Lord fights for them” (25) E’ „stretch out your hand” (26) C’ „the Lord saved Israel (wa-yosha’) (30) B’ the great hand (31) A “they believed in the Lord (31)

\( r = -0.943, r^* = -0.829, r_1^* = -0.943 \)

The artistry of the account is in fact not diminished, as some critics claim, but rather enhanced by the very limited vocabulary used in this chapter, for its chiastic balance is underscored by several words recurring again and again, each the same number of times on both sides of the middle: Egypt (11 times in each half), chariot (5 times in each), charioteers (3 times), sea, march (each twice), horse, split, draw near (each once). The Hebrew text even offers a few word plays, e.g. wa-ye’sor (he put the horse to the chariot) when Pharaoh set out to pursue the Israelites (v. 6) and wa-yasar (he loosened the wheels) when the chariots were bogged in the mud (v. 25).

When chiasm is used with conspicuous refinement, it becomes one of the few means by which an author of Biblical narrative is able to accentuate a certain tale and draw the reader’s attention to its elements of special importance. A further case in point is Ex. 2:1–22. The principle figure in all but the first book of the Pentateuch is of course Moses, but details of his life and character are extremely scanty. Little wonder therefore that of all biblical personages he should have inspired the largest amount of further creative endeavor in exegesis, history, fiction, art, philosophy and theology. For example, Ahad Ha’am construed his image in the light of the recent Jewish renaissance, while Sigmund Freud interpreted the man Moses through anthropology and analytical psychology concluding that Moses was an Egyptian, while Martin Buber tried to solve the riddle of Moses by rejecting the idea of „historized myth” and by asserting that Moses is „mythized history.” Our present task is to work out what Scripture has to say about the man in Exodus 2, the only chapter exclusively devoted to him. We shall try, contrary to the speculative interpretations mentioned, not to read into it what we may wish to find there, but let the text speak for itself.

Jewish tradition has it that Moses was forty years old when he fled from Egypt to find refuge with the Midianites, eighty at the time of the exodus (Ex. 7:7) and one hundred and twenty when he died (Deut. 31:2; 34:7). Of the first forty years the Torah chooses to tell the reader no more than a few incidents, chiastically paired with the most decisive in the middle:

A Marriage of Moses’ parents and his birth (2:1–4) B Moses taken by a king’s daughter to her home (2:5–10) C Moses rescues his Israelite brother (2:11–12) D Moses betrayed by his brethren (2:13–14) C’ Moses rescues non-Israelite maidens (2:15–17) B’ Moses taken by a priest’s daughter to her home (2:18–20) A’ Moses’ marriage and birth of his son (2:21–22)

B takes place on the bank of the Nile and B’ by a well, and in both instances a dialogue develops about Moses himself. Exodus 2 then is an elegant chiasm that could not escape the notice of any reader, and should give him the key for understanding the man.

In this chapter are found the salient traits of Moses’ character: rash impetuosity – did he not later smash the tablets in wrath at the sight of the golden calf? –, indignation at the slightest injustice done to the weak and feeble, and abhorrence of violence – did he not call the aggressor a „villain” without any previous knowledge of the cause of their struggle (TB, Sanhedrin 58b)? The story (cf. CC’) also makes the reader realize that Moses’ sense of justice was as fervent in respect to his own people as regarding others, and equally towards men and women. Also, we learn of his softheartedness, perhaps because of the many women who influenced him in his youth: the chapter tells of his encounters with his mother and sister, the princess and her maidens, and the seven Midianite girls among whom was his future wife.
It is no accident that the Torah selects from among all that must have happened to Moses in the course of forty years just these five scenes. These, more than any other events, left their impression upon him and shaped his character. The image emerging is not one of a gifted hero, but of an outsider, an introvert, impractical and actually unfit for leadership. This is borne out later by his lack of organizing talent: even the obvious idea of appointing judges in order to relieve him from „sitting alone and all the people standing about . . . from morning till evening” and from „wearing himself out” (18:14–18) had to be suggested to him by his father-in-law. As a general, he had so little belief in himself that Joshua had to take his place in the war against Amalek (17:10). We also read of his being tired of life (32:32) and easily despairing (5:22; Num. 11:12). This picture is a far cry from that of an ingenious legislator, Egyptian-trained statesman and inspiring orator. Since he stammered (6:12, 30), he was not even good at talking (4:10). The implicit purpose of this chapter is to delineate his personality as completely unsuited for the task with which he was charged by God, which is precisely how later prophets such as Isaiah (Is. 6:5 ff.) and Jeremiah (Jer. 1:6) thought of themselves. That Moses himself was aware of his disabilities we know from his repeated reluctance to take upon himself the command of the exodus (3:11, 13; 4:1,14).

Moses’ tragedy, as it is extensively documented in the Torah, was to have been rejected by his own people who accused him of letting them die in the wilderness (Num. 17:6): They almost stoned him to death (17:4)! His own tribe of Levi rebelled against him (Num. 16:3 ff.) and his brother and sister envied him, although he was „very meek, more than all men that were on the face of the earth” (Num. 21:1–8). All this is anticipated and alluded to in chapter 2 and in D and placed at the apex of the chiasm because this, and not his failure to see his mission accomplished, was the most bitter experience of his life.

Any biographer emphasizes the days of greatness of his central figure. One would therefore expect to read in the Torah more about the second phase of Moses’ life, i.e. of his negotiations with Pharaoh, or even more about the third, namely of his personal share in leading Israel out of Egypt to the border of the Promised Land. But the opposite is the case. His youth only is described with any detail. The account dwells only on events before his mission had even started, which itself is a sign of a modest biography. But whose modesty? That of an unknown later anonymous biographer? Much rather, of Moses’ own modesty! This, together with the fact that the contents and structure of chapter 2 are so closely connected with the rest of the Pentateuch and Moses’ subsequent fate, provides circumstantial evidence that Moses himself wrote Exodus and Numbers, if not all Five Books.

**GENESIS**

The Book of Genesis occupies in many respects the most distinguished place in the canon. It is the first of the Torah and of the entire biblical library, the most ancient according to Jewish tradition, the most dramatic, the most at variance with science, the least historically attested, theologically the most difficult and literarily the most beautiful. It was also the point of departure for Higher Criticism, which has developed in the course of the last century into an immensely diversified field of investigation and speculation. Yet of these many distinctions, its structure alone is our immediate concern.

To explain this structure, many hypotheses have been offered in the past. Thematically, the book is divided into the story of Creation and Eden; the stories of the Flood and of the Tower of Babel; the Abraham and Jacob Cycles, with Isaac playing a secondary role in both; and „Joseph and his Brothers” forming the finale. In Jewish worship, the fifty chapters of Genesis are divided into twelve „annual” and forty-three „triennial” pericopes. One modern school has found the book to be composed of ten (or eleven) genealogical scrolls („Stammesrollen”), each opening with the word „These are the generations of . . .”. The flaw in this theory, however, is that, apart from their disparity in length, of all scrolls the „Generations of Abraham” are lacking. Finally, the presence of anachronisms, the problem of duplicate, variant, and even contradictory accounts of the same event, the alleged diversity of style and vocabulary and the use of two different Hebrew names for God, all serve as analytical criteria that have led
the proponents of the Higher critical school to postulate that Genesis is a composite work assembled from documents deriving from various periods. Discussing the merits or weaknesses of these theories is not the purpose of this inquiry, but rather to try to discover, first of all, whether the book itself may not offer indications of its own internal construction, perhaps more homogeneous than assumed.

Its main characters are Adam, Eve, Cain, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. The literary technique used for depicting each is not the same throughout the book. For the first four, treated in chapters 1–11, a two-dimensional typology suffices: Adam in the beginning (1:26) stands for ,,human being” (,,Mensch”) and is later divided into male and female, i.e. Adam, the ,,man of earth, dust” and Eve, the ,,lifegiver”. The preoccupation of the Torah with morals leads from chapter 4 on toward another division of mankind into two categories: the evildoers, whose prototype is Cain, and the righteous, personified by Noah. Not one of them receives more than general treatment. Their names, too, hint that their bearers should be seen as types: the name Adam is derived from red earth, Eve from the Hebrew word for life, Cain means ,,metal-smith,” ,,weapon” or ,,lance” (cf. II Sam. 21:16), and Noah, approximately ,,content, comfort.”

From chapter 12 on, one perceives a gradual individualization of character. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are not presented as stereotypes, but as genuine individuals becoming progressively more representative of human experience. From what Genesis tells of Abraham, and even more by what it omits, the reader receives the impression that Abraham was more than life-size, a constant and immutable granite monument. In contrast, Jacob is portrayed in his youth, in his middle and old age, changing from son, brother and lover to father, grandfather and great-grandfather. He matures with the years and turns, before his death, into a great patriarch. A telling example of how the Torah breathes life into these three figures is the way it describes their relationships with their wives. Virtually nothing is said about Abraham’s relationship toward Sarah: this would have detracted from the monolithic image in which Abraham is cast. All we are told is that ,,he went into mourn” for her ,,and to weep for her” (23:2). The verb ,,love” occurs only in his relation toward his son (22:2). Of Isaac it is written that ,,he took Rebekah and she became his wife and he loved her” (24:67) and also that he loved his son Esau (25:28). Jacob’s life, on the other hand, is a full love story: love for his mother (25:28), for his wives Rachel and Leah (29:18,30), for whom he labored twenty years, and love for his sons Joseph (37:3) and Benjamin (44:20). Isaac serves as the link between Abraham and Jacob. He is at once the loyal son of the one and the indulgent father of the other. This part of the book terminates, as is generally agreed, with chapter 36.

Joseph’s story concludes the book. It represents the peak of individualization. We know him personally. No other biblical figure except David receives so much detailed attention.

From this evolves a natural and internally dictated division of the book into a typological prologue (1:1–11:32), a progressively individuating main part (12:1–36:43), and a highly individuated portrait in the epilogue (37:1–50:26). The middle part consists of twenty-five chapters, i.e. exactly half the book, with roughly one quarter (eleven chapters) preceding and one quarter (fourteen chapters) following it. Alongside this basic division are further significant pairings. A ,,descent” into Egypt stands at the two caesurae (12:10–20, 37:36), an ,,ascent” in the middle (ch. 22). Genesis begins and ends with poetry: chapters 1 and 49:1–27. A solemn change of name occurs once in the seventeenth chapter from the beginning (Abram-Abraham, 17:5) and again in the sixteenth from the end (Jacob-Israel, 35:10). Each such change is introduced by the same formula, ,,no longer shall your name be . . . but . . . .” Circumcision follows the first (17:23) and preceds the second (34:14 ff).

Of the numerous other instances in Genesis of pairs of rare words or expressions occurring at equidistance from the beginning and the end of the book, only a few striking examples can be mentioned here:
All this indicates chiastic structure. Moreover, we are readily able to make use of it for exegetical purposes.

Chapter 1, being the counterpart of chapter 49, ought to be read as poetry, like the latter, and not as a technical report of how the world was created. That chapter 1 is a majestic and at the same time jubilant hymn proclaiming the glory of the Creator and the beauty, orderliness and purposefulness of His creation should be recognizable to any reader who does not approach Scripture with preconceived notions. How unobservant it is to characterize this proem as a series of stereotypical repetitions which must be the work of an official priest because officials are dry, pedantic and prone to repeat themselves; and how superficial it is to label this introduction to the Torah as an „Account of Creation“! It is welcome that the chiastic structure of Genesis, the book itself, refutes this misconception and proves, as if such were still necessary, that chapter 1 is no „account“ at all, but a sublime didactic hymn. From this we can see that the alleged clash between chapter 1 and modern knowledge, i.e. between fundamentalism and science, simply does not exist: the substance of poetry is spiritual, not factual, truth.

Let us begin with the prologue.

The first dramatic episode in Genesis is the story of man and woman in the Garden of Eden (2:4b–4:24). The enlightened reader of the late last and the early present centuries used to view it as „primitive“ and delights in finding parallels in ancient Near Eastern myths. Whether such parallels contribute anything to a better understanding of the tale is at least debatable, but it is more than questionable whether any piece of literature or, for that matter, any product of creative art may be called primitive. That the contrary is true with regard to this pericope has been convincingly shown by Welsh, part of whose findings are reproduced in the following chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Narrative:</th>
<th>God, man (2:4b – 17) from adamah to garden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Narrative:</td>
<td>God, man, woman, animals (2:18 – 25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Dialogue:</td>
<td>snake, woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Dialogue:</td>
<td>eating from the tree (3:1 – 5)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>three statements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Narrative:</td>
<td>woman, man (3:6 – 8) eating from the tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C’</td>
<td>Dialogue:</td>
<td>God, man, woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>eating from the tree (3:9 – 13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B’ Monologue: God, man, woman, snake (3:14–19) relationships among creatures

A’ Narrative: God, man (3:20–24) from garden to adamah

The structure is self-evident. Scriptural narration starts from its outset with a beautiful chiasm. Add to this that, in complete accordance with the chiastic hypothesis, Scene D (vs. 6 and 7) itself is also chiastically built. It opens and closes with a couplet positioned around one single line of seven words (four of which are verbs in contrast to the couplets where nouns outnumber verbs), leading rapidly to the lonely, fatal and final wa-yokhal – „and he ate!” The richness of this short line as well as the highly sophisticated structure of the entire passage can be appreciated only by consulting Welsh’s thorough analysis in full. One may ask, however, whether parallels exist in those myths for this kind of writing, and, moreover, whether it is altogether thinkable that form and content may lie so far apart that such finesse of writing could be but the outward shell of no more than a mere childish fairy tale. The impression is inescapable that Jewish sages who from the very beginning took the Paradise story to be a reflection upon la condition humaine might have been nearer to the truth than the many mythologists, anthropologists etc. who have examined the story from their own points of view.

The second narrative is the story of the Flood (chs. 6–9:17). Scholars have claimed that it is composed of several patches of text combined by an editor, and pride themselves that disentangling the sources is „ein unanfechtbares Meisterstück.” Closer inspection shows that what seems a chain of repetitions and contradictions much rather forms a well-balanced „up and down” both of the Flood and of the tale. This is shown in the following diagram:

\[
\begin{align*}
A & \quad \text{A Divine monologue (6:3,7)} \quad B \quad \text{it grieved Him to His heart (8:6)} \quad C \quad „I will establish My covenant” (6:18) \\
D & \quad \text{Four stages of entering the ark „as commanded” (6:22, 7:5,9,16)} \quad E \quad „Go into the Ark” (7:1) \quad F \quad \text{the fountains of the deep burst forth (7:11)} \quad G \quad \text{Seven verbs of „ascent”: increased, bore, rose (7:17), prevailed, increased greatly (7:18), prevailed mightily, mountains were covered (7:19)} \quad H \quad \text{God remembered Noah (8:1)} \quad G’ \quad \text{Seven verbs of „descent”: subsided (8:1), were restrained (8:2), receded, abated (8:3), came to rest (8:4), continued to abate, mountains were seen (8:5)} \quad F’ \quad \text{the fountains of the deep were closed (8:2)} \\
E’ & \quad „Go forth from the ark” (8:11) \quad D’ \quad \text{Four stages of leaving the ark (once a raven, thrice a dove) (8:7, 8, 10, 12)} \quad B’ \quad \text{the Lord said in His heart (8:20)} \quad C’ \quad „I established My covenant” (9:9) \quad A’ \quad \text{A Divine monologue (9:12–16)}
\end{align*}
\]

\[(r = -0.976, \ r^* = -0.643, \ r_1^* = -0.833)\]

The story is again divided into two equal parts of two chapters each, the first numbering forty-four verses (6:1–7:24), the second thirty-nine (8:1–9:17), with the Divine delivering intervention in the middle (8:1a). The symmetry is marked by a play on words derived from the root nwh. Two of them appear in the first half (wa-yinnahem 6:6, nihamti 6:7), two in the second (manoah 8:9, nihoah 8:21), and one at the turn of the tide (wa-tanah 8:4), all containing the two letters n and h which constitute, hardly be chance, the name of Noah himself (nh in Hebrew).

From this construction it transpires, above all, that the story does not concern itself with precipitation and similar natural phenomena. If this had been true case, God’s wrath and not His mercy, the resulting destruction of mankind and not his deliverance would have occupied the central part of the text. In reality, a mere two or three verses tell of the catastrophe (7:21–23), while such a minor incident as sending forth the dove is described in loving detail in five (8:8–12). Stress is laid not on the sinful generation but on the one zaddiq (6:9), not on drowning but on survival, not on meteorology but on theology. The world, so the story proclaims, does not exist because of the great many evildoers (cf. 6:1–4), not even in spite of them, but for the sake of those like Noah, be there even but one in a generation, who follows his conscience and does „as commanded” (6:22; 7:5, 10). Thanks to him, God’s mercy
prevails over His wrath and the world is saved (8:1): „The righteous will live by his trust” (Hab. 2:4). It is not the role of literary criticism to state whether this thesis of the Flood story is correct but only to discover it.

„The Tower of Babel” is commonly designated as the next unit in the book (11:1–9). In spite of its shortness, it is chiastically built with almost every single word playing a part:

A the whole earth (11:1) B one language (1) C they settled there (2) D to one another (3) E „Let us make bricks” (3)

F „come let us . . .” (4) G „. . . build” (4) H „a city and a tower” (4) I „and make a name” (4) J „lest we be scattered” (4) K The Lord came down to see . . . (5) H’ the city and the tower (5) G’ which men had built . . . (5–6) F’ „come let us . . .” (7) E’ „let us confuse” (7) D’ „one another” (7) J’ the Lord scattered them (8) I’ its name was called (9) B’ the language (9) C’ from there he scattered them (9) A’ the whole earth (9)

(r = –0.672, r* = –0.618, r1* = –0.818)

Emphasis is not laid, as is usually assumed, on the tower, which is forgotten after verse 5, but on the dispersion of mankind upon „the whole earth,” the key word opening and closing this short passage. The relation between E and E’ gets lost in translation. In Hebrew, it is a word play on nilbenah and nabelah. Two more word plays underline the symmetry, since each has its place on either side of verse 5: hemar and homer (v.3), and babel and balal (v.9.).

The chiasm of the nine verses may also be presented in a less detailed way:

A Action (11:1–2)


With the „face of the whole earth” settled, the prologue of Genesis ends and the stage is set for the appearance of Abraham, his son and his grandson, the three figures who dominate the central two quarters of the book.

This tripartition of Genesis into one short prologue, an equally short epilogue, and a long centerpiece is repeated within the centerpiece itself, though the proportions are reversed: approximately thirteen chapters are apportioned to Abraham, four to Isaac and nine to Jacob. Seeing in this disproportion a reason for considering the Isaac part as late and added in order to complete a „triad” of patriarchs and for calling Isaac a „pale” figure, a view frequently found in critical commentaries, shows lack of literary comprehension. The triad is original and essential. Isaac’s function is to be the link between his father and his son; he is the receptacle, repository and transmitter of the Divine promises. Another cause for the different literary treatment which Isaac receives is that the thrust of the book is to set him apart in order to juxtapose and yet connect Abraham and Jacob.

The book achieves this aim by various means. Isaac alone is born, lives and dies in Canaan without ever leaving the land; he alone lives in strict monogamy, and he alone is engaged in agriculture. Denoting the wandering „abroad” by A, those to the North (=Aram) by N, those to the South (=Egypt) by S, and those in Canaan by C, the lives of the fathers may be traced linearly

Abraham Isaac Jacob
which is again neatly chiastic. Further, similarities between Abraham and Jacob, the two personages concentrically placed on either side of Isaac, are indeed numerous. The change of their names has already been pointed out – Isaac bears the only name of the three preordained by God. Both Abraham and Jacob left their parental homes, both suffered the threat of losing their beloved sons, both sojourned in Shechem, Bethel, Hebron and Beer-Sheba. Both, with the assent of their wives, fathered sons by their handmaidens. Both were given one commandment each for their descendants forever (17:1 ff, 32:33). Both buried their wives; both built altars. That Jacob’s nightly encounter with the mysterious man (32:25–31) corresponds to Abraham’s experience on Mount Moriah (22:1 ff.) was convincingly shown in Benno Jacob’s commentary.\footnote{53}

The purpose of this lengthy discussion is to demonstrate that chapters 12–36 are of an intricate texture and a rather homogeneous literary unit concentrically planned and symmetrically balanced. The parallels were clearly intended by the author but have frequently been misunderstood by scholars who search in Genesis for Plutarch-like biographies. The book is a highly sophisticated piece of art and therefore deserves to be treated as such and not as a historical chronicle. No wonder that Thomas Mann in Joseph und seine Brüder showed much greater insight than many specialists.\footnote{54} The Abraham and Jacob Cycles will receive detailed treatment below. As we are now concerned with the overall structure of Genesis, we turn to the epilogue.

The beauty and the inner unity of the story of Joseph (chs. 37–50) need not be extolled. Both are universally agreed upon, except in respect to chapter 38, the Judah-Tamar episode, which is said to be a ,,scattered block.” It will not astonish us to find a measure of chiastic repetition of main themes also in this section of Genesis:

\[
\begin{align*}
A & \quad \text{Jacob's family disrupted (ch. 37)} & B & \quad \text{Judah separates from his brothers (ch. 38)} & C & \quad \text{Joseph’s ,,descent” into Egypt (ch. 39–40)} & D & \quad \text{Joseph introduced to Pharaoh (ch. 41)} & E & \quad \text{Joseph organizes Egypt’s economy (ch. 41)} & F & \quad \text{The brothers’ first ,,descent” into Egypt (chs. 42–44)} \\
G & \quad \text{Joseph makes himself known to his brothers (ch. 45)} & F' & \quad \text{The brothers’ final ,,descent” into Egypt (ch. 46)} & C' & \quad \text{Joseph’s ,,descent” into Egypt (ch. 46)} & B' & \quad \text{Judah reunites his brothers (ch. 46:28)} & D' & \quad \text{Jacob introduced to Pharaoh (ch. 47)} & E' & \quad \text{Joseph reforms Egypt’s economy (ch. 47)} & A' & \quad \text{Jacob’s family reconciled (chs. 48, 49:28–50:26)}
\end{align*}
\]

\[r = -0.679, \quad r^* = -0.714, \quad r_1^* = -0.893\]

How Coats could have seen in chapters 37–50 ,,structural parasites” and decided that they show ,,no marked unity” is beyond comprehension.\footnote{55} The least he could have recognized in them is equilibrium and the dénouement of the tragedy of errors in their middle. Equally unwarranted and even more arrogant are Redford’s verdicts that parts of the story are ,,a sorry spectacle” and that the supposed editor was ,,unimaginative” and ,,confused” and did ,,a shoddy job”.\footnote{56} The contrary is true. As an exegetical by-product of the analysis we see that even the Judah-Tamar episode is an integral and indispensable part of the story, which has not intruded into the book by error or oversight.

To return to the chiastic climax in chapter 45, we find there the moral of the story: ,,So it was not you who sent me here but God” (v. 8). In order to understand what this lesson signifies, and accordingly why this story was written, we must again take a panoramic view at the whole book. Genesis is an introduction into the world of ideas of the Torah. These ideas are embodied in its commandments. In preparation for these commandments and because they make no easy reading and are even less easily understood, a long narrative of fifty chapters precedes them, the only function of which is to attract the reader and make him read on. This opinion, \textit{i.e.} that Genesis is actually superfluous in the Torah, is shared by R. Izhaq (Tannaite, 2nd cent. C.E.) as quoted by RaSHi in his very first comment (\textit{ad} 1:1): ,,He [God? Moses?] need not have begun here but at the first commandment Ex. 12:1.” In
Genesis, the introduction to the Torah, the prologue deals with human matters in general; in its central part, it deals with the 'prehistory' of the people of Israel. In both, as only fitting in a book of moral education, the main themes are the problem of good and evil and those related to such as free choice and retribution. These questions are raised immediately at the outset in the Garden of Eden, are taken up again in the stories of Cain and Abel and of the Flood, and are explicitly stated in 18:23–33, esp. 23 and 25: “Wilt thou indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked? . . . Far be it from thee . . . ! Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” The message of Genesis is to reply, by means of dramatic examples, that the answer to Abraham’s anguished question is “Yes, He will do right!” Shall the reader then deduce that no wrong will ever be done to or evil ever befall the righteous? In response to this question comes the story of Joseph, “the Righteous” as he is called by the Midrash, responding: No, the righteous are also exposed to setbacks, even catastrophes, yet ultimately they will triumph and be recompensed. Whatever wrong is done to them and irrespective of whether they deem it undeserved, Providence will turn it all to their best. What the Talmudic sages preached, that “Everything done by the Allmerciful is [done] for the best” (TB. Berakhot 60b), Genesis puts in Joseph’s mouth – and in the center of his story –: “Not you [my brothers] sent me here, but God” (45:8). Comforted, encouraged and assured of God’s justice, the reader is equipped to proceed to Exodus where the commandments begin. He is hopefully expected to keep them regardless of consequences, favorable or not.

The three major sections of Genesis have thus provided chiasmic structures from which certain conclusions of exegetical value have been drawn. Yet the middle section, the Abraham and Jacob Cycles in chapters 12–36, calls for further and more detailed examination. We shall take up the latter first.

The last chapter of this section (ch. 36) contains a genealogy of Esau’s descendants and of Edomite kings; Jacob is not even mentioned by name. The story of Jacob may therefore be said to end with chapter 35 and to start with his departure from his father’s house in chapter 28.

These eight chapters fall into two halves: four deal with Jacob’s “descent” from Canaan to Aram, ending in 31:45–32:1 with his final separation from Laban the Aramean. The other four chapters (32:2–35:29) deal with his return from Aram and with his final reconciliation with Esau (35:29b). In the first half, his opponent is Laban, whose name means “white,” in the second his opponent is Edom, which is the Hebrew for “red.” Jacob’s nocturnal struggle with the enigmatic messenger is found between the two (32:25–33), the crucial incident of his life which turned him from Jacob into Israel (32:29). He erects one heap of stones at Bethel when he sets out from Canaan (28:18), another at Gilead after leaving Aram and before reentering Canaan (31:46), and a third when again back at Bethel (35:14).

That the Jacob Cycle is not more chiastically articulate does not invalidate our hypothesis, because the options before the writer were limited. He was fettered by at least two constraints. First, he had to achieve that high degree of individuation of his main character which has been mentioned before. This alone could have precluded more elaborate chiasm, which after all is an artificial framework better suited to stereotyped didactic subject matter. Second, Jacob’s story was to be a replica of Abraham’s, though less remote and more in ordinary human terms.

There is, however, an interesting detail concerning Jacob which we may call “distant chiasm.” The account first states that when Joseph was sold he was seventeen years of age (37:2). In view of the undisputedly concise style of Genesis this is a surprising piece of specific information. Moreover, it is superfluous, because we are also told in the same verse that he was a lad. As we are not informed of Isaac’s age when he was to be sacrificed, why then need we known how old Joseph was when he was sold? Now we read that Jacob’s age was one hundred and thirty
years when he came to Egypt (47:9) and that „he lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years“ (47:28). The expression „lived“ (wa-yehi) may sound natural enough in English, but is most unusual in Hebrew where one would expect „dwelt“ (wa-yeseb, see e.g. 37:1). The word should therefore be understood in the light of 45:27 which says that when he heard that Joseph was still alive, „the spirit of . . . Jacob lived“ (wa-tehi, [RSV; revived]). „To live“ means here (as in 12:13 and also in II Kings 13:21, Job 42:16 and a number of other cases) to lead not an ordinary life but a full and joyous one. We now begin to see the significance of the twice repeated seventeen years (37:2, 47:28): Jacob „lived“ only with Joseph at his side, which happened during the first seventeen years of Joseph’s and during the last seventeen years of his own lifetime. The two passages refer to each other and enclose Jacob’s old age within two periods of equal length – concentrically, symmetrically and, in a simple sense, chiastically.

The last larger coherent piece of Torah narratives to be examined is the story of Abraham. He is mentioned for the first time in 11:26 as a son born to Terah. His early life is glossed over in three short verses (there and 11:29,31) and he appears on the stage when he is already seventy-five years old (12:1, where, significantly, a new weekly portion begins in Jewish liturgy). In chapters 23–25, he merely completes before his death that which is left for him to do: to bury his wife (ch. 23) and to marry off his son Isaac (ch. 24), while 25:1–18 no more than lists the genealogies of his offspring. To Abraham himself, only chapters 12–22 are devoted.

Of Abraham’s one hundred and seventy-five years (25:7), the first seventy-five are skipped, as we have seen, as if they were not worth telling: his „real“ life began when he entered the Land of Canaan. He was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born and from this event on, like Jacob, he lived for another seventy-five years. His lifespan is thus 75 + 25 + 75 years, a numerical ABA panel. Furthermore, the number ten is predominant in the Abraham Cycle: he is the tenth generation after Noah (himself the tenth after Adam), 100 years of age at Isaac’s birth, and he has to pass ten tests (cf. M. Abot 5:3,4). Of them, nine occur within the middle twenty-five years, and the tenth, evidently set apart on purpose, occurs when he was one hundred and thirty-seven years old. These ten tests, plus two additional episodes, comprise the twelve details told of Abraham’s lifetime.

Many critics stamp several of these episodes as „doublets“, allegedly recorded at random by an editor unable to decide which of two partly overlapping and partly conflicting oral traditions to follow. Moreover, the only warlike event in his life (ch. 14) is said to be out of Abraham’s character and has therefore been considered either a very ancient, perhaps even mythological relic, or alternatively the very latest addition to his „saga“. Solving the difficulty found in a text segment by arguing that this segment must be eliminated is superficial exegesis. Such contradictory views are clearly unsatisfactory. Let us, therefore, probe the structure of what we have in hand. The grouping of the twelve episodes of Abraham’s life emerges as being architectonic and carefully ordered.

A   Abram renounces his past (ch. 12:1–9)  B   Sarai in Pharaoh’s palace (ch. 12:10–20)  C   Abram parts from Lot (ch. 13)  D   Lot delivered from captivity (ch. 14)  X   The Covenant „between the pieces“ (ch. 15)
E   Hagar’s flight (ch. 16)  E’   Circumcision (ch. 17)  X’   Annunciation of Isaac’s birth (ch. 18)
D’  Lot delivered from perdition (ch. 19)  B’  Sarah in Abimelech’s palace (ch. 20)  C’  Abraham parts from Ishmael (ch. 21)
A’  Abraham renounces his future (ch. 22)

\( r = -0.943, \ r^* = -0.829, \ r_{1}^* = -0.943 \)

This symmetry is a good proof of the inner unity of the eleven chapters and refutes the assertions that B’ is a superfluous repetition of B and that D is a later addition. It is indeed difficult to deny that one single mastermind
produced this interwoven and aesthetically satisfying literary tapestry. That it is designed as a chiastic matrix is furthermore forcefully impressed upon the reader by expressions recurring in A and A', creating an inclusio:

A (ch. 12:1)  
„Go...“  
„from (a) country and (b) from your kindred and (c) from your father’s house . . .“ (gradation!)  
„to the land that I will show you.“  
A' (ch. 22:2)  
„Go...“  
„Take now (a) your son, (b) your only [son], whom you love . . .“ (gradation!)  
„upon one of the mountains which I will tell

The relationships between B and B', C and C', D and D' require no specific comment. X and X' are the only two incidents in this narrative which do not constitute tests, while in E and again in E', Abraham receives the promise that his „seed shall be multiplied exceedingly," once through Hagar, with the promise of the birth of her son Ishmael, and again through Sarah, with the promise of the miraculous birth of her son Isaac.

The whole Abraham Cycle is thus extensively symmetrical. Within it, two items, namely the covenant of circumcision (E') and Abraham's supreme test (A'), both of immense impact upon Judaism, are highlighted by displaying themselves with extra chiastic features. The second of the two will be extensively treated below. The first (E') is marked by correspondences which bind the whole pericope of chapter 17 into an extremely complex figure. We first observe that the chapter is constructed of five speeches by God, each similarly introduced and of comparable length, the third (17:9–14) being the longest and most important.

```
A   Abram's age (17:1a)  B   the Lord appears to him (1b)  C   God's first speech (1b–2)  D   Abram falls on his face (3)  E   God's second speech (names, kings) (4–8)  F   God's third speech (the covenant) (9–14)
E'  God's fourth speech (names, kings) (15–16)  D'  Abraham falls on his face (17–18)  C'  God's fifth speech (19–21)  B'  God „goes up“ from Abraham (22)  A'  Abraham's age (24–25)
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This is a faultlessly regular alignment of the formal structure of this passage. Interlocked within it, a parallel content development is detectible, as has been shown by McEvenue:57

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A   The Lord promises progeny (17:1–2)  B   Abraham father of nations (4)  C   Change of name, promise of kingship (5–6)  D   God will carry out His oath forever (7)  E   The sign of the oath (9–15)  C'  Change of name, promise of kingship (15–16)  A'  God promises progeny (16)  B'  Sarah mother of a son (19)  D'  God will carry out His oath forever (18–21)  E'  The sign of the oath (23–27)
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The commandment of circumcision itself is placed in the middle. Critics censure the Priestly writer for having „conflated“ it. The truth, however, is that it adheres to the palistrophic figure. The specific law is found in verse 12; the positive opening „you shall keep my covenant“ in verse 9 is rounded off in the negative by „he has broken my covenant“ in verse 14. Within this distich, the keywords are repeated in a parallel order where verbal forms of the main key root „circumcise“ (mwl) alternate with the rest:

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A   „Keep my covenant“ (17:9)  B   „your offspring“ (zera‘) (10)  C   „circumcised“ (mwl) (10)  D   „male“ (zakar) (10)  C   „circumcised“ (mwl) (11)  E   „the flesh of your foreskins“ (11)  F   „he that is eight days old... shall be circumcised (mwl) every male“ (zakar) (12)  B'   „your offspring“ (zera‘) (12)  C'   „circumcised“ (mwl) (13)
```
D’ „male” (zakar) (14) C’ „circumcised” (mwl) (14) E’ „the flesh of his foreskin” (14) A’ „he has broken my covenant” (14)

\[ r = -0.429, r^* = -0.714, r_{1}^* = -0.893 \]

Such diction need not be to everybody’s taste. It may even bore critical adults. Yet by no means does the Priestly writer to whom chapter 17 is ascribed merit Holzinger’s censure that it smacks of „indescribable pedantry” and that „whenever [the writer] has once analyzed a genus into various species, we must agree to be treated with every single species over and over again.”\(^58\) Similar dislike and lack of understanding of a literary technique not \textit{modo Germanico} is reflected in von Rad’s remark: „[This is] unartistic . . . diction, . . . parting with all impressive ornament.”\(^59\) Chapter 17 alone should be enough to prompt some scholar at least to write a minority report on the literary qualities of the legal texts of the Pentateuch.

Having treated the structure of the central item (E’) in the diagram of the Abraham Cycle, we may turn to its last (A’). As we have seen before, this „test” alone is placed outside the central twenty-five years of Abraham’s life. This was done in order to elevate this incident above all the rest and also in order that it could become the apex of the triadic structure of the central portion of Genesis. Chapter 22, the \textit{aqedah}, which is wrongly named „the sacrifice of Isaac,” (better would be „the binding of Isaac”), is the center of the „acts of the fathers” (ma’asey abot), and since this comprises the centerpiece of Genesis, the nineteen verses of this chapter are the core of the whole book. If our hypothesis is correct, then we should again expect them to be chiastically constructed and to reveal to us the reason for which the book was written. Hence, these verses must be minutely inspected.

The chapter, especially its lesson, has proven to be rather evasive under traditional and modern analyses. Everyone agrees of course that it displays a modern narrative art of the Bible at its best. It is considered so exemplary of the biblical technique of story-telling that it was chosen as representative by Auerbach in his comparison of this technique with Homer’s.\(^60\) Yet there is little consensus as to its meaning. In rabbinic homiletic literature, the \textit{aqedah} is seen as the prototype of readiness for martyrdom (Yalqut, Deut. 26), while in the legal Rabbinics it serves as a paradigm for the right of a prophet to the temporary suspension of a law (TB, Sanhedrin 89b). Philo gives an allegorical interpretation; Hassidism reads various subtleties of its own into the story; and moralists like R. Isaiah Horowitz (Prague-Tiberias, 1565–1630) observe that the chapter teaches that God may demand any sacrifice (SHeLOH, Wa-yera’, end). Early Christian doctrine uses it as a forerunner of the sacrifice of Jesus (Tertullian, \textit{Adversus Marcionem} 3:18). In modern times, the number of critical views is equally large. The \textit{aqedah} is alleged to be a piece of ancient mythology, a Freudian expression of a father’s hatred for his son, or an anticipation of the future sacrificial cult in Jerusalem. Kierkegaard, in \textit{Fear and Trembling}, sees Abraham as the „Knight of Faith” who, for the sake of God, renounces even the ethical ideal to which he subscribes and has constantly taught.\(^61\) Aetiologists believe that it is the intent of the tale to explain why child sacrifice was modified by the substitution of a ram or to serve as a protest against human sacrifice in general. Finally, one frequently finds the chapter quoted as a telling example that the deity of the Hebrew Bible is cruel and demands „blind obedience.”

Scholars are just as divided over the question of the authorship of the \textit{aqedah}. It is generally attributed to the Elohist source, with glosses by R, the redactor, \textit{vice versa}, to the Yahwist with R’s use of the name „Elohim.”

The general impression gained from this image of disagreement and mutually incompatible opinions is that preconceived ideas on the part of their proponents were projected onto this crucial chapter, in disregard of whether they are consonant with the general tenor of the Torah. The following discussion will, much rather, try to bring out the intention of the story by working from the text itself. Whatever may be the result, this procedure is at
any rate methodologically superior to eisegesis. Let us then first look at the structure of chapter 22:1–19, which is divided into two repetitive halves, forming in broad lines a chiastic pattern:

A „Here I am” (22:1) B „your son, your only one” (2) C „raise him as an offering” (2) D „one of the mountains” (2) E young men (3) F the wood (3) G he rose and went (3) H the place of which God had told him (3) I he lifted up his eyes and saw (4) J „we will return” (5) K he laid it (6) L the knife (6) M together (6) A’ „Here I am” (7) M’ together (8) H’ the place of which God had told him (9) F’ the wood (9) K’ he laid (10) L’ the knife (10) A” „Here I am” (11) B’ „your son, your only one” (12) I’ he lifted up his eyes and saw (13) C’ he raised him as an offering (13) D’ the mountain (14) J’ he returned (19) E’ young men (19) G’ they rose and went (19) M” together (19)

\(r = -0.363, \ r^* = -0.566, \ r_1^* = -0.745\)

One fact is indisputable here, namely that this literary unit starts and ends with the identical passage (22:1, 20): „And it came to pass after these things,” thus marking the limits of this story. Beyond this we can observe the following concerning its structure. The main deviations from a chiastic order occur in K’, I’ and J’, yet they contain not operative keywords, but functional verbs such as lay, see, return, whose sequence is obviously prescribed by the very nature of any journey. The remaining lines may be combined in concentric clusters:

ABCDEG, HKL, H’K’L’, A’B’C’D’E’G’

In any case, there is hardly a single element in the first seven verses not echoed after verse 8.

Should the diagram not completely satisfy what one demands of a chiastic system, one may condense it perhaps more persuasively into another:

A A short opening (22:1) B Elohim speaks (2) C Actions performed in silence by Abraham (3–6) D A dialogue (7–8) C’ Actions performed in silence by Abraham (9–10) B’ YHWH speaks (11–12) A’ long and solemn conclusion (13–19)

From this, we can deduce certain conclusions regarding the meaning and internal unity or disunity, as the case may be, of the aqedah. First of all, the climax of the story lies not, as the simplicist would have it, where Abraham took the knife to slay his son, but in the journey which lasted according to biblical time-reckoning for one full day and for part of the days before and after it. That killing a son does not prove anything nor test anyone, since the killer may have lost his senses, has long been recognized by Jewish sages: „Why on the third and not on the rst or second day? So that nobody should say: He [simply] confused him and so he went and slew his son” (Tanhuma, Wa-yera’, 22). The silent walk in full consciousness that every single step brings the end nearer – this constituted the „proof:”

The walk in silence from Beer-Sheba to Moriah is interrupted by a short dialogue between father and son, the climax within the climax. It consists of one simple, hesitant and rational question and one unsatisfactory, because evasive, reply. Both lie embedded between the twice repeated passage, „and so they went both together,” where the Hebrew uses the uncommon emphatic form yahdaw, as one would say in English „hand in hand.” The Midrash sensed this extraordinary usage and commented on it: „One to bind, the other to be bound; one to slay, the other to be slain” (Midrash Genesis Rabba 56). So the test was twofold and both father and son withstood it. Since Isaac’s part in the event is often forgotten, this is the second result of the analysis.

What, then, can be said of the reason for which the aqedah is located at the most prominent position in Genesis? In order to find the answer to this question the diagram (p. 242–3) has to be consulted again. Whereas most of the
lines in the chapter occur twice, once in its upper and again in its lower part, only two, the first and the last, are repeated thrice, namely „Here I am” (hinneni), AAA, and „together” (yadhaw), MM’M’. Perhaps for lack of typographical devices, the author turned to this surprising threefold repetition of these two words to draw attention to them. „Together” points to social relations; „Here I am,” to readiness. As mentioned above, (p. 223), Jewish tradition divides the six hundred thirteen Torah commandments into two categories: one comprises the rational precepts of socially regulative significance called mispatim; the other, the irrational „laws” called huqqim. However, the irrationality of the latter is an apparent one only. In fact, they are purposefully intended to strengthen self-discipline and self-control. It is the huqqim that are always mentioned before mispatim and therefore regarded by traditional Judaism as distinctive of Israel. Chapter 22, the center of the introductory first book of the Torah, anticipates both categories. Father and son went „together” and remained together, despite the elusive answer in verse 8, and returned, after what happened to them on the top of the mountain, „together” with the young men, representatives, so to say, of the Gentile world who are as aware of correct social behavior like the Jews, but are exempt from huqqim. Thus, the chapter prepares the reader for the ethical commandments (mispatim) which govern social relationships and are to be promulgated in Exodus from Sinai on. On the other hand, „Here I am” for God, „Here I am” for fellowmen, „Here I am” for an incomprehensibly exacting deity and for a merciful Lord, prepares the way for „taking upon oneself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven” as embodied in huqqim. Voluntary readiness to give up one’s greatest treasure in full confidence that it will, since it must, somehow make sense, ought never be confused with „blind obedience.” All this seems to be the third result of the present analysis of this chiastic scheme.

That chapter 22 was written by one and the same hand now appears an indisputable conclusion. How otherwise to account for the aesthetically gratifying, coherent, consistent and symmetrical array of its narrative and linguistic elements? Even the alternate use of two different Divine names, Elohim, which occurs invariably until verse 10, and YHWH, used exclusively from verse 11 onward, becomes explicable: not by explaining this break in language behavior by assuming a caesura and ascribing one part to the Elohist and the other to the Yahwist, but rather in accordance with the explanation given by the Rabbis and sustained by Cassuto. They claim that the two names refer to the two complementary aspects of the Deity, as conceived by the Hebrew Bible. The one, Elohim, alludes to His stern, judge-like attributes (cf. the use of the word elohim for authority in Ex. 4:16, 7:1, 22:6 and many other places); the other, YHWH, refers to His personal, intimate and providential care for mankind in general and for Israel in particular. It is therefore only proper that „the God” (v. 1) – notice the use of the generic definite article in the Hebrew text which should be rendered in English by „a god” – who demands and expects submission should be named Elohim, while the name YHWH should be used when He accepts the willingness to fulfill His command and when He emphatically (v. 11–12) refuses to allow this willingness to be put into effect but recompenses it bountifully (v. 15–18). The inner unity of the chapter is again borne out by analyzing its structure in and of itself.

It would seem that the method employed here, and the results of this analysis, are quite opposed to those of many critics and mystics, anthropologists and psychologists. In addition to reiterating the fact that the foregoing conclusions are based solely upon the text, one more remark may be made to support these results. In reading these texts, we have had some recourse to rabbinical sources. These are almost totally neglected by modern scholars, as if those, whose lifelong occupation is to elicit what Scripture says, and who try assiduously to live according to its guidance, were the least understanding. Now these sages are responsible for the inclusion of the aqedah in the daily morning prayer service. Would they ever have done so if the message of the story had been to combat the abomination of child sacrifice, which had been extinct since the period of the First Commonwealth? Or to enforce „blind obedience without questioning the reasons” when the Torah itself repeatedly enjoins the reader to study and reason in order to better understand its concise writing? As it has been seen in the course of this discussion, Genesis was written in order to lead the reader, by means of narrative, toward a deeper
comprehension of the succeeding four books of the Pentateuch, whose essence is the two categories of commandments *huqqim* and *mispatim*. Could the sages have found a better way to inculcate the unlearned reader with this essence than by making him rehearse daily the *aqedah*? The word *torah* means „teaching,” and the teachings of the Torah are encompassed in *nuce* in chapter 22.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS** Three claims were made at the beginning of this essay: (a) that the sequence of elements in narrative passages of all lengths in the Hebrew Bible is governed by chiastic principles; (b) that this characteristic wanes in post-exilic Hebrew narratives; and (c) that the chiastic literary convention demanded that the main idea or at least the critical point of the tale be located at its center.

The foregoing discussions offer a wide range of examples supporting the first and the third of these claims, as well as limited evidence for the second. It is true that all of the displayed chiastic structures are not of equal purity and that some may appear strained, but taken together the evidence should suffice to support the initial hypotheses, to convince the skeptic and to induce the biblicist to employ the phenomenon treated here as a useful tool in his occupation on three different levels.

First, it seems that drawing attention to inverted parallel structure is a welcome aid in teaching the Bible as literature. It focuses the student’s advertence onto the principal lesson of the unit under study by turning his thought toward the central message and away from peripheral issues. This enhances the student’s appreciation of the text and of the design underlying such compositions.

Second, insights which bring to light structural divisions are valuable to the translator. They provide guidance in the appropriate use of connectives and ensure that correct emphasis is maintained in translation.

Third, an awareness of the centrality of an episode or idea may well improve comprehension of a passage as a literary unit and thus lead to realistic conclusions about its original composition.

In spite of these beneficial uses of chiasmus – not to mention the accretion of knowledge for its own sake – the hypothesis advanced here can be expected to meet with a certain amount of resistance. Lund’s important investigations have received much less notice than they deserve; Clark complains of encountering „limited hostility,” while McEvenue anticipates it implicitly. This resistance seems to stand in direct proportion to the size of the literary sample in which chiasm is said to exist: no one will take exception to the claim that a single verse is chiastically built, but many will dispute such an assertion when it concerns the composition of an entire book. The reasons for this reaction on the part of professional scholarship are apparent enough, but they are not well founded. Consider the most likely objections.

Some just deny that chiasm exists in larger units, but the tested evidence handily refutes this denial. Others venture that chiastic structures „just happened,” but once again the statistical probabilities against accident are overwhelming. Nor can we simply assert that authors in distant antiquity could not have excelled in the artistic craft of storytelling, mastering a superior handling of material in both poetry, prose, and even in legal texts under an „aesthetic imperative”. The high literary levels attained in biblical literature are distinctly discernable, even if not entirely explicable.

The particular chiasms which we have displayed here may be subjected to unwarranted criticism from other angles. Some patterns relate to themes, phrases and keywords, while others build upon shifts in *dramatis personae*, situations, locations, numbers and even to unquestionably historical events, and this may be thought to be a sign of
arbitrariness in the foregoing analyses. Inconsistency of methodology, of course, must be avoided. But by the same token, this caveat must be observed: one should not, in the name of consistency, artificially limit the number of levels or media through which chiastic tendencies may indeed have manifested themselves in ancient biblical thought.

Moreover, this essay has alleged that such tendencies were consciously observed in antiquity, but one may well question whether such patterning is deliberate or subconscious. This, like all questions of interpreting original intent, is difficult to answer with certainty. But observe that where we are dealing with chiasmus in small units, it is easy to speak of a rhetorical or stylistic device which the author consciously employed. Should it be any more difficult to account similarly for larger arrangements when the very same pattern recurs over and over again, on all levels of organization, within a volume whose vast composition spanned the course of a millenium and when almost one hundred writers had a share in its composition and collation?

One further point, related to the last one, is worthy of some discussion, namely the question of titles and captions used within any proposed chiastic arrangement. Are the titles loaded, meaning that the concentric pattern perhaps extends no further than to the titles? To an extent, of course, they are, for one chooses them in order to emphasize those features of the first part of the chiasm which are perceived as being repeated in the second. Nevertheless, behind this perception stands an ascertainable, verifiable reference to the text itself, if the chiasm is indigenous and not fictitious. The fact that certain titles are theologically or interpretatively selective is therefore not critical, as long as such differences merely reflect different levels of perception justifiably arising out of the underlying texts.

None of the objections mentioned and, it is hoped, refuted, justify any rejection or disregard of the chiastic hypotheses; yet it can be expected that more resistance will be encountered, and for understandable reasons. When the same structural principle is found throughout the Pentateuch, for example, this fact points toward internal unity, homogeneity, design and to a mastermind or masterhand, i.e., to the opposite of multiple authorship and redactional recensions, with their wholesale additions, expansions, omissions, conations, and interpolations, the pillars on which the „orthodox“ Quellenscheidung of the Wellhausen-Graf-deWette school rests. What is at stake regarding chiasm in the Hebrew Bible, therefore, is nothing less than an entire school of interpretative thought.

And indeed it has recently been suggested by Talmon that the academic divisions between author, editor and copyist may not be as clear as has been previously assumed. Talmon demonstrates that the same biblical author may have written, revised, edited and copied his own work,54 as indeed the Hebrew noun sofer denotes both author and copyist or „writer.” If there was, as Talmon puts it, a unio personalis of the two, then it is easy to see such a writer utilizing chiastic principles at either or any stage of his writing process. All this opens up a great number of new perspectives on the texts of the Hebrew Bible. As long as these avenues are not explored, one will still be justified in postulating, without overworking the hypotheses, one single author as the composer of any smoothly symmetrical chiasm. And the more consummate the chiasm, the firmer the postulation.

Most of the issues touched upon here are matters for the scholar to ponder and evaluate. Yet this essay was not exclusively or ultimately written for scholars, but for ordinary readers. It is more often they who are struck by and appreciative of the Bible’s beauty, and who read the book for instruction, guidance, and immediate pleasure, not obliterated by the interpretations of the literary critics. In the final analysis, it is hoped that the perspectives of chiasm in the Hebrew Bible will increase, first and foremost, the instructiveness and the appreciation of the beauty of this book in the hands of just such individuals, helping them to become aware of the source of some of
their intuitive sense of the Bible’s grandeur. Hopefully, some will become fascinated with the techniques of chiastic composition and will feel prompted to detect further instances where it occurs – and there must be many more – thus adding one kind of enjoyment to many others.

FOOTNOTES

1 R. Lowth, *De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum Praelectiones Academicae* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1753) engl. transl. G. Gregory (London: Chadwick, 1847). On Lowth’s treatment of parallelism, see W. Holladay, ,,Form and Wordplay in David’s Lament over Saul and Jonathan," VT, 20 (1970), 155–57. However, R. Gordis, claims in his review in CBQ, 35 (1942), 241–4, of G. B. Gray’s *Forms of Hebrew Poetry* that Lowth was preceded by almost two centuries by Azariah de Rossi (Italy, c. 1511 – c. 1578), *Me’or Eynayim*, on *inyan* as the measure of Hebrew Poetry. For the latter’s concept of the subject see W. Popper, ,,Notes on Parallelism," *HUCA*, 2 (1925), 78 n. 8. It should be remembered that Jewish literati living among the Arabs must certainly have been aware of the sophisticated Arab analysis of poetry. Chiasm was one of the many forms which parallelism took in Arab poetry and prose, cf. A. J. Arberry, *Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge: University Press, 1965), pp. 21–24. Chiasm in the New Testament was first examined by J. Bengel, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* (1742). For these references, and for many of the following ones, I am indebted to my friend Robert F. Smith and his wide reading. I am taking this opportunity to express my gratitude to my friend John W. Welch who contributed greatly to making my English readable.

2 On the possible *unio personalis* of author and editor in Biblical times see Talmon’s suggestion, note 64, below.


5 Privately communicated to me by R.F. Smith and hereby gratefully acknowledged.

6 Y. Kaufmann, *Sefer Yehosua* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1959)


9 Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 383.


16 M. Buber, Königtum Gottes (Berlin: Schocken, 1932), pp. 1–44.

17 The same geographical sequence may be seen in 1:1–36, as pointed out by Boling.

18 My thanks are due to J. W. Welch for having drawn my attention to the detailed chiasms within the four chapters of the book.


20 Cf. ibid.

21 Cf. ibid.

22 See also ibid., p. 15, citing Bertman, JBL 84:165–8 on symmetry between chs. 2 and 3.

23 Cf. ibid.

24 Such interference has recently vehemently been denied by H. H. Witzenrath, Das Buch Ruth (München: Kösel, 1975), who states (p. 401) that the book is „von eminent politischer Bedeutung“ and betrays no trace whatsoever of „religiöse Anschauungen“. One can only wonder.

24a See below, note 29.


26 Ibid., pp. 90–2.

27 For details, see RaMBaM (R. Moshe ben Maimon, also Maimonides, Spain-Egypt, 1135–1204), Yad Hosaqah, XIV, Hilekhot Melakhim ch. 5:1–6.


29 The structure, message and function as an ouverture to Samuel of Hannah’s Prayer as well as the structures of the other poems in this book are dealt with in my paper, „Studies in the Poetical Sections of Samuel,” Sefer Zerkavod, ed. B. Z. Luria (Jerusalem: Israel Bible Society, 1967), 355–66 (Hebrew).

30 For a similar distinction between the two categories, see below, p. 245.

31 See also W. F. Albright, Yahwe and the God of Canaan (London: Athlone, 1968), pp. 38–42.


33 Lund, op.cit., p. 52.
34  Ibid., p. 57.

35  For further examples, see ibid., pp. 51–8.

36  Ibid., pp. 58–9.

37  The two categories were first distinguished by Rav Saadiah in his Emunot de'ot, III, 1–3; cf. A. Altmann, Saadya Gaon – The Book of Doctrines and Beliefs (Oxford: University Press, 1946), introd. and p. 96, n. 4.

38  I found this quotation in H. Graetz, The Structure of Jewish History, transl. I. Schorsch (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1975), p. 109, but was unable to trace it in Saadiah’s writings.


40  Lund, op. cit., p. 42.


42  The Decalogue itself may be viewed as chiastic if we follow J. Forbes, Symmetrical Structure of Scripture (Edinburgh: Clark, 1854), pp. 138–9, as perhaps also the Bundesformular at Ex. 19:3–8 according to Knutson, op.cit., pp. 143–6, cited by J. W. Welch, „Chiasmus in Ugaritic,” Ugarit-Forschungen, 6 (1974), p. 429.

43  E. Fromm, The Forgotten Language (New York: Rinehart, 1951); see also Hirsch, op. cit., II, ad loc.

44  Hirsch, op. cit., II, ad loc.


52  This is done by E. A. Speiser, Genesis, Anchor Bible (Garden City: Doubleday, 1946).


53  B. Jacob, Das erste Buch der Tora (Berlin: Schocken, 1933), ad loc.
Our first objective is to compare two series of \( N \) elements, \( x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_N \), and \( y_1, y_2, \ldots, y_N \), but occurring in the second series in another sequence, in order to discern whether there is a degree of agreement between them regarding the consecutive ranks of their elements. Spearman's coefficient of rank correlation \( (r) \) measures the association between the two series and is computed by the formula

\[
N 6 \sum d_i^2 \quad i=1 \quad r = 1 - \frac{\sum d_i^2}{N^3 - N}
\]

where \( d_i \) stands for the difference between the two elements carrying the same index.

Example (structure of the Book of Joshua, see p. 58):
According to the above formula,

\[ 6 \times 90 \quad r = 1 - \frac{\ldots}{\ldots} = -0.60773 - 7 \]

The variable \( r \) can range between \(-1.00\) and \(+1.00\). When it equals zero, there is no association whatsoever between the two series. If it is greater than zero, the agreement between them is a direct, *i.e.* parallel one, and if it is less than zero, then the rankings of the two series are opposed to each other, *i.e.* the higher the one, the lower the other. Hence, when \( r \) approaches \(-1.00\), it may be taken as a sign of chiastic arrangement of the elements, and the closer \( r \) lies to \(-1.00\), the more perfect the chiasm. For calculation of Spearman's coefficient in chiastic structures, their elements marked in the diagrams of this study by letters A, B, C etc. are to be numbered 1, 2, 3 etc.

Secondly, we wish to know whether any given negative value of \( r \) pointing to chiasm may be attributed to chance or intention. Statistically speaking, we start from the so-called null hypothesis (\( H_0 : r = 0 \)) that there is no association between the two series of rankings and wish to ascertain whether we should not reject it in favor of an alternative hypothesis (\( H_1 : r < 0 \)) that there does exist a negative association between them. This is a ,,one-tailed“ test, since we assume *a priori* the direction to be a negative one. For checking \( H_0 \) against \( H_1 \), standard tables are at our disposal where the critical values (\( r^* \)) may be obtained. This means that when a certain \( r \) lies beyond the critical value, the null hypothesis should be rejected; otherwise it should not be rejected.

It is customary to be satisfied with \( \alpha = 0.05 \), that is, since the subject matter of statistics is probability, to risk to err in our judgment in five out of one hundred analogous cases. One may, though, insist on a still stricter yardstick and opt for \( \alpha = 0.01 \). Then, the probability of one's judgment being correct will be as high as 99 percent.

Example: In the Solomon Cycle (see p. 63), the number of members is eight, and \( r = -0.762 \). For \( N = 8 \), the standard table indicates the following two critical values: \( r^* \) (for \( \alpha = 0.05 \)) = -0.643 and \( r^*_1 \) (for \( \alpha = 0.01 \)) = -0.833. So this is clearly a borderline case. Since \( r \) does not fall short of \( r^* \), the result is ,,significant“ and the null hypothesis to be rejected with a 95 percent probability of this judgment being correct: the chiastic arrangement is the intentional product of the author’s mind. However, since \( r \) does not equal or surpass \( r^*_1 \), the result is ,,not significant“ and the null hypothesis may not be rejected: if a 99 percent probability of being right is demanded before passing verdict, then the pattern should be pronounced ,,to just have so happened."

At the bottom of all diagrams except those where \( r \) obviously reaches the maximum of \(-1.00\), values of \( r, r^* \) and \( r^*_1 \) are given. They are not discussed in the text so that the reader will have to interpret them himself in the light of this note. For more details on the procedure used here and for tables, see Sidney Siegel, *Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1956).
Chiastic Patterns in Biblical Hebrew Poetry

Wilfred G.E. Watson

1. Introduction

1.1 Scope and aims

A full-scale study of chiasmus in ancient Hebrew poetry\(^1\) would require more time and more space than have been available. Nor could it be the work of a single person, even dependent (as he must be) on the work of others.\(^2\) Accordingly, in the pages which follow the emphasis will not be on exhaustiveness but, rather, on systematic presentation. An attempt is made to order the results achieved so far in the hope of providing a solid foundation for future research.

Another aim has been to remove existing confusion. The envelope figure, to take only one example, is related to chiasmus, but the two cannot be facilely equated. This explains the need for a section on terminology and the matrices. It must not be forgotten that chiasmus is only one of the many structural devices available to the poet and that chiastic patterns mean little unless incorporated into a larger system of poetic theory. Also, sequences within the strophe differ from chiastic patterns spread over longer segments of text. Clarification of this kind is necessary at the outset.

Generally speaking, the concept of function within poetry has been neglected by commentators.\(^3\) Some work has been done with respect to chiasmus,\(^4\) but the topic has not been adequately covered and is so important that a complete section has been given over to it here.

Finally, this study makes some deliberate omissions. Non-poetic texts, even if they were very probably first composed in verse, have not been considered to avoid introducing methodologically extraneous problems. Generally speaking, extreme novelty has been avoided here, since the primary purpose of the present chapter is to describe the state of the art.\(^5\) Also the relationship between chiasmus and literary form, interesting as it is,\(^6\) has been left for study elsewhere.

1.2 Dating

No attempt has been made in these pages to correlate chiastic patterns with the dates of poetic texts for several reasons. Firstly, there is no unanimity among scholars regarding the detailed chronology of biblical texts.\(^7\) Secondly, many „late“ books preserve archaic material\(^8\) or deliberately use archaisms. Also, much of the OT has undergone at least one editorial re-working and the difficulties of assigning levels of text to different hands still occupy scholars.

1.3 Metrical problems
Although the problem of Hebrew metre is still unsolved, there does seem to be a consensus that it is accentual in character, that is to say, based on stress.\textsuperscript{9} The accentual theory finds additional support from the following point. First is the fact that in Hebrew stress is phonemic, indicating it to be metrically significant as well.\textsuperscript{10} To this argument from phonology can be added two others regarding poetic devices. One is the broken construct chain by means of which an additional stress can be created. In Isa 19:8, for example, *kol maslîkê bayê* or *hakka* ("All those casting hook into the Nile"), there are 3 stresses, balancing 3 stresses in the first colon. If the word sequence had been, as it normally would be, *kol maslîkê-hakkâ bayê* or, there would have been only 2 stresses.\textsuperscript{12} The other is the pivot-patterned bicolon in which the crucial element is silent stress, by which is meant the absence of an expected (final) stress-word. So, in Ps 59:2\textsuperscript{13}

\begin{quote}
*hashîlenî meôyê* bay *êlôhim mittê*qomê*tê*saggê*benî Rescue me from my foes, God,
Against my attackers be my bulwark.
\end{quote}

If this example (which was chosen because it also exhibits chiasmus) has been correctly analyzed as a pivot pattern,\textsuperscript{14} it shows stress to be metrically significant.

Of the other theories put forward to explain Hebrew metre, none is convincing.\textsuperscript{15} Some seem rather to belong to the level of stichometry and as such are useful, to a limited degree, to determine the length of cola.\textsuperscript{16} These problems do not impinge directly on the present study since chiasmus seems to function independently of metre. They have been considered briefly because some scholars maintain there is a relationship between syllable-counting (which they equate with metre) and chiasmus.

\subsection*{1.4 Terminology} Basic to the ensuing considerations is clarity of terminology. Scholars use different terms for the same component, calling a colon a hemistich, for instance, or employing the words "stanza" and "strophe" indiscriminately. This can lead to confusion even though a particular writer may employ his terms consistently.\textsuperscript{17} Here, therefore, to avoid all ambiguity, a table of terms will be set out. It must be stressed, though, that more than mere nomenclature is in question, since the terms used imply a certain underlying theory concerning the structure of poetry. Broadly speaking it is as follows: the larger units, whether whole poems or stanzas, are composed of strophes, each strophe comprising one or more cola. These cola, in their turn are made up of still smaller units. Accordingly, a poem can be considered as a set of components (in loose terms, word-units) forming larger and larger complexes which ultimately combine into a single unified structure.\textsuperscript{18}

In accordance with the method of analysis adopted,\textsuperscript{19} the definitions will proceed from the smallest units to the largest. Correct analysis can only begin once such terms have been defined with precision.\textsuperscript{20} (See Table 1).

\begin{quote}
SYLLABLE, WORD Since not even linguists can agree on defining these two basic terms, only their generally accepted meanings will be implied here.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
HEMISTICH A subdivision of the colon comprising one or more words.
\end{quote}
COLON A single line of poetry; also called „stichos“, „stich“ and even „hemistich.“ Holladay defines the colon as a group of words in parallelism with another colon but this does not allow for monocola.

MONOCOLON A colon standing on its own (within a stanza or poem). It can be defined as a single colon which does not cohere closely with another colon, although in a wide sense no element of a poem stands in total isolation.

BICOLON Two lines of verse, generally in parallelism; a couplet formed of two (parallel) cola. The bicolon is the standard unit of verse in Hebrew poetry, and is also referred to as „distich“, „couplet“ and „line."

TRICOLON A set of three cola forming a single whole or strophe, e.g. Ex 32:8.

TETRACOLON A unit of verse made up of four cola, sometimes called a „quatrain,“ e.g. Jer 2:13.

PENTACOLON, HEXACOLON etc. Combinations of five, six (etc.) cola respectively, each set making up a strophe (e.g. I Sm 18:7b). STROPHIE A strophe is a verse-unit made up of one or more cola, and is a general term for monocola, bicolon, tricolon etc. Many authors call the stanza a strophe, perhaps because there are occasions when a stanza may contain only one strophe.

STANZA A combination of one or more strophes. Generally speaking, a complete poem is composed of several stanzas. Some poems, though, comprise only a single stanza (e.g. Ps 117) just as some stanzas contain only one strophe.

For the various terms and definitions directly related to chiasmus see the introductory chapter to the book. The following symbols will be used:

- a, b, c : to denote elements (generally, words) of a colon A, B, C : to denote complete cola
- p : to denote the pivotal element in a pivot-patterned bicolon R : to denote refrain
- x : to denote (extra-chiastic) anacrusis I, II, III : to denote stanzas

Subscripts and superscripts will be used sparingly, either to press a point home or to avoid confusion. Words in CAPITALS are keywords or significant words within a poem; italicized words are significant for a particular pattern.
1.5 Chiasmus, the strophe and the stanza

A recurrent topic in the analysis of Hebrew poetry is how to divide a poem into strophes and stanzas, but in spite of many sporadic attempts no overall solution has yet been reached. In part this is due to some confusion over the meaning of the terms „strophe” and „stanza”. Definitions have already been given, some justification for which must now be provided. According to the terminology adopted here, a stanza is a large unit of poetry which can be subdivided into strophes. So, in Jg 5:25

I Water he requested II A Milk

B in a lordly bowl A she proffered curds

the stanza is made up of two strophes (I, II), a monocolon and an ABA’ (chiastic) tricolon. Similarly, a four-line stanza such as Jb 21: 29-30 consists of two bicola, and so on with varying combinations of monocolon, bicola, tricola etc. It can also happen that a stanza cannot be further subdivided into smaller strophes, as when a four-line stanza is a tetracolon.

A poem is generally subdivided into stanzas (e.g. Ps 119, with 22 stanzas), but some poems comprise only a single stanza, examples being Ps 117, II Sm 3:33b-4 (see below). To add to the possible confusion, a poem may consist of one stanza and that stanza be made up of only one strophe, e.g. I Sm 18:7b.

One of the first scholars to realize that by identifying chiastic patterns, stanzas and strophes could then be distinguished, was Möller. This aspect will be considered below, in section 6.3. 1.6 Classifying chiasmus

With these distinctions in mind, the classification and typology of chiastic patterns can now be approached. In the main, the „Types of Chiastic Pattern” (Table 2) follows the layout of „Terminology” (Table 1). Three broad subdivisions of chiasmus emerge: strophic chiasmus, chiasmus in the stanza, and chiastic poems. First, and possibly most important, is strophic chiasmus, which forms the subject of the whole of section 2. Its fundamental component is the chiastic bicolon (2.1), which is basic because the bicolon in direct (synonymous) parallelism is the building-block of Hebrew poetry. There follow paragraphs on chiastic forms of the monocolon, tricolon, tetracolon and so on. Other types of chiasmus, including gender chiasmus, are discussed next (2.8) and, finally, patterns related to chiasmus (2.9).
Chiasmus in longer passages (section 3) deals with chiastic poems and with segments of poems written in chiastic form. Strict classification is not possible since the subject-matter is too varied in form. The topic of chiasmus in the stanza is covered in part by section 2 and in part by section 3. While not completely satisfactory, this has proved the easiest way of presenting the material and has therefore been adopted here.

The detailed classification, or rather, sub-classification of 2.1 has not been carried over into the other types of chiasmus because there the unit is the colon itself or a multiple of the colon.

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{a} & & \text{b} & & \text{a} & & \text{chiastic monocolon (2.2)} \\
&\text{A} & & \text{B} & & \text{A} & & \text{chiastic tricolon (2.3)} \\
&\text{A} & & \text{B} & & \text{B} & & \text{A} & & \text{chiastic (ABBA) tetracolon (2.4, 2.5)} \\
&\text{A} & & \text{B} & & \text{C} & & \text{B} & & \text{A} & & \text{concentric pentacolon (2.6)} \\
&\text{A} & & \text{B} & & \text{C} & & \text{C} & & \text{B} & & \text{A} & & \text{chiastic hexacolon (2.7)} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Table 2

2 STROPHIC CHIASMUS

2.1 Chiastic bicola

It is not always possible to make a clear distinction between different chiastic patterns. For example, is the standard abc//cba type, with its central, unchanged element (b), complete chiasmus or only partial? Nor can the typology be totally rigid, because some strophes seem to fit none of the categories mentioned here, e.g. Pss 72:9 74:19. The typology adopted here, then, is provisional and further study will reveal a more precise way of differentiating the various patterns.¹ For convenience, a table of chiastic bicola will be set out first. (Table 3)

**TYPOLOGY OF CHIASTIC BICOLA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mirror chiasmus</th>
<th></th>
<th>Partial chiasmus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>abc // cba – where a=a, b=b and c=c</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>abc // cb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ab-c // ba-c ab // ba</td>
<td></td>
<td>a-bc // a-cb abc // cba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>abc // ba</td>
<td></td>
<td>abc -a ab-c // c-ab ab-cd // cd-ab</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

(1) **Pure or mirror chiasmus.** The second colon, in this pattern, repeats exactly the same words used in the first colon but in reverse order; schematically: abc // cba. Since the resulting two lines are mirror images, the term „mirror" chiasmus seems suitable. In fact, it is simply a form of repetition. He shall open, and no one will shut; He shall shut, and no one will open Isa 22:22² Also, 9:2.³
(2) Complete chiasmus. The sequence followed in the second, parallel colon is the reverse of that used in the first, the description „complete“ referring to the fact that none of the components is omitted. Two sub-types belong under this heading:

\[ ab // ba \]

\[ abc // cba \]
Or, strictly, abc // c'b'a', since it is not mirror chiasmus. I removed the burden on his shoulder, His hand from the basket were freed Ps 81:7 Also, Gn 9:6, Isa 14:30, 29:17, 40:12a, 26, 27b, 42:4, 51:4, 62:1b, Pss 3:8f, 7:17, 81:7, 142:3, 147:4, Jb 17:1, 20:6, 32:14, Pr 3:10, 8:21, 13:6.

(3) Split-member chiasmus. First identified by Möller, this subdivision is basically a variant of complete chiasmus, the a and b components each (either separately or together) split into two further elements. A chart will make this clear: (Table 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complete chiasmus:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(ab // b'a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a b b' a'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Split-member chiasmus:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a-bc // bc-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a bc bc a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ab-c // c-ab)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ab c c ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ab-cd // cd-ab)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ab cd cd ab</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4**


\[ ab-c // c-ab \] In this pattern both the first and last components of the bicolon are split I will punish him for his conduct, And for his deeds I will repay him Hos 4:9 Further: Jg 1:15, Isa 13:21b, 27:11b, 43:15, 60:2b, 20, 64:1a, Hab 2:1, Pss 7:16, 15:3b, Jb 10:5, 19:9.

\[ ab-cd // cd-ab \] All the components have been further subdivided, the sequence of the subsections being preserve in an overall chiastic arrangement. Do not claim honour in the king’s presence, And in high positions do not set yourself Pr 25:6 Also, Isa 33:4, Ez 11:19, 32:13, Pss 9:16, 36:12, 78:24, 89:7, Jb 3:6, 31:16, Pr 4:14, 24.

X (4) Partial chiasmus. A set of patterns in which the position of one element remains unchanged and can be considered as standing outside the chiasmus. They are abc // cb, ab-c // ba-c and a-bc // a-cb. (The pattern abc // cba has already been considered).
The unchanged element is at the beginning, and the pattern itself is a variation of the stereotype abc // ba formation frequent in Hebrew (e.g. Hos 5:8, 7:1) and in Ugaritic poetry. Who rides through the heavens to your aid, and in his majesty, the skies Dt 33:26b. Also, Isa 48:18f, 49:18, Nah 3:8, Hab 1:3, 15, Pss 35:17, 78:33, 80:1, 92:3, 103:7, 105:45, 126:2, 132:4, Jb 6:15, 8:5, 18, 27:7, 39:6, Song 1:4.

The c-element is outside the pattern: Lifting from the dust the feeble, From the midden, raising the poor Ps 113:7 similarly, Isa 27:5, 49:22, Pss 21:9, 143:1.

Making attentive to wisdom, your ear, Bending your mind to understanding Pr 2:2 and Nb 24:18, Isa 59:3b, Pss 85:14, 139:7, Jb 3:12, Pr 2:2.

For the abc // ba pattern see below (section 5.6). Patterns such as abc // ca (Isa 45:1, 49:13b) and abc // ba (Jer 4 Mic 1:4a) probably are not really chiastic, but have been mentioned for the sake of completeness. There is no agreement among scholars concerning the typology given above, since what is an ab // ba sequence for one writer may be considered as abcd // cdab by another. This amounts to lack of agreement on what constitutes metre and how a word-unit is to be defined. A correct and exact typology may go some way, therefore, towards resolving the problem of Hebrew metre (touched on in section 1.3) and further refinement is evidently needed.

2.2 The aba (chiastic) monocolon

Akin as it is to the pivot pattern, the aba monocolon differs on two counts. Firstly it is a single line of poetry, not bicolon; and secondly, it is complete, with no ellipsis of a final stress. For example, Mercy on us. Yahweh, mercy on us Ps 123:3a is a chiastic monocolon with the pattern aba. Its function is to open a stanza or poem, as in David's lament for his child: My son, Absalom, my son II Sm 19: 1b or the first line of Ps 115. Characteristic is the central vocative.

2.3 The ABA (chiastic) tricolon

The ABA (or ABA') three-line strophe is a tricolon which can be described as two parallel cola separated by an isolated line, and forming a close-knit unit. With identical outer cola: A Wait for Yahweh B be strong and stout of heart A Wait for Yahweh Ps 27:14 Normally, though, the outermost lines are in parallelism: A A worry to his father B (is) a foolish son A' And bitterness to her-who-bore-him Pr 17:25 Here the A-colon corresponds to the A'-colon, the central B-colon referring to both of them. The son, of course, comes from both parents, so that the layout is an appropriate way of expressing their mutual relationship. See, too, Gn 27:39, 49:8, Sm 2:2, Isa 5:25, 14:8, 16:11, 30:31, 51:3, 56:9, Amos 1:3, Nah 2:4, 3:17, Pss 9:15, 27:14, 32:8, 64:11, 86:12, 104:15, Jb 3:1f, 24:14, 34:37, Song 1:11, 2:12, 4:12.

Being a chiastic tricolon the ABA-patterned strophe combines the functions both of the tricolon and of chiasmus to open or close a poem or stanza, and to express merismus. These functions will now be illustrated.

(1) To open a stanza (or poem). A See, of the fat of the land B will your home be A' and from the dew of heaven above Gn 27:39

Also 49:8, Isa 56:9 (cited below), Amos 1-2, Hab 2:6, Pss 4:2, 32:8, Jb 3:1-2, 10:1. (2) To close a stanza (or poem).
So that I may recount all your praise in the gates of Daughter Zion I may rejoice in your history

9:15 The next verse begins a series of curses on the wicked, while פָּרָן, „so that,” alludes to what has gone before; accordingly, v. 15 closes the short stanza, vv. 14-15. Similarly, Isa 51:3, Ez 34:6, Pss 6:11, 27:14 (cited above), Jb 10:22, 34:37, Pr 5:22. (3) To express merismus. A All (you) beasts of the field B come to eat, A’ All (you) beasts of the forest Isa 56:9 The clue here, as is often the case, is the word kol, „all, every.” Likewise Isa 25:7, Pss 9:15, 89:17, 109:14, 121:6,7, Jb 10:22, 34:37, Pr 17:25.

2.4 The ABBA Tetracolon

The pattern in question is found in tetracola where the first and final cola match (A, A) just as the two central cola correspond (B, B). A The fountain of living WATER B To hew themselves CISTERN B CISTERN that cannot crack A And cannot hold WATER Jer 2:13 This type of ABBA-pattern is the most frequent, where the chiastically arranged elements are two words (or words based on two roots), here „water” and „cistern.” A related type is where the AA cola are semantically similar (parallel), as are the BB cola. Finally, the pattern can involve other poetic devices or be interlocked with other chiastic sequences, as will be set out below. 13

Sub-types of the ABBA tetracolon

Chiastic word repetition, on the lines of Jer 2:13 cited above, forms the basis of the following tetracola (with repeated words in parentheses): II Sm 1:24 (clothed jewels ornaments clothing),14 Isa 49:24f (prey captive captive prey), Jer 9:3 (friend brother brother friend), Ez 19:2b-3a (lion cub cub lion), Nah 2:12b-13a (lioness cub cub lioness), Pss 12:4f (lips tongue tongue lips), 47:7f (gods king king gods), Jb 6:25f (words argue argue words), 27:10f (Shaddai Eloah El Shaddai), Pr 18:6f (lips mouth mouth lips), 31:19-20 (hand palm palm hand),15 Song 2:1 (face voice voice face). Also, Dt 32:43, Pss 78:29f, 113:2f, Jb 21:31f, 27:16f.

In semantic chiasmus the repeated words are not in identical pairs but semantically parallel, or else the whole cola is „repeated” by using a parallel phrase.

Must Abner die so base a death? Your hands were not bound Your feet not thrust in fetters Like one falling at a ruffian’s hands you fell II Sm 3:33b-4 The two central cola are parallel: „your hands unbound // your feet unbound” (paraphrasing) and the outer cola are related by wordplay (see below). Other examples: Gn 16:11, Isa 5:7, Ps 48:11f, Pr 11:18f, 30:4.

Occasionally the ABBA-pattern interlocks16 with other patterns to form a more complex arrangement of cola. So in Ez 32:7-8a the sequence A And I WILL DARKEN their stars B Nor the moon SHALL BEAM OUT ITS LIGHT B All the BEAMING LIGHTS in the heavens A I WILL DARKEN on your account

interlocks with the sequence (also chiastic):

C I WILL COVER, when you are blotted out, the heavens A And I WILL DARKEN their stars C The sun with a cloud I WILL COVER

to form the pattern CACBBA

C I WILL COVER, when you are blotted out, the heavens A And I WILL DARKEN their stars C The sun with a cloud WILL I COVER B Nor the moon SHALL BEAM OUT ITS LIGHT B All the BEAMING LIGHTS
the heavens C I WILL DARKEN on your account.

A similar pattern can be identified in Ez 21:8b-10 and Ps 72:1-4. Also, Pr 1:26f (chiastic tetracolon in climactic pentacolon), and texts such as Isa 49:24f and Mal 3:19.

Several other patterns and devices can be combined with the ABBA tetracolon. So, in Pr 18:6f, the arrangement of repeated roots coincides with a pattern of gender-reversal which runs:

\[
\begin{align*}
&f + m & A & (lips - contention m + f) & B & mouth - blows m + f \\
&f + m & A & lips - trap),
\end{align*}
\]

both being chiastic. Double wordplay binds the components of II Sm 3:33b-4 (cited above): nabal, „fool“ of the first colon and the verb napal, „to fall,” used (twice) in the last colon; and the PN Abner (cf. nîr, „yoke,”) exploited by the middle couplet dealing with binding both hands and feet. A phonetic component amounting to end-rhyme the basis of chiasmus in Gn 49:11.

He tethers to the vine his ass (lîrô) And to the red vine, the colt of his she-ass (âtonô) He washes in wine his cloak (lîbusô) And in grape-blood his robes (sutô)

the pattern being formed by the pronominal suffixes: -ô, -ô, -ô, -ô. See also Pr 30:4. The break-up of an expression found in Jb 27:10-11, combined with chiasmus:

Will he delight in SHADDAI? And call on ELOAH at all times? I will teach you EL’s power, What SHADDAI has I’ll not conceal

the expression being El-Shadday (see also v. 13). The ABBA pattern also acts as a link here, connecting the series of rhetorical questions (vv. 8-10) with v. 11.

No one single function can be assigned to the ABBA pattern: each case must be inspected in turn. The usual functions of chiasmus are: to express merismus (Gn 16:11 Jer 9:3), or antithesis (Jer 2:13, 9:3, Jb 6:25f, 27:16f, Pr 18:6f); to link components of a poem (Gn 49:11, Jb 27:10f, Pr 11:18f) and to express the reversal of events (Ps 12:4f). Noteworthy are Song 2:14 which is a refrain and Pr 31:19f which forms the centre of an alphabetic acrostic.

Although the ABBA tetracolon has been considered here under the heading „strophic chiasmus“, there are examples which amount to 4-line stanzas formed from two strophes, each a bicolon, the only common element being the repeated keywords:

(a) Each against his FRIEND be on guard And in every BROTHER put no trust, (b) For every BROTHER only supplants And each FRIEND peddles slander Jer 9:3

Couplet (a) is a complete unit, as is couplet (b), the link formed by the keyword pattern reô, ‘ah, ‘ah, reô.

2.5 Other Chiastic Tetracola

Some tetracola are chiastic without exhibiting the ABBA pattern. For instance

Listen, WISE ONES to my words, Knowledgeable ones, GIVE EAR to me, For the EAR, words does test, As the PALATE tastes by eating Jb 34: 2f

where the chiasmus is based on sound: hkm, hk (first and last cola), h'zn, 'zn (central cola), the stanza forming an introduction to the block of poetry which follows. Other texts include Isa 1:18bc, 14:30, 18:6b, 48:18f, 58:7,23 E 11:1924 and Ps 3:8f.25

2.6 Chiastic Pentacola

As with tetracola, it is difficult to differentiate 5-line strophes from 5-line stanzas. Accordingly, some illustrative examples will be set out and examined. The clearest chiastic structure is ABCBA, as in the first set of texts.

A Who had said to them B ,,This is your resting-place. C Give rest to the weary! B Yes, this is your place of repose.” A But they would not listen Is 28:12 ,,The verse is built concentrically, and the sound effects correspond to the structure,”26 the main thrust of the pentacolon lying in the central colon (C; cf. Isa 57:21).

A And in the period of their disorder they say: B ,,Up, and save us!” C But where are the gods you fabricated for yourselves? B Let them up and even save you A In the period of your disaster Jer 2:27c-28.

The central line of this pentacolon27 is again the most significant as is evident both from the chiastic structure and the allusion to iy aliyn b', ,,Wherever is Mightiest Baal?” of the Ugaritic texts.28

Similarly patterned are: Isa 42:2-4, 55:8-9, Jer 30:16, Ps 104:29f, and, finally

A Do not withhold discipline from a lad. B If you beat him with a cane C he'll not die; B Beat him yourself with a cane A And you'll save from Sheol his very self Pr 23:13f which is not a simple ABBA-pattern2 but a five-line stanza centering on ,,He will not die” meaning both ,,a good hiding will do him no lasting harm” and ,,by discipline he will be saved from a worse fate”.

Another chiastic sequence is AABCC, as in Hos 14:1030. More frequent is the ABBA tetracolon with an addition colon, either before it or as the final line. Examples are Isa 14:19,31 56:5,32 Other patterns, too occur.33

2.7 Chiastic Hexacola, and longer chiastic sequences

The more lines there are in a chiastic unit, whether strophe or stanza, the fewer the examples, so that exact typology is difficult. This paragraph will deal with chiastic units of six lines (hexacola) and more.

There are enough instances of chiastic hexacola for a broad grouping into three types: ABCCBA (pure chiasmus), AABBA'A' (an expanded ABA sequence), and lastly, miscellaneous sequences. The classic example of ABCCBA (as part of a nine-colon stanza) is Isa 6:10
A Be-lard the HEART of this people, B Their EARS deaden C Their EYES close fast C To avoid them seeing with their EYES, B Or, with their EARS, hearing, A Or, with their HEART, understanding.

Also, Isa 65:18, Zech 2:12f, Jb 33:20-22 and perhaps Amos 5:4f. A variant form of the pattern is ABCCBD in Jer 4:29. The second type is made up of three bicola:

A I will even make in the desert a path, in the wilderness, streams B I am honoured by the wild beasts, jackals and ostriches, A For I can provide, in the desert, water, streams in the wilderness Isa 43:19-20

Also, Jer 4:11-12a and Lam 2:4.

Finally, sets of six cola such as Isa 5:20 (a chiastic series or list), and Am 2:11f (ABCBA').

Chiastic heptacola are Amos 5:4f (unless a hexacolon) and Ps 12:4-5:

A Amputate may Yahweh B all smooth LIPS, C every TONGUE speaking big; D those who say C ,,By our TONGUE are we great, B Our LIPS: our weapon, A Who more master than us!” Ps 12:4-5

The words ,,Yahweh” and ,,master” (adôn) are in italics and not in upper case since they do not correspond exactly there is additional synonymy in the C cola: ,,big” and ,,great”.

Octocola are Nb 12:6-8 and Jer 4:14-16.

A Wash your heart of wickedness, O JERUSALEM that you might be saved. B How long shall they lodge within you, your EVIL thoughts? B Hark! A Voice announcing from Dan, and divulging the EVIL from Mount Ephraim. A Mention these things, O nations, divulge the mischief of JERUSALEM.

Further passages are considered in section 3 (Chiasmus in Longer Passages).

2.8 Other Types of Chiasmus

In addition to the various kinds of straightforward structural chiasmus already considered, there are other forms of chiasmus based on different principles. These are skewed chiasmus, assonantal chiasmus, semantic-sonant chiasmus and gender chiasmus.

(1) Skewed chiasmus. In Holladay’s words „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 medi which psychologically brings us all the way home.” He terms it „a striking compromise between the chiastic patter and sequentiality.” His examples are Jer 16:1-9, 23:1-4 and 23:25-32. The chiastic pattern of Jer 23:1-4, for instance, is ABCB’D and then D’C’B’A’.

(2) Assonantal chiasmus. Here belong not only texts which simply exhibit or exploit both chiasmus and assonance (see below, section 4.11) but also those with a chiastic pattern of root consonants. Such are Jer 5:25 and 16:6. There is some overlap with the next category.
(3) **Semantic-sonant chiasmus.** A combination of chiasmus and assonance, „in which one leg of the chiasmus is formed by a pair of words of similar meaning (the semantic pair), and the other leg is produced by a pair of words of similar sound (the sonant pair).”

So, in Eccl 7:1a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>tôb sem</th>
<th>Good repute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>missemen tôb</td>
<td>beats good perfume</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the four components are chiastically arranged and the similarity of sem, „name, repute” and semen, „oil, perfume” exploited in wordplay. Also, Gn 37:36, II Sm 1:21b, and Ez 22:2, where the semantic element consists of the same word, repeated; Jer 2:7b, where a word pair is used, and Ps 147:15, Lam 3:22. A subset of this group comprises couplets where the consonants of a word in the first colon have been inverted in the second, as

Without oxen, the manger is CLEAN *(br)* But MANY *(rb)* crops result form a bull’s strength Pr 14:4

Similarly, Pss 51:19 *(zbhy – tbzh)*, 78:33 *(bhbl – bbhlh)*. To these examples of Kselman can be added Isa 40:4 *(hָq b l bq)*, Jer 4:27b-28a *(smmh – smym)*, Hos 7:7 *(w’ilkw – mlkyhm)* and Ps 20:5 *(lk – kl)*.

(4) **Gender chiasmus.** The term „gender chiasmus” is used as a convenient abbreviation for a complex poetic pattern which involves matching nouns and genders. The basic form (not involving chiasmus at all) is simply a rather sophisticated form of synonymous (or direct) parallelism:

Out must go the groom *(m)* from his chamber *(m)* and the bride *(f)* from her bower *(f)* Joel 2:16

Here, the word for a room is m. with reference to the bridegroom and f. with respect to his future wife. The device occurs quite frequently in Hebrew poetry. The chiastic patterns to be considered below are variations of such gender-matching parallelism. Of additional interest is that they share some of the general functions of chiasmus well as having functions of their own.

The sub-sets to be discussed can be grouped into four blocks: strophes where gender-matching obtains, with the additional use of chiasmus; strophes where only cross-matching of genders is apparent; a very small sub-set where chiasmus of both gender and noun occurs, and fourthly, segments of poetry longer than a bicolon (A complete poem based on gender-chiasmus is set out in section 3).

**Chiastically-patterned bicola** (with gender-matched synonyms) are best explained by a close look at one clear example.

Hidden in the ground *(f)* is a rope *(m)* for him, And a trap *(f)* for him upon the path *(m)*. Jb 18:10

The matching of genders is here reversed: in the first colon a m. noun („rope”) is coupled with a f. noun („ground” in the second, the word „path” is m. and its connected noun („trap”) is f. The chiastic pattern is based on synonym

PLACE – SNARE SNARE – PLACE

while the resulting pattern of genders is not chiastic:

f m f m
the function of the two patterns combining to express surprise. Another example is Hab 3:3

Does cover the heavens(m) his radiance(m) And his splendour(f) fills the earth(f)

the chiastic arrangement, which expresses merismus\(^{44}\) being

PLACE („heavens”) – APPEARANCE („radiance”) APPEARANCE („splendour”) – PLACE („earth”),

again the corresponding genders not chiastic. Other instances: Isa 11:4, 28:15, 42:4, 62:1b; Nah 2:13, Pss 57:6, 12 (// 108:6), 76:3, 92:3, 147:15, Jb 28:2. (For Isa 28:15 and 18 see below, section 4). The function of this pattern is to express merismus (Isa 42:4, Hab 3:3, Ps 57:6 (& par.); cf. Nah 2:13), reversal of existing state (Ps 76:3, Jb 28:2), a surprise event (Jb 18:10) and harmony (Isa 11:4, 62:1b).

Strict *gender chiasmus* is obtained not from the cross-arrangement of nouns but by the layout of their genders. So in Pr 20:9

Young men's glory (f) is their strength (m) But old men's splendour (m) their grey hair (f)

the antithesis is brought out by the gender-pattern

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
m & f & f & m \\
\end{array}
\]

although otherwise the sequence of words in both cola is identical. Similarly, in Isa 60:17 c the elliptic word sequence (abc // b'c’) is in effect synonymous, the only contrast being the non-alignment of genders which expresses the change that is to take place:\(^{45}\)

And I will transform your overseers (f) into peace (m) your taskmasters (m) to fairness (f)

One last example will show how gender chiasmus can transform plain prose into expressive poetry:

They bartered a lad for a lay (f) And a wench they sold for wine (m) and drank it Joel 4:3 The m + f // f + m pattern, instead of an expected m + m // f + f sequence, expresses how utterly beyond the normal people were acting.

Further examples: Gn 49:15(fmmf),\(^{46}\) Dt 32:14(fmmf), Isa 3:1(fmmf), 29:4(fmmf), 60:17b(mff), Ps 25:13(fmmf), Pr 8:20(mffm), 10:15(mffm), 30:19b(fmmf), Song 7:7(fmmf); also, Jb 29:13(fmmf) and Joel 4:10. No single overriding function is evident, so that each text has to be looked at individually. Expressed are antithesis (Pr 10:1

20:29), abnormal event (Dt 32:14, Isa 29:4, 60:17bc), and paradox (Gn 49:15, Pr 30:19b, Song 7:7).

*Chiasmus and gender chiasmus* in combination is found in only two texts, Pr 10:11 and

May she grind for another (m), my wife And over her may there kneel others(m) Jb 31:10\(^{47}\) where the pattern is

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{verb: f) – (prep. + noun: m) – (noun: f) – (verb: m) – (noun: m) – c – ab} \\
\end{array}
\]

The function of both types of chiasmus is to express the reversal of existing conditions.

The *fourth subset* comprises texts longer than the customary bicolon discussed so far. They are Jer 16:3, Mic 7:6, Pr 18:6-7 as well as Gn 12:6 and 49:3. (For Pr 18:6-7 see above, section 2.3).
For this is what Yahweh says: Against the sons in this place, And against the daughters born in this place, And against their mothers who bear them, And against their fathers who sire them in this land, Jer 16:3

Discussing whether Jer 16:1-9 is prose, or poetry or something in between, Holladay comments, "Is it significant that \( bmqwm \, hzh \) ("in this place") is masculine and \( b'rs \, hz't \) is feminine, or is this only coincidence?". In view of the numerous examples discussed already (especially Jer 16:9), it would seem that design rather than accident is at work here. The antithesis of death coming to destroy parents and children alike (v. 4) is heightened by the intricate pattern of genders, the line-by-line sequence mffm acting in counterpoint with the inversions of the second (f + m) and last (m + f) cola.

For sons treat like fools (their) fathers m + m Daughters rebel against their mothers f + f Daughter-in-law against mother-in-law f A man's enemies are the people his house mmmm Mic 7:6

This, the final strophe of Mic 7:1-6, is a tetracolon with the basic structure mffm, exactly as in Jer 16:3, though here all the genders in any one colon match. Again, as in the passage from Jeremiah, the resulting arrangement expresses the reversal of normal events.

Reuben, my first-born You are my strength m and the start of my vigour, f (+ m) pre-eminent in authority f and pre-eminent in power m Gn 49:3

The five-line stanza is made up of an introductory monocolon and two bicola which the chiastic gender pattern binds together into a unit. Finally, while not strictly poetry, perhaps the list in Gn 12:16 also displays the pattern under examination:

Flocks and cattle m and asses and slaves f + m and maids and she-asses f + f and camels m

The chiastic structure, already recognized by Lund makes nonsense of Speiser's comment, "The list of Abraham's acquisitions appears to have been subjected to some reshuffling in the course of transmission, as is indicated by the separation of he-asses and she-asses". Instead of applying modern occidental reasoning it makes more sense to realize that in the ancient Near East slaves and animals were lumped together as chattels.

2.9 Patterns Related to Chiasmus

The patterns in question are alternating chiasmus, inclusio and chiastic inclusio, and the chiastic gather-line. To some degree they could be classed as chiastic, but in order to avoid confusion they will be discussed separately.

(1) Alternating chiasmus. Used by some scholars to describe patterns such as ABA'B' (e.g. Pss 8:3, 4, 51:7), the term is misleading. It assumes that an ABB'A' pattern has become ABA'B' which is a form of direct parallelism. However, it may be significant in considering the development of chiasmus and so has been mentioned here.
Inclusio or envelope figure is the repetition of the same words at the beginning and end of a section of poetry. It is a form of distant parallelism, a description more applicable when the repetition is not verbatim, but cannot be confused with chiasmus.

Some examples of phonological inclusio are chias tic (see above section 2.82 and 2.83) such as

By his wind (brh) the heavens were made fair Pierced did his hand the serpent who flees (brh)

Jb 26:13

and Jb 12:10. Of a different order is

He shall not come within this city Nor shoot an arrow at it, Nor approach it with a shield; By the way he came he' return. Within this city he shall not come Isa 37:33–4

where the components of two lines in distant parallelism are chias tic ally arranged (a – b and b – a). Also, Eccl 8:5 6c.

Chiastic gather-line A gather-line is the final line of poem which mentions all or most of the elements of the poem, so that a chiastic gather-line is one which reiterates in chiastic order the components of the preceding lines. Examples are Jer. 23:4 and 23:32.

3 CHIASMUS IN LONGER PASSAGES

3.1 Introductory

While it is relatively easy to determine the presence of chiasmus in short stretches of text, from the monicolon to the stanza of eight lines, it is considerably more difficult to establish the same pattern for longer sections of poetry. Among the early scholars to consider such extended chiasmus can be numbered Boys and Lund. Lund, who was rightly critical of Boys' efforts, attempted to be more scientific in method. However, his set of seven "laws" were deduced from the examples he had collected and could not be applied as controls. Even so, Lund was a careful scholar, and, as in other disciplines, later scholars will remain indebted to these pioneer studies. However, some of Lund's examples do not stand closer scrutiny and many more instances have since been recognized. While not pretending to be exhaustive, the present section will discuss the problem of extended chiasmus, set out a representative selection of chiastic poetical texts and mention other texts for reference.

Certain controls are particularly relevant here to help assess which poetical texts are truly chiastic in structure. Such controls include the following points:

(a) First, such chiasmus must be strict. There are cases where a poet has applied chiasmus loosely, or where variants of a standard form are used. (Deviation is often the mark of a good poet). Cases of this nature, though, can only be judged against an established norm.
(b) Next, the whole stretch of text must be involved, not simply certain select parts. So, for example, omitting vv. 7
8 of Ps 30, or v. 10 of Ps 58 (unless this v. can be considered a ballast variant) in order to establish chiasmus – so
Lund – is to beg the question.10

(c) Repetition of single words (or their synonyms) is of more value than labelling of the order „God’s judgement”
„Futility of idols”.11 Traditional word pairs12 are also significant.

(d) The basis on which the chiastic structure is posited must be stated, whether it is change of speaker, alternation
of gender or content.

3.2 Examples of Large-scale chiasmus

The examples considered to exhibit chiasmus, discussed below, are Jgs 9:8–15, II Sm 1:19-25a(+25a-7), Isa 1:21
6, 28:15–8, Jer 2:5–9, Hos 12:36, Amos 9:1–4, Ps 136:10–5, Jb 32:6–10, Eccl 3:2–8. Mostly they have been culled
from the work of other scholars (with some modifications) and not all are of equal merit. Some have been include
in order to make the range as wide as possible, so that both Judges and Ecclesiastes are represented. Space forbids
completeness (many more Psalms could have been analyzed).

Jotham’s Fable: Jgs 9:8–15 This four-stanza poem13 illustrates how gender-chiasmus14 can be combined with a
refrain-like structure. The chiastic pattern is based on the genders of the trees named: the olive (m), the fig (f), the
vine (also f) and finally, the boxthorn (m), in tandem with repetition of „to anoint a king” in the opening and closin
strophes (inclusio).

preamble One day the trees went to ANOINT A KING over themselves. I 9:8

A (m)
They said to the OLIVE-TREE „Be KING over us”. And the OLIVE-TREE said
to them „Should I abandon my rich oil by which both gods and men are
honoured to go and hold sway over the trees?” II 9:9

B (f)
And the trees said to the FIG-TREE „You come and be QUEEN over us”. But
the FIG-TREE said to them „Should I abandon my sweetness and my lovely
fruit to go and hold sway over the trees?” III 10:11

B’ (f)
So the trees said to the VINE „You come and be QUEEN over us.” But the
VINE said to them „Should I leave my wine which gives cheer to gods and
men to go and hold sway over the trees?” IV 12:13

A’ (m)
Then ALL the trees said to the BOXTHORN „You come and be KING over
us.” And the BOXTHORN said to the trees „If you really are going to
ANOINT me KING over you come for refuge under my shade; but if not,
may fire proceed from the BOXTHORN and consume the (very) cedars of
Lebanon.15

David’s Lament: II Sm 1:19-25a(+25b-7) The refrain was first recognized by Moulton,16 the chiastic structure of the
first part (vv. 19-25a) by Shea17 and the ABBA patterns in stanzas II and IV by Ceresko.18 My translation is base
on these and other studies, with some divergences and slightly differing stichometry (especially in v.22a, considered part of stanza II).

Refrain

The Gazelle of Israel upon your hill-flanks slain: truly the heroes have fallen. 1:19

I

Give it not out in Gath, proclaim it not in Ashkelon’s streets, in case the Philistine daughters should rejoice, in case the Uncircumcized’s daughters should exult.

II

O mountains in Gilboa: no dew nor rain upon you fields of the heights, for there was defiled the shield of heroes, the shield of Saul – anointed though he was with oil – by the blood of the slain, by the fat of heroes.

III

Jonathan’s bow never turned back – Saul’s sword never returned empty! Saul and Jonathan, beloved and graceful neither in their lives nor in their deaths were they apart. Swifter than eagles, stronger than lions.

IV

Daughters of Israel, weep for Saul who dressed you in scarlet bejewelled, who put gold ornaments on your dresses.

Refrain

Truly the heroes have fallen in the thick of battle(-slaughter), Jonathan upon your hill-flanks slain.

V

Grievous ‘tis to me on your account, my brother Jonathan, delightful were you to me greatly, marvellous you were; to me, loving you was more than love for women.

Refrain

Truly, fallen have the heroes (their) war weapons destroyed. 20

The main chiastic pattern affects the first four stanzas and the refrains: (R stands for refrain)

R I — A: Foreign women  (f) II — B: Death of Saul and his men  
(f) III — B: Jonathan and Saul  
(m) IV  — A: Israelite women  
(f) R

It is based on gender (fmmf) and contrasts negative (I and II) with positive (III and IV, expressed negatively). No strophic chiasmus is present but there are chiastic patterns in II and IV. II is a double ABBA tetracolon followed by a mini-refrain (v. 22a, echoing elements from the main refrains, chiefly the word pair „slain/heroes”) which is the very centre of the main poem. The pattern is ABBAA’B’B’A’R. And, this very stanza (II) forms the core of the whole lament. In IV, the chiastic sequence (again ABBA) brings the main part of the poem to a close. 21
The Faithful City: Isa 1:21-6 The chiastic arrangement adopted here was proposed by Lack and, while the overall pattern is evident, it is not exact in a mathematical way, being based on content. The turning-point of the poem comes at E and in the lines which follow, the reversal of the city’s present condition is described, expressed neatly by the inverted sequence DCBA. Inclusio, too, is present.

| A | How she has become a whore, the *faithful city*. 1:21 |
| B | Replete with justice, right lodged in her; but now, murderers! |
| C | Your silver has turned base, your liquor, cut with water. Your rulers, rebels, thick with thieves. Each a lover of bribes, running after gifts. No orphan they judge, the widow’s case never comes up before them. 22 |
| D | Accordingly, – utterance of the Lord, General Yahweh, Bull of Israel I’ll certainly gain repose from my foes, take vengeance on my enemies. 23 |
| E | I will restore your judges as before, and your counsellors as of yore. 24 |
| A | Only then will you be called „Right(-living) town, faithful city”.

Undoing the Deal with Death: Isa 28:15-8 The chiastic pattern, already known to Lund is evident as it in its function to express the reversal of existing conditions. The people of Yahweh are to trust in him, not in death. As with the previous poem the chiasmus is based on content, but there is a certain amount of repetition too (italicized). It is difficult to determine whether v.19 belongs to the passage; it seems to form a connecting link with vv. 20ff.

| A | We cut a *covenant with Death*, and with *Sheol* we made a pact. The flood-lash, when it passes, will not reach us. 28:15 |
| B | For we have made *Lie* our refuge, and in Deceit we are concealed. 28:16 |
| C | See, I have laid a foundation-stone n Zion, a granite stone, a weighty corner-foundation, laid by the Expert who does not rush. 28:17 |
| C | And I will set Rectitude the line, and Justice the plummet. 28:18 |
| B | Away will hail sweep *Lie’s refuge, Concealment*, waters will flood. 28:19 |
| A | And annulled will be your *covenant with Death*, *Sheol* will not stand, The flood-lash, when it passes, you will be its base. 28:20 |

Yahweh Spurned: Jer 2:5-9 The overall pattern results both from content and from repeated keywords and catchphrases. „Never saying, Where is Yahweh” recurs in C and C’. „Land” (repeated four times in D) is the keyword of the central section (D, E, D’) and „fathers” (A) corresponds to „grandchildren” (A’). Finally, in both B and B’ there is wordplay on the name „Baal”, in the expressions lo’ yośīlu, „non-profitmaking” and bəlo’ yośīl, „for what makes no profit”.

This Yahweh has said: 2:5
A What did your FATHERS find wrong with me, to keep their distance from me?

B Chasing „Delusion” and being deluded.

C Never saying: ‘Where is Yahweh’ who brought us from the LAND, Egypt steered us through the desert through the LAND of steppe and chasm, through the LAND both hot and dark, through the LAND no-one crosses, where no man lives.

D I BROUGHT YOU TO AN ORCHARD LAND, TO EAT ITS LOVELY FRUIT.

D’ But, on arrival you fouled my LAND. my bequest you made disgusting.

C’ The priests never said: ‘Where is Yahweh?’ Law-experts did not know me, pastors rebelled against me;

B’ prophets prohesied by Baal, and after „no-go(o)ds” ran.

A’ So, my case against you rests, Yahweh’s word, against your GRANDCHILDREN is my case.

The central line, probably a monocolon, is both the main thrust of the poem and its turning-point.

Yahweh’s Lawsuit: Hos 12:3-6 Holladay has shown, by reference to Gn 32:20, 35:15 and expecially 33:4 (which explains Hos 12:4-5, Jacob’s rivalry with Esau) that this poem is a unit, concentric in pattern. The eleven-line stanza can be set out as follows:

A A lawsuit: Yahweh’s with Israel. 12:3

B Truly he punishes Jacob for his ways, according to his actions, he repays him. 12:4

C In the womb he „jackbooted” his brother(=Esau), and in manhood he „struggled-with-God”, he „struggled-with(-God)” and won, weeping he found favour with him(= Esau). 12:5

D At Beth-El, He finds him(=Jacob), and there he spoke with him

A Yahweh, God of the Armies Yahweh is his Name 12:6

Strictly speaking, only the central portion(DEED) is totally concentric; the general scheme is chiastic in a broad sense. The second two lines of v.3 show inner chiasmus, the central cola(EE) are connected by anadiplosis and the final couplet exhibits incremental repetition. But Coote rejects Holladay’s analysis as „implausibly neat” and all because „it neglects the significance of Bethel and other wordplays in the chapter”. This example has been included to show the issue can be controversial and that there is room for scepticism.

No Escape: Amos 9:1-4 Originally identified by Lund, the pattern suggested by him has here been modified.

A Smite the capital, make the door-post vibrate in pieces on top of them all. 9:1b

B Their posterity by the sword I’ll kill: no fugitive shall flee, no survivor survive. 9:2

C If they dig down to Sheol, there my hand will seize them.
And if they rise to the sky, from there I'll bring them down.
And if they hide atop (Mt) Carmel, from there, having searched, I'll seize them.
And if they hide from my EYES in the sea-deep, there will I COMMAND the sea-snake to bite them.
And if their enemies march them into captivity there will I COMMAND the sword to kill them, and I'll fix my EYES on them with evil, not good intent.

The central section (vv. 2-3) is pure chiasmus with the CDD'C'-pattern (depths, heights, heights, depths) forming the nucleus for the rest of the poem. It interlocks with the closing stanza by use of the repeated words: EYES, COMMAND, COMMAND, EYES, and combines with the opening lines to form an inclusio (words in italics). The final four lines deviate slightly from a consistent chiasitic pattern. A Litany: Ps 136:10-5 A significant study of this psalm appeared recently and is followed here. The repeated refrain makes this six-line stanza (in reality 3 + 3, see presently) into a unit twice that length,

A To the smiter, in Egypt, of their firstborn Truly eternal is his kindness, 136:10
B Bringing Israel from their midst, Truly eternal is his kindness, :11
A' With powerful hand and extended arm Truly eternal is his kindness, :12
A' To the parter of the Reed Sea into two parts, Truly eternal is his kindness, :13
B Helper-across of Israel through its midst, Truly eternal is his kindness :14
A Shaking off Pharaoh and his army in the Reed Sea Truly eternal is his kindness. :15

Both groupings (vv. 10-12 and 13-15) are chiastic, and at the same time, the two halves belong together. A: Egypt smitten, corresponds to A(v. 15): pursuing Pharaoh drowned. Both the B couplets describe Israel’s deliverance, while AA' form the centre: Yahweh exerting his power over the elements. Not only does the vocabulary match (“Egypt and firstborn” – “Egypt and army”; “Israel – Israel”; “midst – midst”) but the constructions too:

10 „to” + participle….. (Egypt, firstborn) 11 „and” + causative….. (Israel, midst) 12 13 „to” + participle….. 14 „and” + causative….. (Israel, midst) 15 (Pharaoh, army)

The pattern is varied by v. 12 which, though not mathematically central, functions as a hinge, and by the double envelope structure in vv. 13 and 15 („parter – Reed Sea – parts – Reed Sea”).

Elihu's Disclaimer: Jb 32:6-10 First noticed by Ceresko on the basis of repeated words these chiastic lines form Elihu’s own preamble to his speech. Considering the length of Elihu’s contribution to the debate (32:11-37:24) it is not surprising he used chiasmus to solicit his listener’s attention.40

Young am I in days but you are aged so I was terribly afraid of DECLARING my INSIGHT to you. I SAID: Let days speak out, MANY years teach WISDOM; but it is the spirit in a man, the breath of Shadday giving them UNDERSTANDING.
It is not the MANY(-yeared) who are WISE, or elders who UNDERSTAND correctly. So I SAY: Listen to me, DECLARE my INSIGHT can I, too.

In Season: Eccl 3:2-8 The merit for seeing the complex chiastic arrangement in these seventeen lines is Loader’s. He set out its components as either „favorable“ or „unfavorable“ and his analysis is followed here in the main, the symbols (+) and (–) being used instead. Apart from v. 5 the translation presents no obstacles.

To everything, a season, and a time for every matter under the sun. A time for birth and a time for death A time to plant and a time to uproot plants + - - A - 3:1:2
A time to kill and a time to heal A time to demolish and a time to rebuild A time for weeping and a time for laughing A time for mourning and a time for dancing - + - + B - + - :3:4
A time for and a time for A time for embracing and a time to leave off embracing A time for seeking and a time for losing A time for keeping and a time for rejecting + - + B' - - - :5:6
A time for ripping and a time for sewing up A time for whispering and a time for speaking (up) - + - A' - :7
A time for loving and a time for hating A time for war and a time for peace - - - C - :8

The patterns of (+) and (–) suggest an overall chiastic pattern as set out in the second column: A (+ – twice), B (– + four times), B' (+ – four times) A' (– + twice) and a closing chiastic bicolon (C).46

3.3 Evaluation

The examples set out above showing chiasmus over longer passages make it clear that a great deal of variety is possible and that the term „chiastic“ can be interpreted in quite different ways. This does not rule out strictly chiastic passages, listed in the index already referred to. From that list an almost random selection of texts can be mentioned: Isa 2:6-22, 16:6-12, 29:1-3, 51:1-11, Jer 5:1-8, 50:2-46, Hos 8:9-13, Pss 7:13-7, 15, 29, 30, 58, 59, 72, 95:1-7c, 137, 139, Pr 30:1-4, and Lam 2:1-22.57 Most of these texts have been studied very recently. Certain passages, notably Ps 68, are too uncertain for inclusion; others have been analysed along structural lines and are definitely not chiastic;59 Ps 67 and Pr 1:20-33 have been set out below. 3.4 Editorial chiasmus

Editors have also used chiastic patterning when compiling books (and portions of books) of the Old Testament. Walker and Lund showed this to be the case in Habbakuk and Lack has examined Isaiah along similar lines. For example, according to Lack, Isa 56 – 66 has the following pattern: A (56-58), B (59:1-14), C (59:15-21), D (60-62), C' (63:1-6), B' (63:7-64:11), A' (65-66).62 Again, some books have an overall ABA' pattern, e.g. Job

As already stated, chiasmus at this level has not been discussed and has been mentioned here only for the sake of completeness of treatment.

4 THE FUNCTIONS OF CHIASMUS IN POETRY

To isolate a particular chiastic pattern in a particular poem is largely a preliminary. The next step is to see how the element in question articulates with the rest of the poem (or structures the whole poem, or even set of poems) and especially to determine what function it fulfills. Here the term „function” is being used rather broadly to mean the purpose the poet had in mind. Why did he employ a chiastic pattern at this point in the poem? What effect is it intended to have? This section, accordingly, is an attempt at answering such questions, hoping to encourage both student and scholar in the quest for better answers.¹

Broadly speaking, the general function of chiasmus is to break the monotony of persistent direct parallelism.² More specifically, chiastic patterns fall into two main classes: structural and expressive. Structural chiastic patterns contribute to the overall form of a poem (see section 3), often providing a key to the poet’s plan. „Expressive chiasmus” is a rather vague term adopted to cover what is in effect non-structural chiasmus, where the device has been used to achieve a certain effect or to heighten an effect already present in the meaning of the words. The table set out here (Table 5) shows the subdivisions within these two broad categories and is at the same time an outline of the ensuing paragraphs.

1. **STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONS (4.2)**
   - (a) to open a stanza or poem
   - (b) to close a stanza or poem
   - (c) to link components of a poem
   - (d) to indicate the midpoint of a poem

2. **EXPRESSIVE FUNCTIONS (4.3)**
   - To express
     - (a) merismus
     - (b) reversal of existing state
     - (c) emphatic negation or prohibition
     - (d) strong contrast or antithesis
     - (e) other functions

Table 5

4.2 Structural Functions

(a) **To open a stanza or poem.** The first of the structural functions is quite straightforward: a chiastically-patterned strophe often serves to begin a stretch of poetry:

From Aram I was fetched by Balaq, (By) the King of Moab from the Eastern Ridges Nb 23:7³


(b) **To close a stanza or poem.** Akin to function (a) is the use of chiasmus to bring a section of poetry to a neat end (see function d).

Turned to mourning has my lyre, and my flute to weepers’ voices Jb 30:31
And Isa 5:11, 14:20-1, 30:2, 32:6c, 51:11b, Jer 8:8-9, Amos 5:14-5a, Pss 1:6, 29:11, 105:45, Song 1:11, Lam 1:22ef, Ecclus 12:18.⁴

(c) To link components of a poem. At the level of a complete poem, chiasmus acts as a structuring link throughout (see section 3 for examples). Even at the level of the strophe it is evident that a chiastic arrangement welds its components together:

A jealous god and an avenger is Yahweh, An avenger is Yahweh and a wrathful Lord Nah 1:2⁵

(d) To indicate the midpoint of a poem. The midpoint is either the hinge or turning-point in a poem, or its climax. The central strophe may be chiastic, as for example Jer 2:27b-8a⁶ or it may be non-chiastic, but come at the very cent of a chiastic pattern, e.g. Pr 1:26-27 (see below).⁷

### 4.3 Expressive Functions

(a) To express merismus. Merismus is the expression of totality by the mention of representative parts of that totality. A very common way of expressing merismus is to use a polar word pair⁸ but it is by no means the only way as will be shown. In Ez 32:13, God has threatened to wipe out all the cattle of Egypt, and adds (with reference to its rivers):

No longer shall they be churned up by human feet, Cattle-hooves shall not churn them up

Or, with reference to the stars:


(b) To express reversal of existing state. Under this heading comes a comparatively large number of examples which perhaps indicates that further subdivision of function is necessary. The chiastic pattern is used to emphasize the meaning of the words: that a drastic change is either imminent or has already taken place. So, in Zeph 3:19 Yahwe promises that times will change for the better:

I will rescue the lost And the dispersed I will gather.

As part of a theophany Mic 1:4a describes how nature will be affected by Yahweh’s appearance:

Dissolve will the mountains beneath him, The valleys will be torn apart.

(c) **For emphatic negation or prohibition.** This heading covers negation of three kinds: simple negation, denial, and prohibition. The particles *lo*’ or *’al* (as expected) are usually present. Simple negation is evident in

Therefore, _no_ mercy will be shown them by their Maker, Their Moulder will show them _no_ favour Isa 27:11b

An example of denial is

_Never_ shall dwell within my house an agent of deceit, A liar shall _never_ remain before my eyes Ps 101:7

Similarly, v.3 and Ps 9:19, 26:4–5, 37:19, 132:4 (=oath), Jb 20:9, 20, 21:9, 32:14, Lam 3:22. Chiasmus is more commonly used for straightforward prohibitions, mostly in wisdom literature. e.g.

_Do not_ put yourself forward in the king’s presence, And, in high places, _do not_ take your seat Pr 25:6

Also Jer 6:25, Ps 74:19, Jb 3:6, Pr 23:10, Ecclus 7:5, 10, 11:8.10

(d) **To heighten antithesis or contrast.** A chiastic pattern helps emphasize antithesis11 and is particularly frequent in Proverbs, e.g.

The just man eats to sate his appetite, But the belly of the wicked is empty Pr 13:25 and 10:3, 4, 12, 12:20, 13:24, 14:4 etc. Also, Ps 37:19, 38:8, 78:33, 89:7, 145:20, Jb 10:5, 11:14, 13:12, 34:6, Ecclus 10:10.

(e) **Other functions.** Finally, a group of rather mixed functions for which perhaps only one representative text can be provided.

to express reciprocity: Ps 25:3, Zech 13:9b and Song 6:3:

I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine;

to express „poetic justice“12: Jer 2:19a, 27b–8a, Ps 9:16, 18:21, 25, 25:3 and 7:16–713:

A pit he dug, but it pitted him, and he fell into the hole he made;

his mischief recoiled upon his head, and upon his skull his malice redounded;

as mere emphasis: Jer 1:4–19, 4:5a, 6:1–7, Ps 89:3–514 and Song 1:2–3:

_Truly, sweeter is your love than wine, than perfume is your fragrance sweeter;_ 

to express a surprise event: Ps 78:24 and Jb 18:10:
Hidden in the ground is a rope for him, and a trap for him on the path;

to express harmony: Is 11:4, Jer 30:18b, Zeph 3:19, Pss 25:3, 72:7 and Isa 62:1b:

Until out shines, like a light, her justice, and her deliverance like a torch blazes;

to denote impossibility\textsuperscript{15}: Isa 40:12a, Jer 5:12b, Jb 4:17 and Isa 40:27a:

Hidden is my way from Yahweh, and by my God my rights are disregarded;

to express paradox: Eccl 4:14\textsuperscript{16}:

For from the womb even the king issued, For, in spite of his kingship, he was born poor;

to express simultaneity: Jb 17:7, 19:9, 26:5, 38:38 and Isa 3:8:

For stumble did Jerusalem, and Judah fall.

5 CHIASMUS AND OTHER POETIC DEVICES

Chiasmus is not always used in isolation and is often combined with other poetic devices,\textsuperscript{1} an interrelationship which will be explored here. The devices in question can, broadly speaking, be divided into structural and non-structural.

A: Chiasmus and other structural devices The devices to be considered are anacrusis, ballast variant, the terrace pattern (anadiplosis), word pairs, the list, the pivot pattern and keywords. Incremental repetition and the acrosti will be treated only briefly. The accompanying chart (Table 6: Chiasmus and Related Patterns) will help both for comparative purposes and as a convenient summary.

\begin{align*}
\text{a} & \quad \text{b} & \quad \text{a} & \quad \text{chiastic monocolon} \\
\text{x a c} & \quad \text{b b} & \quad \text{c a} & \quad \text{anacrusis (5.1)} \\
\text{a c'} & \quad \text{b b'} & \quad \text{c d'} & \quad \text{ballast variant (5.2)} \\
\text{a} & \quad \text{b b} & \quad \text{a c} & \quad \text{d} & \quad \text{terrace pattern (5.3)} \\
\text{a b'} & \quad \text{b a'} & \quad \text{p} & \quad \text{pivot pattern (bicolon with silent stress) (5.6)} \\
\text{a a} & \quad \text{b c} & \quad \text{incremental repetition} \\
\end{align*}

Table 6

5.1 Chiasmus and Anacrusis
Anacrusis is the presence of an extra-metrical word (or words), generally at the beginning of a line. Similarly, a word (or words) can stand outside the chiastic pattern:

For, a lamp is a command, teaching is a light Pr 6:23

the pattern being x-ab // ba, x representing the extra-chiastic word kî. Also, with both chiasmus and anacrusis: Isa 17:10, Amos 5:4-6, Pss 67:5, 107:9, 11; Isa 5:20, 21 (hôy, „woe”); Hos 4:4 („ak, „surely”); Ps 9:19 (kî lo, „for not”).

5.2 Chiasmus and Ballast Variant

In a parallel couplet or bicolon, an equivalent to a word in the first line is sometimes missing from the second. In compensation, the balance is maintained by a lengthening of one of the elements in the second colon. The longer element, called „ballast variant” is also termed „expletive” or „filler” and is characteristic of oral poetry. So in Pr 5:16

Should your springs overflow outside? In the square your water-runnels?

the lack of a verb in the second colon (i.e. yapûsû) is balanced by the long expression palgê-mayîm, ballast variant tynotêka. Similarly Jg 5:19 („kings // kings of Canaan”), Isa 14:15 („from upon them // from upon his shoulder”), Ez 17:23 („beneath it // in the shade of its boughs”), 32:4 („on land // upon the surface of the ground”); Pss 22:23 („to my brothers // within the assembly”), 103:7 („Moses // sons of Israel”), 145:2 („I will bless you // I will praise your name”), Jb 28:26 („rain // thunderstorm”), 30:31 („dirge // voice of weepers”).

5.3 Chiasmus and Terrace Pattern

In the terrace pattern the terminal part of one colon is repeated in the immediately following colon and its use is perhaps one of the easiest ways of producing chiastic verse:

A jealous god an avenger is Yahweh, An avenger is Yahweh and a wrathful Lord Nah 1:2

See too (repeated elements in parentheses): Isa 29:17 („Carmel”), Ez 22:2 („you will judge”), Amos 4:7b („upon our city”).

5.4 Chiasmus and Word Pairs

Since chiasmus is a variation of parallelism it is not surprising that word pairs can belong to its structure. Without digressing into the topic of parallel pairs it is enough to point out that chiasmus exploits this device in characteristic ways. The most common is to invert the standard (AB) sequence, a good example being Pr. 18:6-where the sequence of the word pair „mouth // lips” (first bicolon) is reversed in the second („lips // mouth”) resulting in an ABBA tetracolon:

The LIPS of a fool lead to strife, and his MOUTH for a beating cries out: a fool’s MOUTH is his ruin, and his LIPS own snare.

5.5 Chiasmus and the List
Although there are only a few examples of chiastically patterned lists, they deserve mention, since the list is a very elementary but effective literary form made even more striking when combined with chiasmus. By employing chiasmus in its central cola the catalogue of Gn 8:22 becomes poetry:

While the earth lasts, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat summer and winter, day and night shall never cease.

Also, Gn 12:16 (cited above, 2.8), Isa 5:20, Ez 34:4, Song 4:14 \(^\text{13}\) and Eccl 3:2-8 (see section 3).

5.6 Chiasmus and the Pivot Pattern

As first recognized by Möller \(^\text{14}\) some chiastic bicola have the form

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{a} & \text{b} & \text{p} \text{b}' & \text{a}'
\end{array}
\]

with the components of the first colon (a, b) repeated and reversed in the second (b', a'), the central element (p) appearing only once. For example Jb 18:11

Around (do) frighten him terrors, (Do) harry him at every step.


5.7 Chiasmus and Keywords

A keyword is one which occurs several times in a passage and contributes to its meaning. \(^\text{16}\) To determine which are the keywords in a text the first step is to tabulate all the repeated words \(^\text{17}\). From such tables it is possible to see whether the words have been arranged chiastically, bearing in mind that synonyms or antonyms can be significant as well. An example of this last point is Ps 12:4-5 where the synonyms „Yahweh” and „Master” amount to variants of the same keyword since they are equivalent in function (see above, section 2.6). One of the first passages to be successfully examined in this way was Lam 1, \(^\text{18}\) but as a concrete illustration of a rather neglected aspect of chiasmus Pr 1:20-33 has been chosen. \(^\text{19}\) It will be examined in detail.

Pr 1:20-33

The chiastic arrangement of the poem was clearly demonstrated by Trible. \(^\text{20}\) The tabulation of keywords drawn here provides independent confirmation of Trible’s findings, since she made no mention at all of keywords. The overall pattern can be seen at a glance and the heavy clustering in E (vv. 26-7) shows it to be the most important section, as Trible had already proved. In addition, the keyword table provides certain refinements of analysis, notably the stanza-division between v. 23a and 23b (contrast Trible) since the verb sůb obviously belongs to both B and B’. Also, prepositions and particles form part of the chiastic pattern \(^\text{21}\); examples are kol „all,” in D, D’ and lo „not” (also D, D’) repeated four times for emphasis. Finally, there is a tendency for such keywords to be echoed
(denoted by parentheses), e.g. qara’, „to cry, call,” (v. 21a), the preposition b, „in,” used five times in section A (see and the nouns „reproof” (v. 23a) and „dread” (v. 33c).

| A | 20a | Wisdom, in the street, bawls, |
|   | b   | In the squares she gives out her voice, |
|   | 21a | From the top of the walls she CRIES, |
|   | b   | In the entrances to the gates, |
|   | c   | In the city she says her say. |
| B | 22a | How long, FOOLS, will you love FOOLISHNESS? |
|   | b   | Scoffers, in scoffing be pleased with yourselves? |
|   | c   | SIMPLETONS, hate knowledge? |
| C | 23a | (How long) will you TURN from my REPROOF? |
|   | c   | I will pour out on you my spirit, |
|   | d   | I will make known my words to you. |
| D | 24a | Because I CRIED (out), but you refused, |
|   | b   | Stretched out my hand, but no one noticed. |
|   | 25a | You have ignored ALL my COUNSEL, |
|   | b   | And my REPROOF you did not WANT. |
| E | 26a | Aloud will I, at your CALAMITY, laugh, |
|   | b   | I will mock WHEN PANIC COMES TO YOU, |
|   | 27a | WHEN TO YOU, LIKE a storm, PANIC COMES |
|   | b   | And your CALAMITY, LIKE a whirlwind arrives, |
|   | c   | When to you come distress and anguish. |
| D’| 28a | Then will they CRY to me, but I’LL NOT answer, |
|   | b   | They’ll look for me but will NOT find me, |
|   | 29a | Since they hated knowledge, |
|   | b   | And respect for Yahweh did NOT choose. |
|   | 30a | They did NOT WANT my COUNSEL, |
|   | b   | Despised ALL my REPROOF. |
| C’| 31a | They’ll eat the fruit of their wages, |
|   | b   | And with their own counsels be satisfied. |
| B’| 32a | For, by TURNING away the FOOLs are killed, |
|   | b   | And the complacency of SIMPLETONS destroys them. |
| A’| 33a | Who listens to me |
|   | b   | Lives securely, |
|   | c   | At ease, not dreading evil. |

Table 7: Chiastic Keywords in Pr 1:20-33
Chiasmus also interacts with other structural devices such as the acrostic, incremental repetition and the refrain.

**B: Chiasmus and non-structural devices** The topics to be examined here in connection with chiasmus are the “break-up” of a standard phrase, wordplay in its various forms, the simile, rhetorical questions, sound patterns, the break construct chain and several minor devices.

### 5.8 Chiasmus and “Break-up”

Related to the word pair (perhaps as its origin) is the device now known as the break-up of a stereotype phrase. In essence it involves splitting up the components of a set phrase and distributing them over parallel cola; e.g.

Treat kindly what your right hand (יְמִנְכָּא) planted, And the son (בֵּן) you strengthened for yourself Ps 80:16

Here the stock expression „Benjamin“ (בִּניָּמִין), which actually occurs in v.3 has been split up, its constituents inverted and from them a chiastic bicolon constructed. Other examples: Isa 48:7, Pss 69:34, 78:56 and Jb 36:3.

### 5.9 Chiasmus and Wordplay

Chiasmus also interacts with or exploits wordplay, mostly in the guise of paronomasia and rootplay. There is chiastic paronomasia in

When you ascended (כָּלַת) your father’s bed, Then you fouled the suckler’s (כֹּלַת) couch Gn 49:4

and in Jer 30:16, Pss 106:23f (חַמָּד, „his anger“ and חַמָּד, „to please“), 107:11 and Pr 24:21-2. Occasional the consonants of a word in the first colon are inverted to form another word in the second (rootplay) as in

She led him by plenty of smooth-talk (לֶקָה) By the smoothness (הֶלֶק) of her lips she urged him Pr 7:21

both words also being used chiastically. (See section 2.8 for other examples). Syllepsis is used in combination with chiasmus in Isa 58:10.

### 5.10 Chiasmus and Simile

Chiastic components sometimes comprise similes as in Hos 4:16

For, *like a heifer*, wildly has Israel run: Now pasture them, Yahweh, *like lambs in the wide meadow*

Also: II Sm 23:4, Mic 1:4, Ps 133:2-3 and Ecclus 15:2.
5.11 Chiasmus and Rhetorical Questions

Curiously, chiasmus is frequent in rhetorical questions, examples being Jb 6:12, 38:16-7, 25, Pr 30:4. Its function is to emphasize the inherent contradiction of such questions:

Like a human’s days: your days? Your years like an adult’s? Jb 10:5.

Note, too, the chiastic arrangement of interrogative particles in


5.12 Chiasmus and Sound Patterns

The sound patterns to be discussed are assonance, alliteration and rhyme. Of course the three components cannot be clinically isolated, but one or the other does tend to be predominant in a particular verse. To begin with assonance: it can be heard strongly in the central chiastic cola of Hos 7:7

All of them (kullam) are hot as an oven, they consume (wē’akēlû) their rulers, all their kings (kol·malkēhem) have fallen, None among them calls to me,

with echo-assonance in the first line. Further: Jer 5:25, 30:16, Pss 20:5, 72:11, Jb 21:9, Pr 2:2, 8, 21:17. Chiastic alliteration, instead, is present in both Song 1:6(s) and

If I refused (‘im ‘emna) any want of the needy, Or the eyes of the widow made pine (‘almanā‘kallē) Jb 31:16

Rhyme with chiasmus is very rare, sample texts being Isa 3:8a (kasēlā – yēhûdā), 51:7 (‘al-tîr’û – ‘al-tehattû) and 48:5 (see next paragraph).

5.13 Other Devices

Both chiasmus and hendiadys are operative in Ps 55:6

Terrible fear comes upon me, I am overwhelmed by shuddering

the expression „terrible fear” consisting of two words joined by a copula (yir‘ū wara‘-ad). Also, Isa 51:3b, Jb 17:15 and Lam 2:21. Chiasmus heightens the effect of hyperbole in Jb 20:6

If his statue should rise to heaven, or its head to the clouds reach up.

A last device to be considered is the broken construct chain used with a view to producing chiastic word-order:

The sinew (gīd) of your neck is iron a b c Your forehead, brass c’ b’ Isa 48:4

or in Pr 17:6 where chiasmus results from interposing the word „sons” between two nouns in the construct.
The interrelationship of chiasmus and other poetic devices

The survey provided by subsections A and B has been brief and incomplete, but it has shown the extent to which chiasmus and other poetic devices available to the Hebrew bards intermeshed. At times the function of chiasmus is subordinate, in other texts it dominates and occasionally it coincides with, functions of other poetic devices. Further research is required to determine the underlying rules of poetic technique.

In order to show, in a practical way, how such structural and nonstructural devices interrelate with chiasmus, a single poem will be analysed in detail, the example chosen being Ps 67, already examined by Lund.47 Although some uncertainties of translation remain, they do not obscure the intricacy of the poem.48 Analysis and discussion will be provided after the translation.

May God show us mercy and bless us; May he look favourably on our plough,49

To proclaim50 on earth(f) your power (m?),51 Among all the nations(m) your deliverance(f).

Praise you, will the peoples, O God, Praise you, will the peoples, all of them. :4

May the folk be happily rejoicing, For you judge the nations with rectitude, And the folk of the earth you care for.52

Praise you, will the peoples, O God, Praise you, will the peoples, all of them. :6

Earth yielded her produce – Blessed us has God, our own God, Blessed us has

(1) overall chiastic pattern Quite clearly, stanzas I and III correspond as regards content. There is also a degree of common vocabulary: „God,” „bless,” „earth,” They are also related by wordplay: „plough” (‘et) and „sign” (‘ot); „m he look” (ya’er) and „(they) have respected” (wâyîrê‘û). The central stanza, unfortunately difficult to translate, links the outer stanzas and uses words from both: „earth” and „nations.”

(2) refrain and stanza-structure The refrain (R: vv.4 and 6) sections off the poem into stanzas of 4, 3 and again lines, resulting in a pleasing balance. The refrain itself is formed by the use of incremental repetition (staircase parallelism or expanded colon).

(3) keywords As already noted, certain words are repeated, notably „peoples” ( x 6; cf. „folk” x 2 and „nations” x 1), „God” (also x 6), „earth” (meaning both soil and the world generally) „all” and „praise” (each 4 times). These words not only contribute to the structure of the poem but also spell out its main theme: By blessing Israel God will induce the whole world to acknowledge his power. (See next paragraph on repetition of the suffix). (4) structural patterns

The envelope figure (inclusio) appears three times: the main words of v.2 are resumed in vv.7-8; the third stanza opens and closes with the word „earth,” and, thirdly, in the double wordplay of vv. 2 and 8. The suffix -nû (1st pers.pl.) is used seven times. The two central lines of the last stanza (itself chiastic, of ABBA pattern) comprise a pivot pattern.

(5) other devices
Apart from paronomasia, the following devices are present: hendiadys (v. 5 „happily rejoicing” and possibly v. 2 „mercifully bless us”), ballast variant (v. 5 „folk” // „folk of the earth”; v. 7 „earth” // „all the ends of the earth”; also the refrain and in v.3 „On earth” // „among all the nations”).

(6) conclusions By its larger chiastic structure the diverse elements making up the poem are given unity. Even though there is a refrain, repetition and a rigid arrangement of lines, there is no sense of monotony and the whole tenor of the psalm is optimistic.

6 THE VALUE OF RECOGNIZING CHIASMUS

Apart from the general aspect of increasing one’s appreciation of Hebrew poetry (and in addition to what has already been set out regarding function), recognition of chiastic patterns can be valuable in several specific ways.

6.1 Chiasmus, Textual Criticism and Philology

If it can be established that chiasmus obtains in a particular passage, then it can be better understood at the philological level, which in turn may obviate a textual emendation. Since chiasmus operates at a different level, there is no danger of circular reasoning. Dahood has already examined several texts from Job in this way. Such texts are: Isa 2:2, 32:1 (asseverative lamed), 32:6 (dbrc:sh:cs:sh:dbrc pattern „argues in favor of the received text against the Qumran Isaiah Scroll’s hwsb for yaaseh”), 4 Jer 4:14-16, 5 Pss 10:11-12 (‘el need not be deleted), 6 78: (b = „than”), 138:1 (insertion of yhwh in first colon not required), 7 Pr 23:10.

6.2 Chiasmus, Poetry and Prose

The texts examined in this chapter are mainly in verse, but there is a „grey” area, not quite prose and yet not quite good poetry, which has not been looked at. While by no means exclusive to verse chiasmus does seem to indicate (in combination with other factors) that a particular passage is poetic in character. Many examples could be given (see above on Jg 9:8-15) but one will suffice here. In critical editions of the Hebrew Bible Mal 3:19 is printed out as prose, but it exhibits chiastic structure:

For see, the day is coming, glowing like an oven; Turned will be all the arrogant, and all evildoers to chaff, Setting them ablaze, the day that comes,

i.e. an ABBA tetracolon with an intrusive second colon. See, too, I Sm 3:17.

This suggests that other passages need to be looked at with a critical eye, to determine whether they are prose or poetry.

6.3 Chiasmus, the Strophe and the Stanza

Although these topics have already been touched on, in view of their importance and of a certain degree of confusion among scholars, a final example will be given here. It is Isa 54:2, recently translated by Dahood.

(A) strophe I

Enlarge the site of your tent, and the curtains of your home stretch out.

(B) strophe II

Do not hold back.
Chiasmus shows that strophe I is a unit, a chiastically-patterned bicolon. The same applies to strophe III; so that the central strophe II can only be a monocolon. However the three strophes form a chiastic stanza (symbolized by the letters A, B, A' in parentheses), a unit of a higher order. Chiasmus, then, is a key factor in differentiating such self-contained units within a larger pattern, although not many texts are as crystal-clear as this one.

6.4 Other Points

In passages where there is some doubt about stichometry, chiasmus (if present) can be a useful criterion e.g. Ps 67:5 where the xabc // bca pattern determines the stichometry:

For you judge the nations justly;

and the peoples on earth you guide.

Chiasmus, too, indicates the climactic centre (eg. Ps 12) and explains why a poem such as Lam 3 ends on a dismal note: the real climax lies in vv. 31-33:

For the Lord is not always angry: Even if he punishes cruelly, he'll show compassion, in line with his abundant love:

For he does not mindlessly hurt or punish mortal.

6.5 Chiasmus and the Oral Poet

The claim that a large part of the Old Testament was orally composed is generally accepted, even though it is not always possible to establish how much derives directly from oral composition. Certainly it is safe to assume that much of the poetry was improvised in front of an attentive audience and that poets employed certain techniques to assist smoothness of delivery. To the question: Did the use of chiasmus belong to such techniques? the answer appears to be in the affirmative. To take the simplest case first: having delivered a single line of poetry, the easiest way to produce a second automatically parallel colon would be to repeat the components (perhaps with slight variations) in reverse sequence. In fact, it would seem that students were schooled in precisely this manner. They would be given the first line of a saying and asked to provide a second line to cap it; for example,

A wise son makes a glad father,

which has different second lines in Pr 10:1 and 15:20. Or, a second line was given, the exercise being to provide a suitable first line:

Blessings are on a just man’s head, But the wicked man’s mouth hides violence

A fount of life is a just man’s mouth, But the wicked man’s mouth hides violence

Both are chiastic but the quality of the second „answer“ is higher. Even slight variations resulted in effective couplets. From these it was but a series of steps to more and more elaborate sequences, though it is debatable whether complete texts in chiastic form could have been produced orally. More probably such poems, once committed to writing, were later re-worked (much as were alphabetic acrostics) in order to complete or even create wholesale chiastic patterns.
6.6 **Closing Remarks**

Many more topics could have been dealt with, for instance dating, but conclusions concerning them must be reserved for another occasion, since the extent of the material involved is so large. As stated in the introduction, the main emphasis in the present chapter has been on terminology and classification. Once these have been sure established (and there is certainly room for further correction and refinement) then a good basis for further research will have been provided.

**FOOTNOTES TO SECTION 1**

1 Here „ancient Hebrew poetry” means, in effect, the OT with its extra-canonical books (in some traditions), such as Ecclus, since no other extra-biblical Hebrew poetry has survived.

2 I am particularly indebted to Robert Smith, who provided a long list of texts exhibiting chiasmus, which formed the nucleus of this chapter, as well as helpful criticism of the first draft.

3 On function in poetry see Leech, *A linguistic guide to English poetry*, p. 4.

4 Andersen, *Sentence*, pp. 121-4; Ceresko, *CBQ* 40:1-10 (published after the submission of my first draft).

5 By novelty of this order is meant, chiefly, solutions to philological problems. See, however, section 3.2.

6 Holladay, *JBL* 85:434 asks „To what degree does chiasmus depend on the Gattung of a passage?” and „Does the Gattung suggest chiasmus, or is there no close relation between them?” The study of literary forms requires more refinement before it can be related to the presence of chiasmus. For a brief survey of chiasmus cf. Stek, *CTJ* 9:24.

7 Systematic proposals are not lacking, e.g. Segert, *MIO* 15:312ff; Kurylowicz, *Studies in Semitic Grammar and Metrics*, p. 67, n. 2; Margalit, *UF* 7:298, n. 15 and 300, n. 16 – but none is convincing. The early Hebrew inscriptions provide a growing body of comparative material by which biblical texts can be dated (a suggestion I owe to Dr. John C. L. Gibson of Edinburgh).


9 By far the most readable survey, and still valid today, is Cobb, *A Criticism of Systems of Hebrew Metre*.

10 As Dr. John C. L. Gibson pointed out to me, „Syllable counting may be a viable undertaking for Ugaritic where differences in vowel quantity are phonologically relevant, but is hardly meaningful in the case of a stress-orientated language like Hebrew.” Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, p. 140.

11 Discussed below, section 5.13.

12 See also Isa 10:5, Pss 16:11, 71:7, Pr 17:6.

13 Following Dahood, *Psalms*, II:67; he did not recognize the pivot pattern.
Considered in more detail in section 5.6

Among them can be mentioned the word-unit (Ley, Robinson, Kosmala), the thought-unit, syllable-counting, vowel-counting (Freedman) and letter-counting (Loretz).

Syllable-counting is perhaps the system of metre now most in vogue; a convenient survey with lengthy examples is provided by Stuart, *Studies in Early Hebrew Meter*.


Not only was this the technique of oral (improvised) composition, it also reflects the manner in which written works were compiled.

Small is sure; it is easier to detect patterns within lesser complexes, although, of course, the whole context must never be lost sight of.

Note that the term „verse“ has generally been avoided to prevent confusion with the verse-numbering of MT.


„Orphan lines in poetry of pervasive parallels are a contradiction in terms, since whatever the status of a line all its structure and functions are indissolubly interlaced with the near and distant verbal environment, and the task of linguistic analysis is to disclose the levers of this coaction. When seen from the inside of the parallelistic system, the supposed orphanhood, like any other componential status, turns into a netword of multifarious compelling affinities“: Jakobsen, *Language* 42:429.

The definition of chiasmus accepted in this chapter is very broad, as will be apparent.

Note the abbreviations: m: masculine; f: feminine; c: common gender; ETr: English translation; lit.: literally.

For chiasmus on a larger scale see section 3.4, below. **FOOTNOTES TO SECTION 2**

1 Strophic chiasmus can also be analyzed grammatically and syntactically, for which see Andersen, *Sentence*, pp. 127ff.


3 See also Ez 17:24, Mal 3:24a, Song 6:3 and Eccl 7:1a.

4 „A rather infrequent sequence“ according to Dahood, *Psalms*, III:345

5 And to incremental repetition (expanded colon); on the pivot pattern see sections 1.3 and 5.8. It must not be confused with the ABA tricolon.
6 A single colon can be of the following types: aa’a” (three-synonym colon, not a tricolon as in Watson, UF 7: 486-4); aab, abb and aba (chiastic).

7 The peculiar characteristic of the pivot-patterned bicolon is silent stress, on which see Abercrombie, Linguistic 6:5-13 and Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 251.

8 It could also be termed a telescoped form of mirror chiasmus (see above, on typology).

9 On Ps 57:2,8,9 see Auffret, Semitica 27:59-73, who notes the stanza-opening function too. For Ps 67:7b-8a see section 5, below; Song 1:15 (= 4:1) is a marginal case. Ps 47:7, exceptionally, forms a bicolon from two successive and identical aba monola.

10 Often confused with the pivot pattern; see note 5.

11 So Austerlitz, Ob-Ugric metrics, p. 47.

12 Although the actual poetic section is very short (vv. 39-40) it is opened by a ABA tricolon.

13 Ceresko UF 7:77-81, CBQ 38:305-6 and CBQ 40:9-10 are useful for the lists of ABBA patterns, but unfortunately no distinction is made between occurrence over 4 cola (ABBA tetracola) and distribution over greater or lesser segments.

14 See section 3.

15 As pointed out to me by Smith, this tetracolon is at the very centre of the acrostic passage Pr 31:10-31.

16 Cited „intercalation” by Fiorenza, CBQ 39:360-3 (citing R. J. Loenertz) this kind of multistructural overlap (as Smith reminded me) is a feature of Songs (cf. Exum, ZAW 85:47-79).

17 Boadt, VT 25:697.


19 For the meaning of this term see Levenson, CBQ 40: 13ff.

20 See P. D. Hanson, „The Song of Heshbon and David’s NIR, ” HTR 61:297-320.

21 As translated by Dahood, MUSJ 48:460.

22 Following the version by Wernberg-Möller, JSS 3:323; the ellipsis of a verb in the last colon is usual in similes; its presence would have ruined the chiastic pattern.

23 See Dahood, Biblica 57:105.

24 As reconstructed by Brownlee, JBL 89:396-9.

25 Auffret, ZAW (forthcoming). On Ps 74:4 see Dahord, Biblica, 59:262f
Irwin, *Isaiah* 28-33, p. 23f; his translation is adopted here.

Contrast Ceresko, *CBQ* 38:305.

*CTA* iv 28 (UT 49:IV:28) etc.


”,The odd line (B) forms a sort of middle term, or connective link between two couplets”: Forbes, *SSS* p. 26. It no accident that it is the last stanza in the book (even though *NEB* sets it out as prose) for which it is a fitting close.


A difficult text to translate, but any attempt must take into account the pattern of repeated words (identified by Ceresko, *UF* 7:86), ”life, soul (appetite), sight, sight, soul, life”.

Holladay *VT* 26:34-7.

In Mesopotamia, cutting off the tongue was prescribed punishment for falsehood; see texts in *CAD*, L, p. 210.

Kselman, ”A Note on Numbers XII 6-8,” *VT*, 26:500-4.


Holladay, *JBL*, 85:408 and 418.


It was first identified by Cassuto; see, conveniently Cassuto, *Goddess Anath*, pp. 44-46. The present author read a paper entitled ”Gender-matched Synonymous Parallelism in the OT” at the Sixth International Congress of Biblical Studies, Oxford 1978, to be published in *JBL*.

Note the polar word-pair ”heavens // earth” and the verb ”to fill”.

It is worth noting how a feminine noun, *p²quddâ* (literally, ”surveillance”), here an abstract noun with concrete meaning, is used to denote men.

Recognized by Gevirtz, *EI*, 12:111*.


For translation see Gevirtz, *JNES*, 30:87-98.

Lund, *CNT*, p. 43. See section 5.5, below.

Speiser, *Genesis*, 90.


,One line weaves together several words, one word out of each of two, three, or four consecutive lines, either preceding or following the gather-line": Thiering *JSS* 13:191 (who coined the term).

For these poems cf. Holladay, *JBL* 85:424-5. **FOOTNOTES TO SECTION 3**

1 Reflecting the very process by which poetry was composed: the smaller units first, the larger later because they themselves were made up of these lesser units.

2 Boys (ed. Bullinger), *Key*; see also Forbes, *SSS*.


8 For two controls (word-pairs and wordplay based on consonantal assonance) in determining semantic-sonantal chiasmus, cf. Kselman, *Biblica*, 58:220. A further control, not listed above since it only applies to very few long passages, is comparison with a parallel text (e.g. Ps 18 // II Sm 22).

9 See Radday's Excursus.

10 Analysis into prelude + chiastic passage (e.g. Ps 30 – Lund, *CNT*, 119-20) or the reverse (see II Sm 1:19-27, below) is not, therefore, discounted.

11 On Chiasmus and Keywords, see section 5.7.
Useful are RSP I and II, supplemented by the corrective book reviews of de Moor and Loewenstamm.

Brought to my attention by Smith. See Boling, *Judges*, 166.

Discussed above, section 2.8(4).

Philo logical notes: „One day the trees went“, lit. „the trees certainly walked“; „come for refuge“, lit. „come, shelter“ (hendiadys); „boxthorn“; cf. Akk. *eddetu*, „boxthorn;“ CAD, E, p. 23 (with discussion) and *atutu*, „(a thorny plant)“, CAD A/II, 522. Not even the latest study of this passage, Crüsemann, *Der Widerstand gegen das Königtum*, pp. 19-32, has taken the differences of gender into account. Note that Crüsemann (ibid. 20, n.9) rejects the meaning „to hold sway over“ in preference for „to reel around“ (herumzutorkeln).


The repeated word-pair *hll // gbr* („slain // heroes“) which occurs throughout the poem, always refers to Saul, Jonathan and their fellow soldiers. Accordingly, it cannot denote the enemy in v.22a – as commonly if not universally accepted – but refers instead to the land being ritually defiled by the shedding of Israelite blood. Neither rain nor dew is to wash it away since it has not yet been avenged.

For the interlocking refrains see Freedman, „The Refrain etc;“ 120.


Lund, CNT, 45; see, too, Irwin, *Isaiah* 28-33, 26ff.

Lit. „we pressed the breast,“ an idiom used in Akkadian to mean „to make an agreement;“ for details, cf. Watson, *Biblica*, 59:132-3.


A different analysis is proposed by Irwin, *Isaiah* 28-33, 30-2.


For *hazut*, „covenant,“ see Weinfeld, *JAOS*, 93:197 n. 101. In v. 15 the chiastic pattern „covenant Death Sheo treaty” is combined with the gender pattern f + m // f + m. In v. 18, however, both these patterns are flouted which expresses how Israel’s pact with Hell is to be annulled.

30 Following Bright, Jeremiah, 15.

31 Again an allusion to „Where is Mightiest Baal?” of the Ugaritic texts; see above section 2.6.


34 The translations „jackbooted” and „struggled-with-God” are attempts at mirroring the wordplays on „Jacob“ (cf. ʿaqeb, „heel,”) and „Israel.”

35 Coote, VT, 21: 393 n.2.

36 Lund, CNT, 86-7.

37 Auffret, „Note sur la structure littéraire du Psaume CXXXVI,” VT, 27:1-12, esp. 4; see, also the diagram, p. 6 and the overall plan of the Ps. p. 9.

38 Structural studies of this kind provide a good control for the presence of chiasmus.

39 Ceresko, UF, 7:85: „an interesting variant on the A:B:B:A pattern. Its configuration can be represented as A:B:C-D-E::C-D-E:B:A.”

40 Note the prose introduction, 32:1-5.

41 As is often the case, the opening bicolon is pivot-patterned.

42 Hendiadys, lit., „I recoiled and was afraid.”

43 Better, „I thought”, but the translation „I said” preserves the repetition of the verb ʾamar.


46 Positive and negative components are also operative in II Sm 1:19-27 (see above). The chiastic pattern suggests (+ –) for v. 5. Loader considers v. 5 to refer to sexual intercourse and v. 7 to silence during mourning, the thought of the whole ‘sonnet’ being „life – death – end – beginning”. Alternatively, v. 5 could denote preparing a field for planting („to throw stones away,” cf. Isa 5:2) and the building of a cairn for burial („to collect stones”), but until the allusion is known, no certainty is possible.

47 Dahood, MUSJ, 48:54 (ten-line stanza with inclusio).

48 Holmgren, „Chiastic Structure in Isaiah LI, 1-11,” VT, 19:196-201. However, there is some doubt about the meaning of ʿargiṯ in v. 5 and with the overall stanza-division.
49 Kessler, Semitics, 3:31-5.
51 Ceresko, CBQ, 40:6; but he ignores repetition of the root ht’ in w. 4b, 7b, 9a and 11a.
52 Kselman, BASOR, 220:77-81.
53 Riding, „Psalm 95 1-7c as a Large Chiasm,” ZAW 88:418.
54 Ceresko, CBQ, 40:2-3.
56 Holman, „The Structure of Psalm CXXXIX,” VT, 21:298-310.
57 Mentioned to me by Smith.
59 For instance, see Auffret, The Literary Structure of Psalm 2.
61 Lack, La symbolique du livre d’Isaïe, (passim)
62 Ibid. p. 125 and the table, p. 128.
63 See Welch, UF, 6:427 (citing Gordon). FOOTNOTES TO SECTION 4

1 See the works by Andersen and Ceresko referred to in section 1, note 3.
2 According to Holladay, JBL, 85:409 chiasmus is „used to vary the steady drumbeat of the normal pattern.”
3 In translation the passive has been used (rather than „he brought me”) in order to bring out the pattern. Balaa seems to be putting the responsibility for his utterances on the Moabite king whose name and title form the central part of this introductory bicolon.
4 See section 3.4 for poetry as opening and closing complete books.
5 Present, too, is the terrace pattern; see below, section 5.3.

7 Smith lists 1 Sm 2:1-10, 11 Sm 22:1-51 // Ps 18, Lam 2, 3, 4, 5, as well as Isa 2:6a-22, 60:1-3 etc.

8 See Krasovec, *Der Merismus (passim).*

9 Also Pss 71:9, 89:34.


11 Accordingly, Andersen’s claim (brought to my notice by Smith) that antithesis is lessened by chiasmus does not apply to poetry; for details see Andersen, *Sentence,* pp. 73, 121-2, 159-60.


15 See below on rhetorical questions, section 5.11.


1 I still prefer „poetic devices” to „rhetorical devices” because the term „rhetorical” has negative overtones and because „poetic” is a better description.


3 For the terms „expletive” and „filler” see Austerlitz, *Ob-Ugric Metrics,* pp. 64-65, 101ff. See, too, Gordon, UT, pp. 135-7.


6 The ballast variant can also be used to balance larger chiastic texts such as Jer 5:1-8, Ps 72:9-11 (courtesy Smith).


8 Also Ps 37:40, Jb 17:15.

9 Welch, *UF,* 6:425.


11 The AB sequence is discussed by Boling, *JSS,* 5:221-5.
12 For other examples see above, section 2.3, also section 5.8, below.

13 Exum, *ZAW*, 85:64; also, Jer 51:20-3 (Smith).


21 As Magne had already demonstrated – see note 17.

22 The keywords significant for the pattern are in capitals; two subsets of chiasmus have been marked: PQP’ (v. 21) and STTS’ (vv. 26-7). The translation is a little stilted since the emphasis is on mirroring the word-order of the Hebrew.

23 E.g. Nah 1:4b, Pss 38:3, 8, 10, 11, 13, 19, 20, 22 (non-alphabetic acrostic) and 145.

24 As in Ps 29:8.

25 2 Sm 1:19-27, Pss 76:4, 6, 80:4, 8, 15, 20, Song 2:14, 6:3.


27 Possibly, therefore, the device belongs under the heading „structural.”


29 The construction with *’al* is difficult; for the last three words see Dahood, *Psalms*, II:260 who cites Ps 89:22.

30 Recognition of the break-up precludes deletion of „Benjamin” in v. 3.


Wordplay and pun are generic terms. More specifically, *paronomasia* plays on similar-sounding words (e.g. Mic 1:10), *rootplay* uses the etymological root of a noun or verb, and *syllepsis* is double meaning.

As translated by Gevirtz, *JNES*, 30:97-8, who failed to notice the wordplay.


As explained by Watson, „The Hidden Simile in Ps 133“, *Biblica* (forthcoming); contrast Ceresko, *UF*, 7:81-2.


Pope, *Job*, 198; note the rootplay between ‘emnò and ‘éné.

See Brongers, *OTS* 14:100-14.

The verb in the singular shows hendiadys to be present.

Contrast the plural verb in v. 11.

Chiasmus but not hyperbole was noticed by Dahood, in Bream, ed., *Light*, p. 124 (his translation).

Note the rhyme with ‘aggîd („I shall declare”) in v. 5.

The bibliography on the broken construct chain is large; see Freedman, „The Broken Construct Chain,” *Biblica*, 53:534-6 and Gevirtz, *Patterns*, 80 n. 31.

Lund, *CNT*, p. 97-8; also Boys, *Key*, p. 60.

Some recent studies taken into account include Mowinckel, *VT*, 15:29, Jefferson, *VT*, 12:210ff; Loretz, *UF*, 7:120ff and Kraus, *Psalmen*. There is no agreement on either literary form or date. Of course the Psalm develops the blessing of Nb 6:24-5, but it has been styled a prayer for rain (Dahood), a hymn of public thanksgiving (Mowinckel) and a harvest song for the Feast of Tabernacles (Kraus). If my translation of v. 2b is correct it may comprise a blessing for the plough at seedtime.

Dahood, *Psalms*, II:127 follows Rosenmueller in rejecting the construction ya’er ’ittanû as anomalous and repoints the second word ’atanu, „may he come to us.” My translation presupposes the word ’et, „ploughshare,” with suffix. For the meaning of ya’er panôyw see Dahood, *Psalms*, I:26.

Lit. „so that known will be” or the like; Dahood prefers „If … is known.”

Assuming Heb. derek = Ug. drkt (so Dahood, *Psalms*, II:128); see note 54.

53 Repointing MT ﬁ`t to `ot, „sign” since the accusative particle is redundant in poetry.

54 If drk does mean „power, dominion,” in v. 3 and if it is m., then the bicolon exhibits the chiastic gender pattern fmff. 

FOOTNOTES TO SECTION 6


3 Watson, Biblica, 59:133.

4 Ceresko, CBQ, 38:306.

5 Dahood, Biblica, 57:108.

6 Dahood, Psalms, I: 64.

7 Dahood, Psalms, III:276.

8 Weiden, Proverbes, pp. 139-40 and Dahood, Psalms, II:318.

9 For chiasmus in prose see Andersen, Sentence, pp. 119-40.


12 Contrast Dahood, Psalms, II:126 „You will lead the nations into the plain // and peoples into the land.”

13 For this technique cf. Gemser, Sprüche Salomos, p. 45; also Olivier, „Schools and Wisdom Literature,” JNSL, 4:49-60.

14 A study along the lines of Freedman, „Divine Names and Titles in Early Hebrew Poetry,” Cross, Lemke, Miller edd., Magnalia Dei, pp. 55-107 is needed; see especially the chronological tables pp. 105-7. Another topic is the relationship between chiasmus and enjambment, on which see Andersen, Sentence, p. 123, who cites Isa 60:20, and Dahood, IDBSuppl, p. 671 who mentions Isa 11:9b, Zeph 3:19 and the ABBA pattern generally.

15 Some of the material used in this chapter derives (particularly as regards approach and presentation) from my forthcoming book Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques, part of which was written during an Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellowship in Münster. Most of the research on chiasmus, though, was carried out in Edinburgh.
Structure and Chiasm in Aramaic Contracts and Letters

Bezalel Porten

Two family archives of Jewish soldiers who had settled at Elephantine on Egypt’s southern border during the Persian Empire (fifth century B.C.E.) came to light at the turn of this century. The archive of Temple official Ananiah son of Azariah was acquired by the American Egyptologist Charles Edwin Wilbour in early 1893 but not published until 1953 by Emil G. Kraeling (=K).¹ The archive of the wealthy woman Mibtahiah daughter of Mahseiah was acquired by Robert Mond and Lady William Cecil in 1904 and published in 1906 by Archibald H. Sayce and Arthur E. Cowley. They were republished in a larger collection by Cowley (=C) in 1923.² We shall be concerned with 16 of the 21 documents from these two archives which may be classified as follows:


The endorsement of two documents (K 6, 8) is missing; one was most likely a house (-gift) document (K 6; C 9); one may have been designated a sonship document (K 8); and one document (C 9) lacked an endorsement. Thirteen documents deal with realty (C 5, 6, 8, 9, 13, 25; K 3, 4, 6, 10, 12) or moveables (C 20) while three deal with slaves (28; K 5, 8). The terminology and formulae in both groups are very similar.

With one or two exceptions (C 2, 9), the Aramaic contract was written only on the recto and was folded up from bottom to top. A single or double line endorsement defining the transaction and recording the names of the parties was then written on the final or penultimate flap. This flap was folded horizontally into thirds, tied and sealed. Despite the varying classification, the recto text of most of the conveyance documents follows a common sevenfold structure:


In four texts, the Transaction and Investiture sections intermingle (C 13; K 4, 6, 9). In two of the documents dealing with slaves, the Investiture section is actually Disinvestiture (K 5 [emancipation], 8 [sonship]); in one the section is replaced by Withdrawal (C 20) and in one it is absent (C 6 [withdrawal document]). The opening and closing pair of sections are objective statements. The second and penultimate correspond with their reference to the parties and occasional mention of place of composition (either Elephantine or Syene). The middle three sections are subjective narrative formulations; they tell a story. The Transaction section relates acts that have already taken place. The Investiture addresses itself to the immediate present and looks to the future. The Guarantees are all future-oriented. The verbs in the three sections accord with the tale: past -- present + future -- future. The center of the document is the purpose of the contract -- affirmation of the recipient’s right to an object.

Specific stylistic features characterize each one of the three subjective sections. The central section is the simplest and is characterized by a threefold formula. The Transaction section is characterized by key word repetition, inclusion and chiasm. The Guarantees section is noted for key word repetition and balance. Nine realty documents
which display each of these features to the fullest and with ample variation have been selected for treatment (C 8, 13, 25, 28; K 3, 4, 9, 10, 12). Following a sectional analysis, we shall deal with each of the documents separately.

As a model for the Transaction section we may select K 4 which contains five clauses (lines 2 – 4, 5 – 12), albeit intermingled with the Investiture section:

1. I gave you PART of a house. (a) 2. I gave it to you GRATIS. (b) 3. Behold the measurements of that house which I gave you: (c) 4. Behold the boundaries of that house which I gave you: (d) 5. This PORTION of the house whose measurements and boundaries are written (above) I gave you GRATIS. (acdb)

The single Aramaic word ,,I gave” (yhbt) runs through each of the five clauses even though it is not necessary in the third and fourth clauses and is often missing from these (C 8:3 – 5, 13:13, 25:4f; K 10:3). The fifth clause summarizes the first four in reverse order (abcd –– acdb). Most of the other contracts are variations on this pattern. One sale contract omits the third clause (K 3:3 – 11):

1. We sold and gave you a house. 2. We sold it and you gave us its price and we are satisfied therewith. 4. Behold the boundaries of that house which we sold you. 5. We sold and gave it to you and withdrew from it.

Besides repeating the key words ,,sold” and ,,gave,” clauses 2 and 5 add further elements to the transaction –– satisfaction with the price and withdrawal from the house. A second sale contract condenses clauses 1 and 2 and omits clause 5 (K 12:12 – 22):

1 & 2. We sold and gave you a house; you gave us its price and we are satisfied therewith. 3. Behold the measurements of that house which we sold and gave you: 4. Behold the boundaries of that house which we sold and gave you:

The expected summary clause 5 has been deftly incorporated by the scribe into the beginning of the Investiture section; in this sense the clause serves as transition and does double duty:

This house whose measurements and boundaries are written herein you control forever.

A gift document omits clause 2 but contains a reverse inclusion in the last clause (C 8:3 – 8):

1. I gave you -- during my lifetime and at my death -- one house-plot of mine. (abc) 3. Its measurements: 4. Its boundaries: 5. That house-plot of yours -- I gave you -- during my lifetime and at my death. (cab)

One contract omits clauses 2 and 3 and adds a unique addition to clause 5 (K 10:2 – 8):

1. I gave you a house.

4. These are its boundaries:
5. This house whose boundaries are written herein I gave you as additional portion to your marriage contract.

A withdrawal document is extremely terse (C25:4 – 8):

1. I withdrew from you from that house. 4. These are its boundaries:

Two documents are extremely expansive and unique in their respective structures. One combines clauses 2 and 3 and expands clause 5 threefold (K9:2 – 11, 11 – 13, 15 – 18); the unique structure here is partly due to the document’s intermingling of the Transaction and Investiture sections.

→ 1. I thought of you during MY LIFETIME and gave you a house. 2 & 3. Behold the measurements of the house which I gave you GRATIS: 4. Behold the boundaries of the house which I gave you: 5. This house whose measurements and boundaries are written herein I gave you GRATIS. [Three Investiture clauses granting specific rights.] —→ 6. This house whose boundaries and measurements and provisions are written herein I gave you at MY DEATH GRATIS. —→ 7. Because you supported me when I was old, I gave it to you at MY DEATH.

Clause 6 is resumptive and is needed to frame the Investiture rights; it reverses the words „measurements and boundaries” and adds the correlative „at my death” to the „during my lifetime” of clause 1. Clause 7 explains the motivation for the grant and explicates the term „thought” in clause 1. The last three clauses are thus all summary in nature –– clause 5 reverses clauses 1 – 4 (abcd –– acdb); clause 6 is resumptive, chiastic, additive and correlative; clause 7, explicative.

The second unique structure is likewise sevenfold and is perfectly chiastic (C13:2 – 7):

A 1. I gave you the house

B 2. which Meshullam gave me and about which he wrote a document.

C 3. I gave it to Miptahiah in exchange for her GOODS D 4. which she gave me when I was on duty.

C’ 5. I gave you this house in exchange for GOODS worth 5 karsh B’ 6. and I gave you the document which Meshullam wrote for me.

A’ 7. I gave you that house and withdrew from it.

A relates the gift of the house and A’ withdrawal from it; BB’ – the document given by Meshullam; CC’ – the goods of Miptahiah which she gave (D). The central item is unmatched; it is the reason for the present gift.

The model Investiture paragraph is tripartite; its three clauses are progressively arranged. The section comes in two versions:

1. You control it 2. and your children after you 3. and the one to whom you give it (or: and give it to whomever you wish) (C8:9 – 11, 28:6 – 7; K3:11 – 12, 12:22 – 24).
1. It is yours and your children's and belongs to the one to whom you give it (or: and give it to whom-ever you wish) (C 13:7 – 8, 25:8 – 9).

In three contracts the section is abridged and it may be thought that the omission implies a limitation on the right of alienation; K 4:4 – 5 and 10:8 – 9 omit the third clause, while K 9:11 omits the second and third but combines both versions in the first clause -- „It is yours; you control it”.

All of the Guarantees sections contain two clauses (promise and penalty) occurring in a variety of combinations. Four of the contracts add a set of clauses known as the „diagnosis pattern”. The various promise-penalty combinations may be diagrammed as follows:

1. \(ab\) -- single promise and single penalty (C 13:8 – 12; 28:7 – 12; K 9:18 – 22): I/My people will not be able to sue you/your people. 
   (a) Should I/we/they sue you/your people -- penalty.

2. \(a_1a_2b\) or \(a_1a_2a_3b\) -- multiple promise and single penalty (C 25: 9 – 17; K 12:24 – 31):
   I/we will not be able to sue you. 
   (a) We will not be able to sue your people. 
   (b) Should we sue you/your people -- penalty. 
   * We shall not be able to sue you. 
   (a) Our people shall not be able to sue you. 
   (b) We shall not be able to sue you.

3. \(a_1a_2b_1b_2\) -- double promise and double penalty (K 4:12 – 18): I shall not be able to sue you.
   (a) My people shall not be able to sue you. 
   (b) Should I sue you -- penalty. 
   (a) Should my people sue you -- penalty. 
   (b) We shall not be able to sue you.

4. \(a_1b_1a_2b_2\) -- alternating promise and penalty (K 10:9 – 15): I shall not be able to retract gift.
   (a) Should I retract gift -- penalty. 
   (b) My people shall not be able to sue you. 
   (a) Whoever sues -- penalty. 
   (b) Should my people sue you -- penalty.

5. \(a_1b_1a_2b_2a_3a_4\) -- alternation and multiple promise (K 3:12 – 23): We shall not be able to sue you/your people. 
   (a) Should we sue you/your people -- penalty 
   (b) Our people shall not be able to sue you. 
   (a) Should they sue you/your people -- penalty. 
   (b) Should someone else sue -- we shall restore. 
   (a) Should we not restore -- we shall replace.

6. \(b_1a_2b_2\) -- elliptical alternation (first promise missing) (C 8: 11 – 15, 18 – 22):
   Whoever sues you/your people -- penalty. 
   (a) I shall not be able to retract gift. 
   (b) Should I retract gift -- penalty.

While each scribe expanded or contracted the two basic clauses to taste or need, the principle of balance is preserved with high consistency; only in example 6 does a penalty appear without prior promise (but see below).
Either added to or interwoven with the promise-penalty clause is a quaternary incorporating the diagnosis pattern (C 8:15 – 18, 13:11 – 12; K 9:21 – 22, 10:15 – 17):

1. No one shall be able to produce against you another document beside this document. (Prohibition)
2. That document which they do produce is false. (Act)
3. It will not be accepted in suit/Only the document which I wrote is valid. (Definition)
4. It will not be accepted in suit/Only the document which I wrote is valid. (Consequence)

This pattern may be abridged and one document (K 9) omits clauses 2 and 3 while another (C 13) omits clause 3. Three of the documents including the diagnosis pattern place it after the promise and penalty clauses. The one document which omitted an initial promise clause (C 8; #6 above) placed the pattern after the isolated penalty clause, thereby creating a new and unexpected balance -- penalty-diagnosis pattern. The scribe then proceeded to take up the document theme from the diagnosis pattern and interweave it twice more with the subsequent promise-penalty clauses. This intricately devised Guarantees section (C 8:11 – 27) may be diagrammed as follows:

1. Third party -- no other document a. Whoever sues you -- penalty. b. No one can produce against you another DOCUMENT. c. That DOCUMENT which they produce d. is false. e. It shall not be accepted in suit while this DOCUMENT is in your hand. 2. I -- this document a. I shall not be able to retract gift. b. Should I retract gift -- penalty. c. Should I initiate suit, I shall not win while this DOCUMENT is in your hand. 3. Former claimant -- his document a. There is a withdrawal DOCUMENT which Dargamana wrote for me. b. I gave you that DOCUMENT. c. Should Dargamana sue you, produce that DOCUMENT and undertake suit with him.

By combining customary clauses in an unusual manner and repeating the key words ,,document“ and ,,suit“, the scribe achieved a threefold sequence (anyone -- I -- Dargamana) and preserved balance.

In most of the contracts the three sections are linked together by the devices of key word repetition, symmetry, and chiasm. Occasionally the link is only between the two sections:

Investiture: It is yours. Guarantees: If anyone sues you -- penalty and the house is still yours (K 4:4 – 5, 16)

* * * * * * * *

Investiture: It is yours; you control it Guarantees: Whoever sues you -- penalty and you still control it and your children control it and you may give it to whomever you wish (K 9:11, 19 – 21).

In this contract, the scribe omitted references to control by the children and by a third party in the Investiture section. That this omission was elliptical and not substantive is seen from its inclusion in the penalty clause. In the other contracts balance is between the Transaction and Investiture sections on the one hand and the Guarantees section on the other. The links between the sections may be diagrammed as follows:

1. ab-ab (C 13, 8): Transaction: I gave you a house. (a) Investiture: It is YOURS.
   (b) Guarantees: Promise: I shall not be able to sue you for that house which I gave you.
   (a) Penalty: Should I sue you -- penalty and the house is still YOURS.
   (b)
Transaction: I gave you a house. (a) Investiture: You control it and your CHILDREN after you. (b) Guarantees: Promise: I shall not be able to sue you for that house which I gave you. (a) Penalty: Should I sue you -- penalty and that house is still yours and your CHILDREN'S after you. (b) 2. aab-aab (C 28): Transaction: The slave comes to you as your portion. (a) Investiture: You control the slave who comes to you as your portion, and your children after you and you may give it to whom you wish (ab) Guarantees: Promise: I shall not be able to sue you about that slave who comes to you as a portion. (a) Penalty: Should I sue you about that slave who comes to you as a portion -- penalty and he is yours and your children's and you may give it to whom you wish (ab) 3. ab-baba (K 10):

Transaction: I gave you a house. These are its boundaries: (a) Investiture: You control it. (b) Guarantees: Penalty: Should I retract gift -- penalty and you still control the house whose boundaries are written herein. (ba) Whoever sues you -- penalty and you still control the house whose boundaries are written herein. (ba) 4. abc-abc (K 12): Transaction: We sold and gave you a house and you gave us its price. (a) Behold the measurements of the house: (b) Investiture: You control it and your CHILDREN after you and ANYONE to whom you give it. (c) Guarantees: Promise: We shall not be able to sue for the house which we sold and gave you and for which you gave us its price. (a) Penalty: Should we sue you for the house whose measurements are written above -- penalty and it is yours and your CHILDREN'S and belongs to ANYONE to whom you give it. (bc) 5. abcd-cdba (K 3): Transaction: We sold and gave you a house and you gave us 14 shekels. (a) Behold the boundaries of that house: (b) We sold and gave it to you and withdrew from it. (c) Investiture: You control that house and your CHILDREN after you and ANYONE to whom you give it. (d) Guarantees: Promise: We shall not be able to sue for that house which we sold and gave you and from which we withdrew your CHILDREN or ANYONE to whom you gave it. We shall not be able to sue you for that house whose boundaries are written herein. (b) If we are unable to restore the challenged house, we shall give you your 14 shekels. (a)

It is thus clear that while similar stylistic features characterize the links between the three operative sections, the balance between the sections varies from contract to contract. It is almost as if each contract had its own pattern and six different patterns were discerned -- a-a, ab-ab, aab-aab, ab-baba, abc-abc, abcd-cdba.

Two contracts deal with slaves not as property but as persons, yet the document's structure is similar to that just investigated. In other words, the same type instrument was drawn up to emancipate a slave or adopt a son as to convey a house or withdraw from a claim. Instead of investing ownership, the middle section in effect divests. The emancipation document (K 5) is called a „withdrawal document“ and its three operative sections are bound together by a sevenfold repetition of two alternating key words (aabb-aba):

Transaction: I released you and I released your daughter (aa) Disinvestiture: No one can control you, can control you to mark you or transfer you.
The adoption document (K 8) contains a threefold recurrence of the expression „he is my son” and „enslave and mark” (twice reversed to „mark and enslave”). The three operative sections are bound together in an ab-aba pattern.

Transaction: I shall not be able to subdue him as a slave. He is my SON.

(a) Disinvestiture: We have no power to mark him (b) Guarantees: Promise:
We shall not be able to enslave and mark him. Penalty: Whoever rises to mark and enslave him –– penalty and he is still my SON. And no one has power to mark and enslave him and he is still my SON.

(aba)

In conclusion it may be said that the Aramaic contracts are not only highly developed from a legal point of view but quite sophisticated as literary documents. Each contract is drawn up by a professional scribe steeped in a legal-literary tradition, dated according to both the international Babylonian and local Egyptian calendars, at the behest of one of the parties on behalf of the other, and witnessed by a battery of either four or eight males who usually sign their own names. The document is a brief tale –– it records a past transaction, bestows a right, and guarantees its permanent maintenance. All this is done with a keen eye to elementary stylistic features. The three operative sections are like three literary units of a first-person narrative. The plot is stereotypic –– „I gave it –– it is yours –– I cannot take it back”. The variations on the theme are abundant.

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The Aramaic letters have recently been catalogued by Joseph A. Fitzmyer. Selected for discussion here are four letters from three different sources: (1) the Bagohi letter first edited by Ed. Sachau in 1911 and included in Cowley’s collection (C 30, 31); (2) one of the Arsham letters edited by Godfrey R. Driver in 1954 and again in 1957 (D 7); (3) and the correspondence between Tattenai and Darius I recorded in the Biblical book of Ezra (5:3 – 6:12). A detailed examination of these and other administrative letters reveals that the official Aramaic epistolary style prevailed from Elephantine to Susa. Here we shall only concern ourselves with such stylistic features as triads, heptads, key word repetition, balance, inclusion, and chiasm.

Unlike the Aramaic contracts, the papyrus letters were usually written on both the recto and the verso. The scribe estimated the number of lines he had to write, halved that amount and cut his papyrus scroll accordingly. He began his letter on the recto, turned the papyrus up from the bottom and concluded the text on the verso. He turned his papyrus again to the recto and folded it from the bottom to the top. A single line of address was then written on the final or penultimate flap. This flap was folded horizontally in half (occasionally in quarters), tied and sealed. The letter written by Jedaniah to Bagohi was discovered in two preliminary drafts and lacks an external address. The text may be outlined as follows:

1. Internal address (30:1, 31:1) 2. Blessings (30:1 – 3, 31:1 – 2)
The main sections are the two middle ones. The Report is a mixed third- and first-person narrative divided into three parts or nine units, each unit beginning with a temporal designation. The subject of the Report is the destruction of the Jewish Temple at Elephantine and the three parts follow the sequence Destruction (third-person) -- Before the Destruction (third-person) -- After the Destruction (first- and third-person).

The nine-unit Report may be outlined as follows:

A. Destruction 1. In Tammuz, 14 Darius II (410 B.C.E.), the Egyptian Khnum priests conspired with the Persian governor Vidranga to destroy the Jewish Temple (30:4–6). 2. Then, Virdanga instructed his son Naphaina, garrison commander at Syene, to destroy that Temple (30:6 – 8). 3. Then, Naphaina led Egyptian and other troops in the destruction of that Temple (30:8 – 13). B. Before the Destruction -- precedent 4. During the days of the native Egyptian kings, our fathers built that Temple (30:13). 5. When Cambyses conquered Egypt, they overturned the Egyptian temples but did not damage that Temple (30:13 – 14). C. After the Destruction 6. When this happened to us, we prayed to YHWH that we behold the downfall of that Vidranga. Granted (30:15 – 17). 7. Moreover, when this evil befell us, we wrote you a letter in appeal. No response (30:17 – 19). 8. Moreover, from Tammuz, 14 Darius II until now, we have been fasting and abstaining from intercourse (30:19 – 21). 9. Moreover, from then until now, 17 Darius II, sacrifices are not being offered in that Temple (30:21 – 22).

The Petition is made up of two balanced triads, the first a polite series of requests for a document of intercession and the second a series of proffered rewards. The key words „Temple” and „YHWH” are each repeated three times, while the third and sixth clauses refer back to the first. The middle clauses in both triads mention all those „here” (in Egypt). The section opens with the well-known conditional formula. This sevenfold section may be diagrammed as follows (30: 23 – 28):

1. If it please our Lord, 2. take thought of that TEMPLE to build it, since they do not let us build it. 3. Look after your friends HERE in Egypt. 4. Let a letter be sent to build the TEMPLE of YHW as formerly built. 5. And we will offer sacrifices on the altar of YHW in your name. 6. And all of us HERE shall pray for you at all times. 7. And if you act so that that TEMPLE be built, you will have great merit before YHW.

The presence of balance and chiasm in formal petitional style is evident from the roughly contemporaneous Book of Esther. Ahasuerus asks Esther (5:3),

„What is it, Queen Esther? (x)  
What is your request? (c)  
Up to half the kingdom, (k)  
It shall be granted you.” (b)

or again (5:6):

„What is your petition? (a)  
It shall be granted you. (b)  
And what is your request? (c)  
Up to half the kingdom -- it shall be fulfilled.” (kd)
The queen replies (5:8),

„If I found favor in the eyes of the king and if it please the king
to grant my petition
and fulfill my request . . . .”

At the second feast the king repeats his question (7:2),

„What is your petition, Queen Esther?
It shall be granted you.
What is your request?
Up to half the kingdom – it shall be fulfilled.”

The queen replies (7:3),

„If I found favor in your eyes, O King and if it please the king,
let my life be granted me as my petition
and my people as my request.”

Three times the king posed his question. The first time he was startled by Esther’s appearance and so the structure of the question differs from the regular form it takes at the two feasts – xc-ka rather than ab-ckd. Esther’s replies to the king’s questions at the two feasts reverse the order of the question – ba-dc and ba-c with d elliptically omitted. When she makes her final request, the opening statements consist of four clauses chiastically arranged (8:5):

A „If it please the king B and if I found favor BEFORE him B’ and the matter is right BEFORE the king,
A’ and I am pleasing in his eyes . . .”

The first two clauses chiastically reverse the order of Esther’s prior request:

A „If I found favor in your eyes, O king B and if it PLEASE the king . . .” (7:3) B’ „If it PLEASE the king
A’ and if I found favor before him . . .” (8:5)

The reversal here probably bears the same explanation as the reversal in Ahasuerus’ initial question – there, an unexpected appearance of the queen; here, an unexpected question of the queen. The initial and final appearance of Esther are linked by the motif of the king extending his scepter (5:2, 8:4).

In our Aramaic letter, the structural balance lies not in the opening conditional sentence, as in Esther, but in the following request. Here there is a direct parallel in the conclusion of Esther’s final petition. After requesting revocation of the letters sent out by Haman for the destruction of the Jews, she exclaims (8:6, NJPS translation):

„For how can I bear to see the disaster which will befall my people! And how can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred!”

By definition, a petition sought the favor of a superior and had to be worded so as to please the ear. The petitioner might curry favor by overloading the opening conditional clause of grace or concluding his petition with a couplet.
of lament at the dire consequences of non-fulfillment (Esther); or he might accompany his petition with a *quid pro quo* — “You do three things for us and we will do three things for you” (letter to Bagohi).

The letter of the Persian satrap of Egypt, Arsham (Arsames) to his official Nakhthur was written on parchment and on one side only. Like the papyrus letters, it too was rolled up from bottom to top, inscribed with an address on the penultimate flap, folded horizontally in quarters, tied, and sealed. The text itself may be outlined as follows (D 7):


The two operative sections may be further subdivided into two; three of the four subsections begin, like the Report in the Bagohi letter, with a temporal designation. The order of the four units is Formerly -- Now -- Formerly -- Now:

1. Formerly, when the Egyptians rebelled, Psamshek, the former ofcer, protected our property and even added thereto (7:1 – 3). 2. Now, I hear that other ofcials are protecting their masters’ property and even adding thereto (7:3 – 5). 3. Formerly, I wrote to you to protect my property and add thereto (7:5 – 8). 4. Be informed that if there is any reduction of my property and no addition thereto, you will be called to account (7:8 – 10).

Units 1, 3, and 4 concern the addressee; unit 2, other ofcials. The scribe emphasizes the contrast through the stylistic device of reversal in repetitive clauses:

1. Moreover, from another place -- other property -- he sought out. (abc) 2. Moreover, other (property) -- they seek out -- from another place. (bca) 3. Moreover, from another place -- other property -- seek out. (abc) 4. If, from another place -- - you do not seek out ... (ac)

As often, one element (b) is elliptically omitted from the nal clause. The three statements describing Arsham’s own ofcials follow the order abc or ac; the one statement describing the other ofcials has the reverse order bca.

Almost all the stylistic features mentioned above come to play in the correspondence between Tattenai and Darius about the reconstruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 5:3 – 6:12). A half dozen key words or their synonyms recur in such a way as to delineate the theme of the letters: ,,I issue an order *(sym t’m)* that the Temple *(byt)* be rebuilt *(bnh)* on its sacred place *(ʾtr)* and financed from the taxes of Transeuphrates *(ʿbr nhr)*. The letter from Tattenai may be outlined as follows:


The response of Darius has been partly preempted by the narrative framework; as the text stands, his letter may be outlined as follows:

The usual Aramaic word order is object-verb and the regular order of two of our key words is „Temple-build” (ab). In our document the scribe chiastically reverses the order usually when going from one unit or sub-unit to another:

3a. Notice: We went to the TEMPLE and it was being building. (ab) 3b. Investigation: We inquired, who ordered this TEMPLE to build? (ab) They responded, We are building a TEMPLE built formerly. (ba)

4a. Recommendation: We ask you, Did Cyrus order to build the TEMPLE? (ba) 2a. Permit: Darius wrote, That TEMPLE let them build. (ab) 2b. Subsidy: I order to build that TEMPLE. (ba)

The most intricately designed unit is 3b (Investigation). The answer of the elders to Tattenai’s query consists of seven statements chiastically arranged (5:11 – 16) and is set off from the query (5:9 – 10) and the following Recommendation (5:17a) by the above-noted chiastic reversals. The unit itself may be outlined as follows:

A 1. The elders are building a house built formerly. 3. A great king in Israel (= Solomon) 4. but the king of Babylon DESTROYED this house. C’ 5. However, King Cyrus ordered the Temple he built; B’ 6. he authorized Sheshbazzar to build it on its site. A’ 7. From the time Sheshbazzar began to build the Temple it has not been completed.

The elders are building a Temple begun by Sheshbazzar (AA’). The Temple that was formerly built is now being built on its site (BB’). Solomon originally built it and Cyrus authorized that it be built again (CC’). Nebuchadnezzar had carried out its destruction (D).

In conclusion it may be said that letters like contracts are documents written by professional scribes with a keen eye to structure and a deft use of those stylistic devices necessary to support it. Repetition is the life blood of the bureaucratic letter, whether from Arsham in Babylon to Nakhthur in Egypt or from Tattenai in Judah to Darius in Babylon. The petition should display measured balance whether uttered orally by Esther before Ahasuerus or written by Jedaniah to Bagohi. A detailed report composed of several units or clauses may be arranged according to the principle of Act –– Prior –– Subsequently, as in the Bagohi letter, or follow a sevenfold chiastic scheme. Finally, the most common device to mark off one repetitive unit from its neighbor is chiasm, as in the letters of Arsham and Tattenai.

FOOTNOTES


6. The Arsham letters were studies by J. D. Whitehead, Early Aramaic Epistolography: The Arsames Correspondence (University of Chicago Dissertation, 1974); the Elephantine and Ezra letters by myself in three Hebrew articles, „The Archive of Jedaniah son of Gemariah of Elephantine –– The Structure and Style of the Letters (I)”, Eretz-Israel

Chiasmus in Talmudic-Aggadic Narrative

Jonah Fraenkel

One component of the beauty of any work of art is the distribution or arrangement of its parts. This probably holds true for literature as much as for any other artistic medium. In regard to narrative literature, analyzing the distinctive elements of a given composition and detecting the order in which those elements are arranged is apt to shed light upon the tensions within, as well as the completeness throughout the plot, making these endeavors therefore two of the tasks of the critic. There is a wider range of possible sequences at the disposal of each writer, only one of which will be presently examined as it manifests itself in aggadic narrative sections of the Talmud.

It is only natural that there should be a developmental change between a narrative’s opening and its ending. Between its introductory and its concluding situations, we usually discern a contrast or at least a clear difference in the situations of the characters involved. The apparent structure is therefore:

A The Opening B The Plot A’ The End

Consider a simple example. It opens with Rav Ashi’s request that two professional mourners tell him how they would eulogize him at his funeral. After the first mourner has pronounced his eulogy, the other claims to be able to do better and promptly recites his; but Rav Ashi is dissatisfied with both. In the end, the legs of both men become afflicted so that on Rav Ashi’s death neither can attend his funeral. This anecdote begins with the words: „On that day, what are you going to say?” and it ends with „On that day, neither came to eulogize him.” The A–B–A’ structure is clearly designed to emphasize the opposition between a person’s wish to know what will be said of him after his death, and the fact that on that occasion nothing will be said of him at all. Since all aggadic tales have a religious-didactic purpose, we are expected to infer from the present one that the excessive pride of a man who wants to hear his own praise is reprehensible.

Although typically very short, the plot of the aggadic story will frequently be further subdivided. In the foregoing example, the two eulogies are juxtaposed to Rav Ashi’s displeasure and to the mourners’ affliction:

A Opening B First eulogy B’ Second eulogy C Displeasure C’ Affliction A’ Conclusion

The turning point may here be seen to occur between B’ and C, but such neat symmetry is not absolutely necessary. The crisis may be shifted from the center to the flanks and the single elements may be of varying sizes. Moreover, one element need not follow the other in chronological sequence, but rather find its counterpart at a later stage of the plot. In such cases, the scheme is A–B–C–B’–A’. Then, the story follows another course, as the tension between B and B’ necessarily differs to some extent from the one between A and A’. A gifted writer may succeed in constructing all parts of his plot in this way and thus achieve a complete inverse parallelism or chiasm such as A–B–C–C’–B’–A’. Thus, many options of artistic structure are open to him. How they were used in aggadic literature will now be illustrated in detail in six particular passages.

1. Joseph honors the Sabbath (TB, Shabbat 119a) Yosef-moqir-shabbat had a certain Gentile in his vicinity who owned much property. Said to him the [soothsaying] astrologers: „All your property, Joseph-who-honors-the-Sabbath will enjoy it [one day].” So he went, sold his property and bought instead a pearl which he put into his
garment. When he crossed [the river] on a ferry, the wind blew his garment off and cast it into the water, where a fish swallowed it. [The fishermen] hauled it up and brought it [to the marketplace] on Sabbath Eve before evening (i.e. Friday before sunset). Said [the fishermen]: „Who would buy at this [late] hour?” Said [the other people]: „Go and take it to Joseph-who-honors-the-Sabbath who is wont to buy [choice food for the sake of the Sabbath].” They took it to him, he bought it, opened it and found the pearl, and sold it for twelve purses of gold denarii. A certain old man met him and said unto him: „He who lends to the Sabbath, the Sabbath repays him.”

A simple key to understanding the structure of the story is the repetition of selling and buying: The rich man sells his property and buys the pearl, Joseph buys a fish and sells the pearl. Its scheme therefore is:

A Opening B The Gentile sells C The Gentile buys D Centerpiece C’ Joseph buys B’ Joseph sells
A’ Conclusion

The centerpiece of how the pearl happened to pass from the hands of the Gentile into Joseph’s is divided into two parts: in the first, the pearl is in the garment which the wind casts into the river away from its original owner; in the second, the pearl „moves” toward Joseph by being swallowed by a fish which is offered for sale and discussed in the market and finally taken to Joseph. Since the fish serves as „means of transportation,” the swallowing of the garment terminates the pearl’s movement away from its first owner (for which reason the garment itself is not mentioned again) and starts its eventual movement toward its second owner. This again points to a sort of chiasm within D:

D The pearl’s „movement” away from the Gentile Center and turning point D’ The pearl’s „movement” toward Joseph

Let us now consider the two inverted parallelisms within each other and start with the inner one. The two „movements” differ from each other insofar as the first is brought about by the wind and the fish, two natural causes devoid of human volition, whereas in the second, people, namely fishermen and fishmongers, are active. When the fishermen arrive at the market at a late hour, when most Jews have already made their purchases for the approaching Sabbath, they wonder: „Who would still buy at this late hour?” This is when Joseph is first mentioned. Had the storyteller intended to parallel the two „movements,” he could have let the fish be offered for sale early on Friday, let Joseph pass by the fishmongers out of chance and -- again by chance -- buy that particular fish. But his aim was to tell us that only because of Joseph’s special love of the Sabbath did the pearl reach him, and this is the function of the dialogue in the marketplace. The relation between the two „movements” is thus underscored by their respective positions immediately before and after the turning point, by their directions moving away and toward, and also by their nature: quasi-technical means versus freely willed human actions. The result is a well-balanced dialectical-chiastic core.

This core then further illuminates the remaining elements of the narrative. Selling and buying alternate. The Gentile sells his property in order to evade an unpropitious decree of the stars and buys instead an extremely precious object lacking all practical use. For him, possessing property is an aim in itself. On the other hand, Joseph buys the fish for the love of Sabbath. Although, like all other Jews in town, he probably had purchased and prepared his festive Sabbath meals, he nevertheless „pays dearly” (moqir) for the Sabbath and spends his money not on increasing his property, but in carrying out a Divine precept. Once the pearl has „moved” toward him, he does not keep it or sell it for profit. On the contrary, one is given to read between the lines that Joseph will use the twelve purses of denarii for „paying dearly” for the following Sabbaths. It follows that the comparison between the two pairs of business transactions shows not only a contrast in sequence, but in content too.
In the end, an old man appears and talks to Joseph. Being a secondary figure, he has no part in the plot itself, but he interprets it. His counterpart is found in the astrologers who foretell a certain event and by so doing set the entire incident in motion. At first glance, the astrologers may seem more important than an unknown old man: after all, they know the future while he is only capable of interpreting the past. Yet in reality, they forecast only a certain mechanical and preordained occurrence effected by the blind forces of nature, whereas the old man’s words are a value judgment of human actions and of their results — the same contrast as before.

The message of the tale, highlighted by its construction, is that in the inevitable course of nature, a man will lose his property if he holds it as an absolute goal, while his fortune will increase if he „wastes” it — having acquired it in the first place in order to „waste” it — on keeping a miswa, a commandment of the Torah.

To be sure, for the first sentence of the story („Joseph . . . property”) we do not find any parallel at its end, where the rich man is not even mentioned again. Since this sentence does in fact not carry any dramatic tension, it must be viewed as an „exposition.” Hence, the detailed structure of the episode is the following:

Exposition A The astrologers’ prophecy B The Gentile sells his property C The Gentile buys a pearl D The pearl „moves” away (wind, water) E A fish swallows the pearl D’ The pearl „moves” toward Joseph (fishermen, etc.) C’ Joseph buys the fish B’ Joseph sells the pearl A’ The old man’s interpretation

2. R. Hiyya and the Angel of Death (TB, Mo’ed Qatan 28a)

R. Hiyya — [the Angel of Death] was unable to approach him. One day [The Angel of Death] disguised himself as a poor [man], came and knocked on his (i.e. R. Hiyya’s) door. Said [R. Hiyya] to them (i.e. his family): „Bring bread forth to him!” They brought [it] forth to him. Said [the Angel of Death] unto him: „Does my lord not take pity on the poor? And on this man, why does he not take pity?” He revealed himself to him and showed him a fiery stick. Then delivered [R. Hiyya] himself to him.

The crux of this tale is embedded between its initial and final sentences. In the beginning, the Angel of Death is not able (Aramaic masi) to take R. Hiyya’s soul because of the latter’s righteousness, and in the end R. Hiyya delivers (’amsi) his life to him. The Aramaic paronomasia is clearly intended to connect the two sentences and to create tension between them. Since according to the first sentence, the Angel of Death cannot approach R. Hiyya in order to kill him, we would expect the story to terminate with the positive statement, that finally he could and did take the life of the saddiq, who ultimately had to die like all other mortals. But no, in the end R. Hiyya delivers his soul voluntarily and had he not done so, the Angel of Death would not have been able to approach him even then.

As we have seen before, such a dramatic frame is in itself not yet any proof of chiasm and additional evidence is called for. Such is furnished by the two sentences following the first and preceding the last, respectively, where the Angel of Death disguises and reveals himself. The structure is therefore thus:

A The Angel of Death is not masi to approach R. Hiyya B He disguises himself C The middle part B’ He reveals his identity A’ R. Hiyya ’amsi his life

At first sight it seems astonishing that the Angel of Death disguises himself as a beggar. If R. Hiyya feeds him, would this not prevent his death? Does Scripture not say that „righteousness delivers from death”? On the other hand, since it is expressly stated in the opening that the Angel of Death could not approach R. Hiyya at all, he could
not have approached him and taken his life even if he appeared to him in his full terror equipped with his „fiery stick.” The two appearances of the angel differ from each other externally, but both have the same result: R. Hiyya does not die. Only by combining the two appearances does the angel achieve his hoped-for aim. How this came to pass is elaborated in the middle part of our tale.

The Angel of Death knocks on the door without saying a single word. Immediately he is fed, because feeding the poor is a matter of course in R. Hiyya’s home. The angel does not enter the saddiq’s home because he „was unable to approach him,” a fact emphasized in the story by the words „bring forth.” The angel then asks two questions one, the rhetorical, connects his disguise with divulging his identity; the other is the real question and request. With the latter, the angel begins to disclose who he really is and accuses R. Hiyya of not taking pity on him, the Angel of Death: Feeding this poor man out of pity is tantamount to cruelty toward the Angel of Death, for whom the good deed by R. Hiyya prevents him from killing the sage. The two parts are again dialectically linked:

B. The Angel disguised at the door  
C. R. Hiyya takes pity on him  
D. The link: a rhetorical question  
C’. „Why does he not take pity?”  
B’ The Angel drops his disguise

The contrast between disguise and disclosure shows what the angel had in mind. Since there is no chance for him that R. Hiyya would cease observing miswot, the angel hopes that dying would become another miswa to R. Hiyya: he will take pity on the Angel of Death exactly as he is used to taking pity on the poor. Equating pity on the poor with pity on the Angel of Death is not an easy matter. For the ordinary reader, there lies some irony in the angel’s question „Why don’t you pity me?” How can one pity the Angel of Death? R. Hiyya perceives this question in the fullness of its awe when he recognizes the Angel of Death with, and by, his fiery stick on his doorsteps:

You cannot dismiss the Angel of Death by sending and feeding him a piece of bread. And if one is not capable of taking pity on Death and Fire, how genuine and deep is one’s pity on the poor? R. Hiyya’s last moment thus becomes the supreme test of his entire lifetime, and he passes the test by delivering his life.

3. R. Meir aud Aher (TB, Hagiga 15a) An episode concerning Aher who was riding on horseback on a Sabbath while R. Meir was walking behind him in order to learn Tora from his mouth. Said [Aher] unto him: „Meir, turn back behind yourself, because I have already estimated according to the horse’s steps: this is the Sabbath boundary.” Said he unto him: „You too turn” „I have already heard from behind the curtain: „Return, 0 faithless children” – all except Aher.”

The story consists of five parts:

(1) Aher transgresses Torah commandments  (2) R. Meir learns Torah from Aher’s mouth  (3) Aher warns R. Meir  (4) R. Meir asks Aher to repent  (5) There is no way for Aher to repent

We immediately notice that the two sages alternate on the stage. Let us examine the role of each separately.

Parts (1) and (5), where Aher alone is active, form the external frame and stress Aher’s unforgivable sin. Had the author wanted to weaken this impression, he could have incorporated some of (3) already in (1) and written for instance: „An episode concerning Aher who when riding on horseback on a Sabbath estimated according to his horse’s steps, for R. Meir’s sake who was walking behind him, that . . . .” The author does the opposite: he lets Aher sin in isolation. Similarly, and even more so, in (5), Aher sins again where he is totally alone. All sinners may repent, but not Aher: even his repentance is not acceptable anymore.
In (3), teacher and pupil are together, but here too Aher prefers his loneliness: R. Meir will return to town while Aher continues, riding on his horse further away from town. To be sure, we sense that Aher does not cease thinking of R. Meir and respecting his conviction, but we are not sure of the nature of this respect: does he count his horse's steps in order to rid himself of R. Meir or because he wants to prevent his beloved pupil from sinning too? The reader is inclined to assume that R. Meir understands his former master's words in the second manner, yet the words „Turn back” (Heb: la'ahoreka = behind yourself) instead of the equally possible „Let us stop here for a moment and continue our discourse” point to the first interpretation, i.e. to Aher’s wish to leave his disciple, which moreover fits the „isolationist” frame sentences. With this wish of his to be left alone, Aher conforms on earth with what had been decreed on him in Heaven: „Return -- all except Aher.” Parts (1), (3) and (5) are thus related to each other.

They are opposed to parts (2) and (4) in which R. Meir is active. He fervently desires to break Aher’s solitude and seeks to achieve this aim in two ways. First, he walks after Aher, i.e. follows his master in the latter’s direction. His wish „to learn Torah from his mouth” and his willingness to follow both fit each other, and in both Aher is the dominant factor. R. Meir „follows” Aher without fear because he is aware of the proscribed boundaries and also trusts that Aher will not try to divert him from righteous conduct, which is indeed borne out by Aher’s warning in (3). But why should R. Meir show so much interest in a heretic? For his teaching? Is there really no purer source of instruction in Israel? The reply to these questions is given in (4) which explains (2) just as (3) and (5) explain each other. R. Meir, wanting Aher to repent, believes that the more Aher instructs him, the greater the chances that Aher will repent. In (3) it seems that he employs the appropriate means, as he may interpret Aher’s words as a genuine care for him, Aher’s disciple. Therefore R. Meir goes further and in (4) implores Aher to repent. He uses Aher’s own words „turn back” as if he wanted to say: „Let us now continue together on our common way, but in the opposite direction, and return to observing the commandments of the Torah.” The equivocal double use of the Hebrew word for „turn back” is certainly not brought about by chance, but implies: Just as you led me until now in one direction and I followed you, so let me lead you from now on in the opposite direction. A tension similar to the ambiguous „turn back” exists between „behind him” (Heb. ‘ahraw) in (2) and „behind yourself” (Heb. la’ahoreka) in (3): they are almost equal in sound, but contradictory in meaning. Thus, the expression „Turn back behind yourself” contains the two possible interpretations of (3) and hints at the dialectical relation between (3) on the one hand and (2) and (4) on the other.

A diagram may serve to summarize:

4. R. Yona and his Sack (TB, Ta’anit 23b)

R. Yona, father of R. Mani: When the world needed rain, he took a sack and said: „I shall go and bring a zuz’s worth, of grain.” He went and stopped at a deep and hidden place and covered himself with the sack and asked for mercy and rain fell. When he came [home] they said unto him: „Did you bring a thing?” Said he unto them: „I said [to myself]: since rain fell, the world was relieved.”

The structure of this passage is easily recognizable. It consists of three parts, the first and last of which chiastically envelop the center:
The world needs rain. R. Yona at home taking a sack says that he will bring grain. R. Yona leaves his home. He prays alone away from home; rain falls. He returns home. He is asked whether he brought a thing. The world is relieved.

The action takes place on two levels: that of the „world,” i.e. in the public domain which includes R. Yona’s household, and that of R. Yona himself. The „world” is in need of rain, yet people agree that one should buy „a zuz’s worth of grain,” in other words, that daily routine still takes precedence. Obviously there must have been a famine where R. Yona lived as otherwise none of his household would have understood why he left his place in order to buy a small quantity of flour. While he is away from home, it rains, but those who were in such dire need of it behave just as before: not knowing what R. Yona had done in the meantime, they ask him whether he has „brought a thing.” Their question illustrates their static behavior and forms the conjunction between the first and the last parts. In contrast, on R. Yona’s level, there is dramatic tension. He intends to use the sack for a purpose totally different from the one he declares. Far away from his home and town, he prays in a manner tradition would demand: clad in sackcloth and „at a deep place.” He shuns the public eye so that it may not become known how powerful his prayer is. The intensity of his prayer offered in solitude and hiding evokes God’s mercy: rain comes.

With this dramatic result the story could have ended, but the storyteller wished R. Yona to prove his loneliness in one more situation. To the question „Did you bring a thing?” one would have expected the reply „Yes, my prayer caused the rain to fall.” Instead, R. Yona’s answer is fully consonant with the level on which his household lives: „Rain fell and the world was relieved.” His last words „rain” and „world” also occur (in inverted order) in the opening, just as „relief” in the end is matched by „need” in the beginning.

Apart from these contrasts which express the external dramatic tension of this tale, there is yet another between the beginning and the end. The first sentence is the author’s and there is no opposition there between R. Yona and the „world.” Not so in the last sentence: there, R. Yona himself speaks, intensifying the tension between the two levels of this story: his words are true for the „world,” but they still conceal the entire truth. R. Yona remains remote even at the end.

5. Rav Pappa and the Fast (TB, Ta’anit 24b) Rav Pappa decreed a fast because no rain had come. [While fasting himself] his heart became weak and he ate a bit, then he asked for mercy, but no rain came. Said unto him Rav Nahman bar Ishparty, „Had you swallowed a [whole] bowl of porridge, rain would have come.” [Then] his (i.e. Rav Pappa’s) mind became weak and rain came.

The tension in this story is again accentuated by the lack of rain, followed by one „weakness” in the beginning, and rainfall, preceded by different „weakness” in the end. The matter of rain also reappears in the middle: „no rain came,” „rain would have come.” This is illustrated by a diagram:

A  Rav Pappa decreed a fast because no rain had come B  His heart became weak C  He ate a bit, asked for mercy, but no rain came C’ „Had you swallowed . . . rain would have come” B’ His mind became weak A’ Rain came

Unlike the preceding stories, this one lacks the central axis of the chiastic construction, which fact lends a certain autonomy to each half. Let us examine each separately.
The first half ends on a note of disappointment: no rain came. But why? We are not explicitly told the reason, but we may infer it from C: because Rav Pappa had broken the fast. But why did he do this? Again we may reason that because of his weak physical state he believed himself to be incapable of intense prayer, and since he believed prayer to take precedence over fasting, „he ate a bit.” At this point, we are still unclear how Rav Pappa himself understood the failure of his prayer and whether he held himself responsible for it.

The second half opens with a surprising response. Its plain sense is, „Had you eaten more, your prayer would have been more intense and rain would have fallen,” which seems to confirm and conform to Rav Pappa’s own way of thinking. Yet Rav Nahman’s remark is in fact a sarcastic sneer: „Since you ate, be it only a bit, you broke the fast and actually prevented rain from falling.” Is there something in the first half to substantiate this interpretation of Rav Nahman’s words? Yes, if we permit ourselves to interpolate a pausa after C as if to say, „So Rav Pappa suspected, on reflection, that his eating may have caused the drought to continue.” This pause would then supply the missing center of the chiasm. While assuming it on structural grounds, this reasoning is further corroborated by the expression „his mind became weak” in the second half. Rav Pappa does not recoil against Rav Nahman’s censure: rather, he accepts it, feels ashamed and regrets having eaten.

Analyzing the chiasm demands a comparison between his two „weaknesses.” As to the first, it is merely a physical fact serving as a starting point of the plot which has nothing to do with Rav Pappa’s personality. As a result of this weakness, he eats, and whether this was the correct thing to do or not is left open as immaterial. Not so his second „weakness.” This time, it is the conscious retreat of a public figure who is rebuked in front of others, who acknowledges his mistake by his silence and refrains, because of shame, from defending himself and repartée. At this point, the entire matter of fasting and breaking the fast, whether justified or not, becomes immaterial too: Heaven looks favorably on such self-humiliation, prefers it to the mortication of the flesh, and lets rain come.

6. The Hasid and his Wife (TJ. Ta’anit 1:4, 64b) It became known to the sages: „The hasid of Kefar Imi will pray and rain will fall.” So the sages went to him. Said (Aram. 3rd pers. sing. fem.!) his „household” unto them: „He is up on the mountain.” So they went forth to him and greeted him, but he did not answer their greeting. He sat down to eat, but did not say unto them, „Come and eat with me.” On his way home, he gathered kindling wood, [placed it on his shoulder] and spread the overgarment on top of the burden. Entering [his home] he said unto his „household,” „These sages want us to pray so that rain may fall. If I pray and rain falls, it is to their discredit, and if not (i.e. if no rain falls after my prayer) the Heavenly Name is profaned. Therefore come (Aram. 2nd per. fem.!), I and you (Aram. 2nd pers.fem.I), and let us go up [to the upper story] and pray there. If rain falls, let us tell them that Heaven has already performed a miracle, and if not, let us tell them that we are not worthy of praying and being answered.” [So] they went [up] and prayed, and rain fell. He [then] went down and said unto them, „Why did the sages happen to come here today?” Said they unto him, „We ask you to pray so that rain may fall.” Said he unto them, „Do you [really] need my prayer? Heaven has already performed a miracle.” Said they unto him, „Why, when you were on the mountain and we greeted you, did you not answer us?” Said he unto them, „I was engaged in my day-laborer’s work. Could I have turned my mind away from my work?” Said they unto him, „And why, when you sat down to eat, did you not tell us to join you?” Said he unto them, „I had no more than my slice [of bread]; should I have spoken to you with hypocrisy?” Said they unto him, „And why, when you went home, did you put the overgarment on top of the burden?” Said he unto them, „It did not belong to me but was loaned to me so that I might pray in it.” Said they unto him, „And why, when you came back from the mountain, was your wife in dirty clothes, and why, when you went back from the mountain, was she dressed in clean clothes?” Said he unto them, „While I was on the mountain, she was dressed in dirty clothes lest a man be attracted by her, and when
I returned from the mountain, she was dressed in clean clothes lest I be attracted by another woman." Said they unto him, „You indeed are worthy of praying and being answered.”

Twice are we told in this story what the hasid has been doing on that mountain: once as seen through the eyes of the author and a second time as explained by the hasid. Similarly, the theme of his prayer for rain is first related by the man himself, and then again by the author. The material is then chiastically organized as follows:

First part A  The hasid’s doings on the mountain B  He tells his wife about the sages and the rainfall B’ He tells the sages about the rainfall A’ He explains his doings on the mountain Last Part

In the exact middle, the man and his wife pray for rain, and rain falls. This event, obviously the decisive one in the entire story, occurs without much previous tension as it is already unequivocally stated in the opening, in a quasi-prophetic revelation, that the hasid would pray and that rain would fall. Yet in his words to his wife, he twice envisages the possibility that their prayer may not succeed and that no rain fall because they were „not worthy of praying and being answered,” which is only one of several signs of his modesty. In the end, the sages declare the man to be „worthy of praying and being answered” which does not mean that in the first place they had their doubts whether his prayer would be answered, but rather that they are now convinced that he is indeed worthy of being answered. The initial, central and final sentences form the external frame of the story and point out that its principal question is whether the hasid is, or is not, worthy of having his prayer answered.

But what convinced the sages that this man was so worthy? Surely not what they saw in A, where they met a taciturn and rather uncouth laborer in a field whose behavior is so peculiar that they do not even have the chance of asking him to pray. To be sure, they were told in the beginning that he would pray and that rain would fall. Yet by the time they ask him to pray, it is already raining and prayer is not needed anymore. Moreover, the sages do not have any opportunity of asking the man to pray, because he does not let them speak to him but withdraws with his wife into a secluded place of his house. Since the sages are unaware of what has been discussed between husband and wife, they wonder even more whether that unusual man is worthy of praying and being answered. After the rain, when the hasid’s apprehension that he would be asked to pray has passed, a lively dialogue starts between him and his visitors until the end of the episode.

A detailed examination and comparison of the elements of the chiastic structure here is the key to their understanding. The first part of the dialogue between the visitors and their host deals with rainfall (B’) and has its parallel, as mentioned above, in the initial dialogue between husband and wife (B). Part B’ shows that the man is concealing the truth: While he asks the visitors for the purpose of their visit,31 we remember that he knows it very well, as he previously told it to his wife. He replies to their first statement by an ambiguous question: „Do you really need my prayer?” This may either be taken as a rhetorical question: „After all, you see that rain falls even without my prayer;” or as a real one requiring the answer, „We certainly need you to pray since we were told that without it no rain would fall.” Thus, the hasid succeeded in hiding the truth without telling a formal lie.

How did the sages understand all this on their part? Probably they told themselves, „We were advised the man would pray and subsequently rain would fall, but did he really pray? Taking his patent modesty into account, he may have prayed when he was on the upper floor with his wife.” To make sure of his modesty and righteousness they question him about his peculiar behavior. Each question directly refers to one specific previous action except for one: the matter of the woman’s clothes, which has no opposite part in the first half of the story, but only is hinted at. We are told that the „household” talked to the sages when they arrived, but in that sentence the verbal form of the predicate is feminine singular instead of masculine plural. It follows that not several servants, but one woman
talked to them, whom, however, they mistook for one of the servants because of her lowly attire. The author kept this character’s identity secret, exactly as she herself did, so that they might not be attracted to her.

The considerable literary effort made here by the author asks for a thorough examination of the woman’s role in all the remaining parts of the story.

Upon her husband’s return home she dresses in her clean clothes, whereupon the visitors recognize her as the lady of the house. Although the author calls her again „household” we are left in no doubt that the hasid is speaking to his wife. Knowing that this prayer will be of no avail unless he is joined by her, he talks to her at great length. If his prayer without her presence had had a chance of bringing rain, he could have prayed, having the necessary overgarment with him, in seclusion on the mountain where he most probably had also offered his regular daily prayer. Yet the presence of this virtuous woman is necessary so that her merit may strengthen his intercession. Though this detail seemingly contradicts the opening where only the hasid’s prayer is mentioned, the author makes use of this contradiction in order to make his point. Since nobody looks at this woman, nobody is able to recognize how great her virtue is, except her husband for whom alone she makes herself attractive. Therefore only he knows that he needs her participation in his prayer.

The hasid’s unusual conduct on the mountain is now becoming more comprehensible. By no means can he talk to the sages and listen to their request because he does not want to divulge to them how indispensable the presence of his wife is for his prayer, or else they would become aware of her and later be attracted to her. He is unwilling to turn his mind away from his work because, having greeted the sages, he would have to give them a lengthy explanation. Likewise is it true that a poor laborer who owns neither a field nor an overgarment for prayer cannot invite guests for a meal. His entire demeanor, though rough, is one of truthfulness, a sort of hard shell which covers a pure and humble heart. This becomes evident when he talks to his wife at the end of the first half, and of her at the end of the second. It is only in the very end that the sages realize all this when the woman has long ago disappeared behind the scene and her husband may freely tell of her greatness.

It remains for us to clarify the significance of the kindling wood and the overgarment. This detail is meant to show how little he thinks of his own comfort and what good care he takes of another’s property. Such is the „hasidic” style of life of the man whom we know only by the appellation „the hasid of Kefar Imi” and whose name we are never told. Another reason for mentioning the overgarment is to indicate the fact that the man was properly equipped to pray on the mountain, had he wished to do so without his wife. Thirdly, the loaned overgarment is also linked to his wife’s dress: while the woman has two sets of clothes, the clean one for her husband and the dirty one for the visitors, he has not even one simple overgarment, but has to borrow one which he will use only for prayer. For both husband and wife, clothing is a necessity for observing miswot and not for varity.

There is much development here, from the moment when the sages first see the woman and take her for a servant, to the end when they comprehend her covert virtues. It is the analysis of the chiastic structure of the story that enabled us to detect her paramount role in it. The intricacy of the structure becomes evident in the following diagram:

A „The hasid will pray and rain will fall” B The woman incognito in a servant’s dress C The man’s conduct on the mountain D He talks to his wife of prayer and rain E Their common prayer: it rains D’ He talks to the sages of prayer and rain C’ His conduct on the mountain explained B’ The woman’s identity and dress finally explained to the sages A’ „Worthy of praying and being answered”
We have only examined a small number of passages. Nevertheless, within this sample, chiasmus is evident and diversified. Let us summarize the major characteristics observed here. As mentioned before, the thematic principle in literary chiasm is generally introduced by the tension created between the two extreme framing elements A and A'. It is only natural that this tension should find expression not only in the description of certain mutually opposed objective facts such as „it did not rain” against „it rained,” but much more so in the tension arising from challenges to man's conduct and attitude, e.g. „Rav Pappa decreed a fast” or „R. Yona – when the world was in need of rain.” In such stories, man's actions are causally significant. On certain occasions, it also happens that the storyteller cancels the simple dramatic tension by revealing at the beginning what will happen in the end, e.g. „Joseph will enjoy the Gentile's property” or „The hasid will pray and rain will fall.” In such cases the reader begins to ask himself: „Why is this so? What are the merits of these people?” The chiastic use of tension develops further, as it goes without saying that there are various degrees of such tension. In the tale about Joseph, for example, the plot is quite involved, for which reason there are substantial tensions within it. On the other hand, there is little tension in the hasid's story, since its end only confirms what has been said in its beginning.

The second element (B) of the chiasm plays a double role. It develops the plot and at the same time relates to B'. The rich Gentile tries to obviate fate by selling his property; the Angel of Death disguises himself as a poor man and thus only enhances R. Hiyya's merits; R. Meir accompanies the sinner; Rav Pappa's heart weakens; and the sages meet the woman instead of the hasid. Each of these developments twists the plot and changes the normal course of events. We may perhaps go so far as to generalize and say: if in an aggadic story B is no more than the natural continuation of A, the story is not fundamentally chiastic. An example is the story of the two mourners in which Rav Ashi wishes to hear their eulogies in A and which actually occurs in B, which lends the story a different literary character.

But it is the double function of B that accounts for the chiastic structure. While B finds its complement in B', it stands both opposed to A and closely related to A'. Let us illustrate this fact. The rich man sells his property to buy a pearl in order to outwit fate; he thus shows how attached he is to his riches, and it is this very action that seals his fate, hastens his well-deserved loss and, ironically, eases the pearl's „movement” toward Joseph. A double, though not ironical, meaning lies in the Angel of Death disguising himself as a poor man, and in R. Yona's pretending to go and buy grain. Rav Pappa's „weakness” also has two consequences: he interrupts his fast, thus prolonging the drought and bringing on shame and repentance. Likewise R. Meir follows the sinner in the hope that he will later follow R. Meir on his way back. Finally, the hasid's wife does not seem to play any essential part when the sages first meet her, and it is only in the end that it becomes clear that she fulfills a vital role in the plot. It is immaterial whether the twofold significance of these particulars is brought about by the principal figure himself -- as in the cases of R. Yona and the Angel of Death -- or by one of the author's literary devices. In either instance, this double character introduces a stark contrast and lends the chiasm its dramatic sophisticated quality, whether it is sharply pronounced as in the Joseph and the Angel of Death stories or more subtle as in the hasid tale.

A comparison with chiasm of a weaker kind will shed light on this point. In the Rav Ashi story, one of the mourners says:

A Weep for the losers B and not for the lost one B' as he went to rest A' and we are left to sighs.

The quatrain opens with a play on words: The Hebrew word for „losers” (obedim) may also mean „those who lost their way.” Both meanings are alluded to by the mourner. Alliteration and consonance occur in B' and A': menuha (rest), 'anu (we), and 'anahot (sighs). These almost lyric devices are intended to move the listening crowd at the funeral, but there is nothing dramatic about them. Turning to his audience (in the 2nd person), the mourner
proceeds (in the 1st person) by means of „amplification“ and includes himself at the end by saying „we." The eulogy has pathos, but lacks the dramatic problematic features of our six basic texts.

The function of C and C' depends on the length of the story. If it is short, C is already its center; if longer, the role which C and C' play resembles that of B and B': to make the plot even more involved, at some times giving it a new direction, or promoting and strengthening the one begun by B. The latter occurred in the Joseph story („buying a pearl“ versus „buying a fish“) and in the hasid story (his incomprehensible behavior on the mountain versus its explanation). Such and further subdivision of the plot into paired elements, while a sign of the author’s virtuosity, is not a necessity for introducing possible new subject matter into the story.

Now we come to the centerpieces. They present the crisis in each sample, and are the agencies for relieving the tension created by A and A' and for overcoming the conflict caused by B. When R. Yona prays in sackcloth, he not only brings the hoped-for rain but also solves for us the enigma of his words spoken to his family; in exactly the same manner, rain is brought and an enigma solved by the hasid’s prayer. There, as well as in the Angel of Death story, the main figures are, in a certain sense, disguised in the first half of the story, but now, in the centerpiece, the „mask“ drops and we begin to understand their deeds. It seems, however, that this unmasking has a more general meaning. When the fish swallows the pearl, or, at the latest, when the fish is caught, we begin to understand why the Gentile’s property was exchanged for one single pearl: all had been predestined by Providence, but we saw only the mask. Observe also that an error may sometimes serve for such a mask: Rav Pappa believes in the power of fasting, yet as the plot progresses he is proved wrong. Providence knows of his error and leads him from weakness of heart by means of disappointment and insult at the centerpiece of the tale, toward a salutory „weakness of mind."

Thus, the central crisis functions as deliverance and catharsis in all samples except one: R. Meir and Aher. Here Aher’s words „Turn back,” as used by R. Meir in his fruitless attempt to influence Aher to „turn back,” are anything but cathartic, nor do they open up any avenue for a solution. Indeed, the chiasm of this story is turned upside down, or, better, it is the negative of the other stories. Aher’s last sentence, starting with „I have already heard . . .,” refers to what had happened before the entire incident and thus prejudices its outcome from its very beginning: when he rides on horseback on a Sabbath it is already quite clear that he would never repent. No tension could therefore have been created between A and A’ and, in fact, there is almost none. Only in the middle, when R. Meir tries once more, tragically and in vain, to change what is preordained does tension rise to some extent.

Exactly where the centerpiece starts and ends may be defined only within view of those elements that comprise the turning point. The centerpiece need not be of the same length in all cases: a turning point may consist of a few words („and a fish swallowed it”) or take up a whole third of the text (starting from the hasid talking to his wife and terminating when the sages question him).

From the center on, the stories run their normal course until their end. But the Talmudic storytellers were in no hurry. They disentangle in the second half all the complications introduced by the first. The parallelisms between the two halves lend importance to every single detail and enhance the dramatic effect. Yet we get the impression that the authors were afraid that their tales might end too much as expected and that by subordinating the second half to the first, they might bore their audiences. Hence, they frequently save a certain element for a final surprise. The angel’s „fiery stick,” the woman’s clean clothes, the Sabbath as a debtor are cases in point. In order to achieve a „last minute” surprise, the authors were at times compelled to deviate from strict chiasm.
Our subject has been analyzing the formal aspects of these stories and it is therefore only natural that we stressed that one element of literary artistry in particular. Nevertheless, it seems appropriate to state that these ancient authors were not artists in the present-day sense of the word. But undoubtedly we find much artistry in their creations, which was never to them so much an end in itself as a means for attracting listeners and readers, captivating their attention and impressing them with a specific religious or moral message.

FOOTNOTES


2 TB, Mo'ed Quatan 25b. A more detailed analysis follows below.

3 The first five examples are taken from the Babylonian Talmud. Their texts were examined in manuscript variants and compared with those works of medieval literature, where they are quoted, in order to establish their most reliable versions before translating them into English. Hence, the present wording differs here and there from their rendering in the widely used printings and translations of the Talmud. Parts of the third example are incorporated within a lengthy description in the Palestinian Talmud (Hagiga 3:1, 77b), where, however, they do not form one single, coherent and artistic entity. The sixth example is from the Palestinian Talmud, a popular parallel of which occurs in the Babylonian (Ta'anit 23a–b).

4 While a person of this name is mentioned nowhere else in Talmudic literature, the anecdote is told as if he had been well-known in his days. This literary device -- the importance of which will become clear in the following -- is widely used in the Talmud, cf. our sixth example below. The expression moqir in Aramaic is ambiguous: it means both honoring and paying dearly for something.

5 The realia point clearly to Babylonia where people crossed rivers on ferry boats.

6 The motif of a precious object changing its owner by being swallowed by a fish who is caught to be eaten is attested in the literature, see Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (Copenhagen/Bloomington; Indiana Univ. Press, 1955–58), B 548.2. ff.

7 The old man uses a metaphor: The Sabbath is a debtor who asks for a loan and repays it. Now, any debtor is expected to do likewise, which makes the relation between creditor and debtor technically a „mechanical” one. Yet the present debtor is the Sabbath, which implies uncertainty whether the creditor will receive his due, which again implies Joseph’s „free choice.”

8 It may well be that the author used as a precedent an ancient folk-tale in which unpredictability of fortune was exemplified by property passing from hand to hand by wondrous means. However, the sophistication which is expressed in the juxtaposition of the astrologers’ and the old man’s words proves that ours is not a folk-tale at all.

9 The author chose here not to create opposition between the rich Gentile and Joseph, though he could easily have done so by telling us that the latter was a poor man, which is further evidence that this is not a folk-tale (see note 8).
In the opinion of the Talmud, righteous men, by virtue of their continuously performing acts of piety, are inaccessible to the Angel of Death, be he even commanded to take their lives; cf. the passage about Rav Hisda (in Mo'ed Qatan, immediately before the present passage) and the one about King David in TB, Shabbat 30b.

It is customary in Aramaic usage for a man to speak of himself in the third person. The meaning of this question is therefore: „Why do you not take pity on me?”

The Aramaic word for „himself” is nafshey. Its literal translation is „his soul.” It is doubtlessly the purpose of the author to achieve a double entendre.

Prov 10:2; 11:4. For the Talmudic interpretation of this verse, see TB, Shabbat 156b.

The chiastic structure of the episode entitles us to surmise that in the beginning the angel knocked on the door with his ordinary stick.

Aher („another man”) is one of the names by which Elisha ben Abuyah was known, a Tannaite of the first half of the second century C.E., who later renounced Judaism. He was the teacher of the great Tannaite R. Meir (see Encyclopaedia Judaica (Jerusalem New York: Macmillan, 1971), VI, col. 668 ff., s.v. Elisha).

Horseback riding on the Sabbath is not one of the severest prohibitions, but since it was done here in public and therefore was intentionally meant to undermine the authority of the Halakha, this situation would have been viewed as a capital crime (see TB, Yeḥamot 90b). As the present episode occurred under Roman rule in Palestine, Aher had of course nothing to fear of a Jewish court.

The „Sabbath boundary” is two thousand cubits, beyond which a Jew is forbidden to walk further from the outskirts of his town.

A sort of partition behind which decisions of the Heavenly Court are taken and may be heard.

Talmudic storytellers were fond of putting biblical quotations in the mouths of their dramatis personae. See my paper „Biblical Verses Quoted in Tales of the Sages,” Scripta Hierosolymitana, XXII (1971), 80 ff.

A zuz is one quarter of a selā’ of Tyre, i.e. approximately equivalent to one Biblical seqel. According to the price mentioned in 2 Kings 7:2 and our knowledge about the great inflation in Talmudic times (especially during drought), R. Yona’s zuz could not have bought much more than two pounds of grain.

Covering oneself with sackcloth while praying at a time of great distress is attested in the Bible as common usage, cf. Is. 58:5, Ps. 35:3, Est. 4:3, and it known also in Talmudic times, cf. Lam. Rabba 2:2.

Based on the verse „Out of the depths I cry to thee, o Lord” (Ps. 130:1), the sages prescribed that a person should pray while standing at a low place for humiliy’s sake, cf. TB, Berakot 10b and elsewhere as quoted in the Tosefta, Order Zera’im, Berakot 3:17 (ed. S. Liebermann, New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1956, p. 16).

It is not impossible that the storyteller aims at ambiguity in the words „Did you bring a thing?”. Understood on the world’s level, the „thing” is grain; on R. Yona’s, it is rain. If so, this ambiguity is the counterpart of that of the
intended purpose of the sack. In both cases, R. Yona alone is aware of the equivocality, and thus both form another element of the chiasm.

24 In Talmudic diction, this signifies physical weakness caused by great effort or lack of food, cf. TB, Shabbat 10a and Quiddushin 40a.

25 This sage is mentioned nowhere else in the Talmud. An ancient tradition quoted by R. Natan ben Yehiel (Italy, 11th cent.) in his Arukh conceives of him as Rav Pappa's stepbrother (see Aruch Completum, ed. A. Kohut, Vienna: 1878, II, p. 173). If this tradition is trustworthy, then the clash between the two figures of the story is even sharper.

26 This idiom stands in Aramaic for melancholy and sadness caused by insult and shame.

27 This place is mentioned also in TJ, Shabbat 16:7, 15d and parallels, but its exact location as well as the hasid himself are not known from any other source. See also note 4.

28 This expression (Heb. beney beyto) is usually employed for a person's servants, cf. Gen. 15:3, Eccl. 2:7; M. Abot 1:5 (according to TB, Baba Mezi'a 60b and RaSHI ad loc., and Maimonides Yad Hazaqah, Matenot 'Aniyim 10:17). For the importance of this expression in this story and its grammatical difficulty, see below. Literally, beney beyto means „his house’s sons.”

29 The original uses the archaic word pe'ula, following Biblical usage in Lev. 19:14.

30 When praying a man is supposed to be covered with a garment, cf. TB, Shabbat 10a.

31 The Aramaic original reads ‘ittarefun, i.e. „you missed (or lost) your way.” It may be understood in two senses: either that they went in vain, since it had already rained before they asked the man to pray, or that they went from the man’s house up to the mountain in vain. For more double meanings found in the dialogue between the hasid and the sages see below.

32 Had the author used here „wife” instead of „household” we would have had no choice but to understand that in the beginning they really met with servants and when they came from the mountain with the hasid they met another person – the hasid’s wife.

33 For a further strongly chiastic example, with as many as five elements, see my paper „The Story of R. Sheila, TB Berakot 58a” Tarbiz, 40 (1970), 33–40.

34 We know almost nothing about the lives of the Talmudic narrators, but we may assume that they all lived in either Palestine or Babylonia between the second and the fifth centuries C. E. inasmuch as the personalities referred to in these narratives are often historically identifiable. R. Hiyya, for example, lived in Palestine at the end of the tannaitic period (late second and early third centuries C. E.); R. Yona lived in Palestine in the fourth century; and Rav Pappa was the most famous Babylonian Amora of the fifth generation (d. 371 (C. E.).
Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon

John W. Welch

It may seem strange to find a discussion of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon among a collection of essays concerning chiasmus in antiquity, since the Book of Mormon first appeared, in English, in 1830. And in certain respects it is strange, or at least different. But in other respects, nothing could be more natural.

The Book of Mormon itself purports to be an ancient religious and partially secular record written by a group that left Jerusalem after the first Babylonian conquest of the city in 598/7 B.C. but before the capitulation of Jerusalem to Nebuchadrezzar II in 587/6 B.C. Led by a prophetic individual named Lehi and his fourth son Nephi, the group travelled south on the Saudi Arabian frankincense trade routes and further by sea to the Western Hemisphere, where this culture survived until ca. 421 A.D. Some of these people remained conscious of their Near Eastern cultural heritage, and it was this segment of the population which was responsible for the writing and abridging of the texts now contained in the Book of Mormon. This people lived in an intense state of messianic expectation and recorded several revelations regarding the role of Christ and their spiritual relationship to him.

Ever since the Book for Mormon first appeared, however, it has aroused controversy and curiosity. Those who have believed in the validity of the book have asserted that it reads like an authentic Hebrew text and that its character and content are consistent with the Jewish and Near Eastern cultural background from which the book itself says that it derives. Those who have not been so credulous have responded that the book’s style is „stilted, complicated, diffuse, meaningless or even brutal” and that any resemblance between the style of the Book of Mormon and ancient Hebrew literature is due to passages in the Book of Mormon which have been „plagiarized from the Bible.”

My present purpose is not to put all such arguments or controversies to rest. Whether one accepts the antiquity of the Book of Mormon will tend to remain, to a significant extent, a matter of faith. Nevertheless, of all the things which can be said about the Book of Mormon, it must be acknowledged that the book, especially in its most literary portions, is replete with precise and extensive chiastic compositions. These passages are often meaningfully creative, original, and intricate, judged to be highly successful by any consistently applied criteria. The purpose of this essay is to display a few of the most salient chiastic arrangements in the Book of Mormon. However one views this book, no judgment concerning it can consider itself complete without at least taking into account the chiastic literary character of much of this writing. Several such passages will be discussed and then, in conclusion, the significance of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon will be briefly considered, first in respect to the Book of Mormon and then in light of what this may mean for chiastic analysis generally.

The first six books in the Book of Mormon, written from the Sixth to the Second Centuries B.C., have come down relatively intact and show little or no sign of redaction or alteration by later hands. The first two books, 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi, were written by Nephi, the son of Lehi, although both books are composite works containing material either quoted from or reworked by Nephi from the writings of his father Lehi, his brother Jacob, and from certain portions of prophecies attributable to Isaiah which were known to Lehi and Nephi from records which they took with them from Jerusalem. Though composite, Nephi’s writings are far from unorganized. His use of parallelism, balance, and particularly chiasmus is that of a sophisticated literary technician.
Nephi divided his writings into two books. The first book is predominantly an account of the migration of the group, and is written as a religio-political tract with a major purpose of establishing Nephi as the legitimate successor to his father as the leader of the colony. The second book contains almost exclusively spiritual and prophetic writings. Both books are independent chiastic units, centrally focused and symmetrically organized, which itself explains why Nephi divided his writings into two books.

1 Nephi is a well-structured book, with almost every element in the first half of the book having a specific counterpart in the second half. The book begins and ends with prophetic statements about the impending fate of Jerusalem and the delivery of Lehi’s group from this destruction. Lehi is the prophetic voice at first; Nephi has taken his place by the end. In between, the group’s departure from the land of Jerusalem is paralleled by its arrival in the land of promise. Nephi establishes himself over his brothers by accomplishing two amazing feats: in the first half of the book he obtains sacred records where his brothers had failed, and in the second half he constructs a ship while his brothers said it could not be done. Many elements in the narration of these last two episodes are identical, down to the repetition of 1 Ne 3:7 at 17:3. In the central section of the book (chapters 8–15), two accounts are given of the same major vision, first as it was experienced by Lehi and second as it was duplicated in Nephi’s experience (see 1 Ne 14:29). Interspersed amid this basic framework are further detailing doublets. A steel sword is important in chapter 4, while a steel bow is significant in chapter 16. The guiding words of the Lord are given to the people by means of two brass instruments, in the first half of the book by brass plates and in the second, by a brass ball. Nephi is bound with cords by his brothers twice, once in the desert in chapter 7, and again at sea in chapter 18. Lehi’s wife Sariah is mentioned twice, once in chapter 5 and again in chapter 18. The father of Lehi’s daughters-in-law, Ishmael, is mentioned prominently in exactly two sections, first in chapter 7 and again in chapter 16. At the very center, and much like the centerpiece of several Biblical books, stands Nephi’s account of his encounter with the spirit of the Lord, as Nephi was „caught away in the Spirit of the Lord, yea, into an exceeding high mountain“ (1 Ne 11:1). Experiencing the same vision as his father Lehi appears, therefore, to be the decisive factor which in Nephi’s mind ultimately established him as the successor to his father. It was clearly the most important spiritual experience of his life, and perhaps for this reason he places it at the center of his first book. The pattern of 1 Nephi may, therefore be displayed as follows:


In addition to utilizing chiasmus to confer a successful degree of coherence upon the structure of this overall narrative, Nephi also employs chiasmus on many other occasions on a smaller scale. Consider only a few. The main incident in the first half of the book is Nephi’s obtaining the brass plates from a politically influential opponent of Lehi’s named Laban. After the elder brothers had failed to obtain the plates by diplomacy or by purchase, Nephi
went into the city alone at night to steal the needed religious records. He tells his story in a noticeably chiastic manner: (A) First he leaves his brothers at the city walls, (B) then heads toward the house of Laban and finds Laban drunk on the street. (C) Nephi sees and describes Laban's steel sword, and (D) is constrained by the spirit to kill Laban. (E) The spirit affirms that Laban had been delivered into Nephi's hands. (F) Nephi recalls the imperative that his nation must not perish in unbelief and (G) particularly remembers the promise (cf. Lev 26:3 ff) that inasmuch as the nation obeys the law it shall prosper. (F') It therefore appears absolutely essential that the nation have the law to avoid perishing in unbelief, and thus (E') Nephi accepts that Laban had been delivered into his hands. Thus (D') he kills Laban and (C') takes his sword, armor and clothing, (B') proceeds to the house of Laban where he obtains the plates and (A') returns to his brothers outside the city walls (1 Ne 4:4–27). Immediately preceding this story, Nephi tells of his brothers' great fear of Laban (4:1–4), while at the end Nephi tells how his brothers fear Nephi, mistaking him at a distance for Laban (4:28–29). Although this narrative is a relatively straightforward episode, it is also apparent that the events could have been retold in a manner other than in the chiastic fashion in which it actually appears. Especially the central material which Nephi includes to justify the slaying did not need to be, and yet is very effectively, situated at the center of this pericope.

Likewise, the main incident in the second half of the book is Nephi's achieving preeminence over his brothers as they obtain passage to the land of promise. Here again, many chiastic features can be observed. When Nephi's brothers raise three objections against him in 1 Ne 17:17–22, namely that (A) he cannot accomplish so great a work, (B) that the group has been made to suffer unduly by Lehi and Nephi, and (C) that the group has been misled because they were willing to hearken unto Lehi who criticized the people of Jerusalem, Nephi answers these objections in 17:23–26 in the reverse order, namely (C') that people must hearken in order to be saved, (B') that the Israelites have historically suffered greatly, and (A') that the Lord has given men such as Moses the power to accomplish ,,great works''. Again, when Nephi tells of the voyage of the group, he does so in chiastic fashion, most deliberately, (and otherwise inexplicably) telling twice how his brothers were forced to loosen the bands with which they had bound him (18:15 and 18:20).

Beside utilizing chiasmus in structuring lengthy bodies of material, Nephi employs chiasmus in ordering individual words as well. In 1 Ne 17:36–40, for example, the following chiastic inversions appear:

A  Behold, the Lord hath created the earth that it should be inhabited, And he hath created his children that they should possess it, B  And he raiseth up a righteous nation And he destroyeth the nations of the wicked, B'  And he leadeth away the righteous into precious lands And the wicked he destroyeth and curseth the land unto them, A'  He ruleth high in the heavens for it is his throne and the earth is his footstool And he loveth those who will have him to be their God.

This passage is intricately constructed with direct and inverted parallelisms operating simultaneously on several levels. Besides the overall A–B–B'–A' framework, simple chiasms also appear with these lines augmenting their balanced composition without disrupting their basic parallelism. It is also interesting to note that chiastic elements such as these occur frequently in the writings of Nephi, but less so in the words preserved from Lehi and his fifth son Jacob.

The book of 2 Nephi, although not so detailed as 1 Nephi, is also a chiastic unit. Central emphasis is given here to the words of Isaiah, which are seen by both Jacob and Nephi as containing much which could be likened unto the future of Lehi's group. The book begins with Lehi's final Testaments to his sons, grandsons, and sons-in-law. It ends with Nephi's Testament to his nation (he appears to have had no sons). The organization of 2 Nephi is thus:
Consistent with the poetic character of much of the writing in this book, other chiasms in 2 Nephi are tightly constructed and relatively lyrical in character. In 2 Ne 28:21, Nephi composes these chiastic couplets describing the work of the devil:

a And others will he pacify And lull them away into carnal security b That they will say All is well in Zion b' Yea Zion prospers All is well a' And thus he cheateth their souls And leadeth them away carefully down to hell.

Similarly, a pleasing poetic use of chiasmus occurs in the following messianic hymn. The repetitions here seem to be consciously designed to convey emphatically Nephi’s understanding that salvation belongs not to the law as such, but to the Lord:

A 1 And notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses 2 And look forward with steadfastness unto Christ 3 Until the law shall be fulfilled, 4 For for this end was the law given. B Wherefore the law hath become dead unto us And we are made alive in Christ because of our faith, Yet we keep the law because of the commandments; C And we talk of Christ We rejoice in Christ, We preach of Christ, We prophesy of Christ. C' And we write according to our prophecies That our children may know To what source they may look For a remission of their sins. B' Wherefore we speak concerning the law That our children may know the deadness of the law And may look forward to that life which is in Christ, A' 4 And know for what end the law was given, 3 And after that the law is fulfilled 2 In Christ that they need not harden their hearts against him, 1 When the law had ought to be done away (2 Ne 25:24–27).

The next four books in the Book of Mormon (Jacob, Enos, Jarom and Omni) manifest virtually no chiasmus. These books are increasingly brief and, particularly the last two, were composed during a dark age in Nephite history which was marked by political stagnation and little or no literary activity. Nephite culture was finally revitalized by a king named Mosiah, who in the Second Century B.C. colonized an area north of the original Lehite settlement. Mosiah’s son Benjamin, more than any other individual, typified this period of renaissance in the Nephite world.

One of the most interesting documents contained in the Book of Mormon is a copy of the speech delivered by Benjamin as he proclaimed his son, Mosiah II, king over his people, about 124 B.C. (Mos 2:9–5:15). Benjamin had apparently worked during his lifetime to preserve and perpetuate the understanding of ancient languages among his people, especially his sons (Mos 1:2–4). Thus it is most fitting that his last official address, which was apparently delivered during Rosh hashanna-Sukkoth⁹, and perhaps also in a Jubilee year,¹⁰ as well as in connection with the coronation of his son,¹¹ should epitomize a high classical style, being thoroughly chiastic.

Benjamin’s Speech is divided into several obvious sections by explicit breaks in the ceremony or transitions occurring at Mos 2:29–30, 3:1, 4:1–3, and 5:1–5. Further analysis suggests that the speech is a seven-part inverted system as follows:

I. Introduction (2:9–28) God as the Heavenly King and man’s obligations thereunder. God has physically created you. Covenant peoples are servants of God. The hope of exaltation after death. (A. Coronation proclamation. 2:29–30) II. For obedience to the laws the Lord and king impart victory and prosperity (cf.

Most of the parallels in the organization of this speech are readily apparent. It is significant that the entire speech centers on a proclamation of the need for atonement/purification (Yom Kippur, or Day of Atonement, would also have fallen within days of the time when Benjamin delivered this speech). This central statement is constructed as an elaborate chiasm. Benjamin tells his nation that they will be lost unless:

(a) They humble themselves (b) and become as little children (c) believing that salvation is in the atoning blood of Christ; (d) for the natural man (e) is an enemy to God (f) and has been from the fall of Adam (f) and will be forever and ever (e) unless he yieldeth to the Holy Spirit (d) and putteth off the natural man (c) and becometh a saint through the atoning of Christ (b) and becometh as a child (a) submissive, meek and humble (Mos 3:18–19)

Chiastic repetitions occur frequently in Benjamin’s rhetoric. Two further examples demonstrate the precision with which this was achieved. In the first section of his speech, Benjamin’s ideas flow, seemingly without effort, through one sequence of thoughts and then again through the opposite order of that same series, with two unmistakably parallel decrees standing at the center of the system. Briefly stated, the structure of this portion of the speech may be seen as follows:

A The Purpose of the Assembly is stated (2:9–10) ,,I have not commanded you to come up hither to trie with words but that you should harken unto me and . . . that mysteries be unfolded to your view.” B What is man? We are all mortals (2:10–11) ,,I am a mortal man, like as yourselves . . . the Lord hath granted me all my strength.” C The Laws in Benjamin’s Kingdom (2:12–14) ,,I have not sought riches . . . nor suffered that ye make slaves of one another, or murder, plunder, steal or commit adultery . . . nor that ye be laden with taxes.” D Service (2:15–17) ,,When ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God.” E ,,Behold ye have called me your king (2:18) And if I, whom ye call your king, Do labor to serve you Then had not ye ought to labor to serve one another? And behold if I, whom ye call your king (2:19) Has spent his days in your service and yet hath been in the service of God, Doth merit any thanks from you O how had you ought to thank your heavenly King!” D’ Service (2:20–21) ,,If ye should serve God with all your whole soul, yet would ye be unprofitable servants;” C’ The Laws in God’s Kingdom (2:22) ,,If you would keep his commandments ye should prosper in the land.” B’ What is man? We are of the dust (2:23–26) ,,He hath granted you life . . . I am no better than yourselves”. A’ The Purpose of the Assembly amplified (2:27–28) ,,I have caused that ye should assemble yourselves that your blood should not come upon me.

It is particularly interesting to observe the masterful way in which each portion of the second half of this system enhances and completes the thought of its corresponding section in the first half of the section. In A, Benjamin draws attention to the purpose of the assembly from the people’s perspective; in A’, his thought is directed toward his own purpose for calling the assembly. In B, he declares himself, although the king, to be infirm like any other
mortal; in B', he emphatically states that all men are infirm, indeed less than the dust of the earth (2:25). In C, he reports the observance of the laws in his kingdom; in C', he explains the operation of the law in God's kingdom. In D, he teaches that one only serves God when one serves a fellowman, while in D' he makes the further penetrating point that no human service can be ultimately profitable to God, for no service (and all service is only service of God) is capable of removing the servant from his indebtedness to God. Finally in E, Benjamin transfers, as it were, any benefits he might receive under his royal rights and privileges to God, the heavenly King. It is clear that Benjamin's thought, in each instance, is not complete without its chiastic counterpart.

Also remarkably precise is the central passage in the seventh and final section of Benjamin's Speech. Immediately prior to this portion of the speech, Benjamin's people had reaffirmed to the king their willingness to keep the covenant and to be obedient to God's commandments in all things (Mos 5:5). At this point Benjamin pronounces his people „the children of Christ, his sons and daughters“ (Mos 5:7) and issues a warning to all those who are unwilling to enter into or to keep sacred the covenant:

(a) And now whosoever shall not take upon them the name of Christ (b) must be called by some other name; (c) therefore he findeth himself on the left hand of God. (d) And I would that ye should remember that this is the name (e) that should never be blotted out (f) except it be through transgression; therefore (f) take heed that ye do not transgress (e) that the name be not blotted out of your hearts (d) I would that ye should remember to retain this name (c) that ye are not found on the left hand of God, (b) but that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called (a) and also the name by which he shall call you (Mos. 5:10–12).

Again, the repetition here is precise, extensive and meaningful. It simply strains reason to imagine that such structure in this oration occurred accidentally. Furthermore, the historical setting and classical interests of Benjamin make it all the more plausible to view this speech as one of the great chiastic writings of all time.

Benjamin's speech is the first major section in the Book of Mosiah. This book covers events from approximately 150 B.C. to 92 B.C., with the earliest material coming at the center of the book. Although it appears that this book was edited, in certain parts, by Mormon in the Fourth Century A.D., it seems to have retained its organizational framework, which is fundamentally chiastic. The book begins with Benjamin's Speech, in which his son Mosiah is crowned king and the people exhorted to righteousness; it ends with Mosiah's edict in which Judges are selected to succeed Mosiah in power. Benjamin consecrates priests in the first half of the book; Alma ordains priests and teachers in the second half. The travels of Ammon to the land of Lehi-Nephi, where Ammon finds the people of Zeniff in bondage to harsh overlords, is paralleled by the subsequent escape of Alma from bondage out of the same land. A set of 24 Gold Plates are conspicuously mentioned in both halves of the book, once in chapter 8 and again in chapter 21. Finally, at the center stands the powerful declarations of a repentance-crying prophet named Abinadi, who is persecuted and interrogated and put to death. Abinadi's recitation of the law and his commentary on Isaiah 52:7–10 and 53:1–12 constitute an apt centerpiece for this book, whose unifying theme is to show that those who reject the word of God will be brought into bondage and destroyed, whereas those who obey divine injunctions, especially as taught by the anointed Nephite rulers, will prosper in the land.13

The next book in the Book of Mormon is entitled the Book of Alma. It contains 63 chapters and is the most diverse composition in the entire volume. The last 18 chapters were written by Helaman, the son of Alma, during a period of intense civil strife; the earlier chapters contain a wide array of records concerning the words and deeds of Alma and several of his contemporaries. Many of the speeches and hymns composed by Alma show chiastic tendencies, especially those things which he wrote late in his life.14 For example, as a young man, Alma had experienced a
powerful conversion, which in his youth he had described in relatively abrupt antithetical parallel statements, including:

„I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God.

My soul was racked with eternal torment; but I am snatched, and my soul is pained no more.” (Mos. 27:29)

As an old man, blessing his first-born son Helaman, Alma relives his conversion, but now he retells and reshapes it within a meticulous chiastic framework which not only contrasts the intense agony of his conversion with its exuberant joy but also frames that conversion with twelve precisely flanking elements which surround the focal point of that conversion, namely Alma’s reliance on „one Jesus Christ, a Son of God.” This extraordinary chapter, Alma 36, follows a rigorous chiastic pattern:

My son give ear to my words (1) Keep the commandments and ye shall prosper in the land (1) Do as I have done (2) Captivity of our fathers –– bondage (2) He surely did deliver them (2) Trust in God (3) Support in trials, troubles and afflictions (3) I know this not of myself but of God (4) Born of God (5) Alma seeks to harm the Church (6) Limbs paralyzed (10) Fear of the presence of God (14) Pains of a damned soul (16) Alma remembers one Jesus Christ (17) Alma calls upon Jesus Christ (18) Soul filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain (20) Long to be in presence of God (22) Use of limbs returns (23) Alma labors to strengthen the souls of men (24) Born of God (26) Therefore my knowledge is of God (26) Supported under trials and troubles and afflictions (27) Trust in him (27) He will deliver me (27) Egypt –– captivity (28–29) Know as I do know (30) Keep the commandments and ye shall prosper in the land (30) This according to his word (30)

It is difficult to imagine a more paradigmatic or a more effective use of chiasmus than this. Alma 36 is worthy in form to the best of any ancient chiastic writer. Two further points deserve particular attention: first, as if to remove any doubt concerning the fact that this chiastic arrangement was intended to accentuate the contrast between the agony and the joy which Alma had experienced, he makes that contrast explicit in verse 20 when he states: „My soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain.” Second, it says much for Alma’s artistic sensitivities that he succeeds in placing the turning point of his life at the turning point of this chapter. Such effects, it would appear, do not occur without design. As natural as it might seem to use chiasmus as a literary device in contrasting opposites such as those Alma had experienced or in emphasizing the turning point of one’s conversion, its usage is not at all obvious or automatic, as is evidenced by the fact that Alma did not use it when he described his conversion as a young man. Such a use of chiasmus is, rather, a conscious creation of an imaginative and mature artist.

Alma’s literary skill rises to a further level of creativity in the most unique chiastic passage he appears to have written, Alma 41:13–15. From Alma 36 we have already seen that Alma is capable of flexibility and fluency within chiastic principles. In Alma 41, he adds a sense of innovation to those qualities. While expounding the principle of restoration (or divine judgment), Alma lists four pairs of adjectival substantives ($w_1$–$w_2$ to $z_1$–$z_2$), and then turns around to pair two lists of four terms and to reverse their order at the same time ($z_2$ to $w_2$, and $z_1$ to $w_1$). The effect is clever:

Alma 41:13–15 A My son, the meaning of the word restoration is to bring back B Evil for evil Carnal for carnal Devilish for devilish-- C_{16,2} \ w_1 \ w_2 \ good \ for \ that \ which \ is \ good, \ x_1 \ x_2 \ righteous \ for \ that which is righteous y_1 \ y_2 \ just \ for \ that \ which \ is \ just \ z_1 \ z_2 \ merciful \ for \ that \ which \ is \ merciful; \ Therefore
my son that thou art C, merciful unto your brethren, y, deal justly, x, judge righteously w, and do good continually; And if ye do all these things, Ye shall have your reward, yea, C, ye shall have mercy restored unto you again, y, ye shall have justice restored unto you again, x, ye shall have a righteous judgement restored unto you again, w, ye shall have good rewarded unto you again. B’ For that which ye do send out Shall return unto you again And be restored; A’ Therefore the word restoration more fully condemnethe the sinner and justifieth him not at all.

The pair of lists in the second half of this chiasm has much in common with the list of pairs in the first half. Each of the pairs in the first half is composed, on the one hand, of a substantive and, on the other hand, of a predicate adjective (e.g., „just things“ will be rewarded for that which is „just“). It is significant that of the two lists contained in the second half of this system, the first list is a list of predicate adjectives (e.g. see that you are just), while the second list is a list of substantives (e.g. ye shall have justice). This inversion operates concurrently with the inversion in the order of the lists both times they appear in the second half of the passage. Altogether this is an unusual but extremely successful occurrence of chiasmus.

Compared to the high chiastic style used by writers such as Benjamin and Alma during the flowering of Nephite culture during the late Second and early First Centuries B.C., the literary achievement of subsequent Book of Mormon authors pales noticeably. Helaman and his successor, who was another writer named Nephi, along with Mormon and Moroni are the major contributors to the last third of the book. None of them appears to employ a wide variety of literary devices, let alone chiasmus. A case might be made that the books of Helaman, 3 Nephi and Ether are centrally weighted or roughly chiastic, but aside from occasional, limited usages, the occurrence of chiasmus in the last sections of the Book of Mormon diminishes significantly. Whether this is attributable to the immediate economic and political pressures which the Nephite nation increasingly experienced until its destruction in the Fourth Century A.D., or whether this is simply due to the fact that the First Century Nephite renaissance had run its course, or again merely because the later portions of the Book of Mormon are the most heavily abridged and redacted cannot be said. But whatever the reason the contrast between the last third of the Book of Mormon and its earlier sections is rather marked, which in and of itself is rather remarkable, given that Joseph Smith’s influence as translator is a constant factor throughout.

No one seriously contends that Joseph Smith or anyone associated with him knew or could have known of chiasmus or had the training to discover this principle for himself. The evidence is overwhelming against such a claim. And even if he had known in theory of chiasmus, there would still have remained the formidable task of composing the well-balanced, meaningful chiastic structures (combined with other structures unknown or unanalyzed in his time) which are found in precisely those portions of the Book of Mormon in which one would logically and historically expect to find them. Accomplishing all of this would have been an especially imposing task, since the Book of Mormon was Joseph Smith’s first work, which, at age 24, he dictated without notes mostly inside of six months and rarely revised the only draft which the manuscript ever saw.

Several independent conclusions may therefore be drawn from the foregoing discussion. If, on the one hand, one should view Smith himself as being responsible for the book, this would initially imply that even extremely complex chiastic patterns have occurred here completely unintentionally and accidentally. Perhaps such chiastic incidences should then be explained as a product of something such as a general human literary sense of balance or symmetry. This, of course, would have broad implications with respect to one’s understanding of the many chiastic passages observed elsewhere in the Bible and in other ancient writings. It would not, however, explain why chiasmus is not, then, more universally observable and why it seems to occur in certain periods of a culture’s literary development but not in others. If, on the other hand, one views the Book of Mormon alongside other
ancient texts, it would appear that chiasmus should be viewed as an even more durable literary figure than one might otherwise have expected. At least the Book of Mormon offers evidence that chiasmus was preserved and utilized with unusual conscientiousness as a basic element of this culture's literary heritage over long periods of time. How such a literary preference or sensitivity was taught and transmitted, of course, remains unknown. These and many other questions of general interest raised by the presence of chiasmus in the texts of the Book of Mormon persist regardless of how one views the book as a matter of faith.

Finally, and perhaps above all else, the study of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon shows how badly misunderstood a writing can be if it is not examined carefully. This lesson, too, applies regardless of what one’s opinion is of the Book of Mormon, or for that matter, whatever book one may be examining. Although any book may be misread, the Book of Mormon has probably suffered more than its fair share of misunderstanding. Indeed it has even been observed that the book „has not been universally considered as one of those books that must be read in order to have an opinion on it.”15 To understand this book, however, it surely must be read, and not just superficially, but with sufficient effort to perceive its message and to sense its content. As with much of ancient literature, the design and depth of the Book of Mormon often comes to light only when the book is studied with chiastic principles in mind.

**FOOTNOTES**

1 The Book of Mormon was published in 1830 (Palmyra, N.Y.: E.B. Grandin) by Joseph Smith, Jr., the first modern prophet of the church which has since become widely known as the Mormon Church, properly called the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Mormon Church accepts the Book of Mormon as an ancient scriptural record comparable in many respects to the biblical, apocryphal or pseudepigraphic writings of the ancient Jews. Smith claimed to have translated the Book of Mormon from a set of gold tablets presumably compiled and abridged by a man named Mormon in the Fourth Century A.D. References herein are to the chapters and verses of the 1879 and later LDS editions of the book.

2 See generally this author’s comments in „They Came from Jerusalem -- Some Old World Perspectives on the Book of Mormon,” Ensign 6:26 (Sept. 1976).


7 *Ibid*.

8 Lehi appears to have known Is 2–14, 29, 40:3, 48–53 and 55:1–2.
9 The people bring sacrificial animals (Mos 2:3) and dwell in booths to hear the address delivered from the temple (Mos 2:6). Many other features indicate that the setting of this speech is proximate to a celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. See J. Tvedtnes, „A Nephite Feast of Tabernacles,” unpub. (1975); cf. J. Bright, A History of Israel, 2d ed., p. 164.

10 Two sections of Benjamin’s speech are closely related to Lev. 25–26 concerning Jubilee, but no specific mention of Jubilee is made by Benjamin.

11 Concerning the coronation ritual here, see H.W. Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City; Deseret, 1964), ch. 23.

12 A detailed analysis of this passage, Mos 2:9–28, may be found in my thesis, „A Study Relating Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon to Chiasmus in the Old Testament, Ugaritic Epics, Homer, and Selected Greek and Latin Authors,” pp. 140–47.

13 A detailed outline for the Book of Mosiah is suggested in my article in BYUS 10:82.

14 For example, Alma 36, 29, 12–13.

Chiasmus in the New Testament

John W. Welch

For over a century and a half and with varying degrees of success, several New Testament commentators have seriously studied the presence of chiasmus in particular portions of the New Testament. Time has come not to reiterate the individual presentations already made by these scholars but rather to recognize and evaluate the use of chiasmus throughout the Christian Canon. Such an evaluation reveals that chiasmus is indeed a prevalent literary form appearing significantly in many parts of the New Testament. The necessary consequence of this is that interpreters and critics of the New Testament can no longer confidently proceed without some awareness of chiasmus as a basic aspect of the literary structure of the texts of the New Testament.

Such a broad assertion may seem brash, overreaching or exaggerating. But ample evidence supports this claim, whether it is made in respect to the structure of certain sayings of Jesus, the composition of elegant theological prose, or the organization of entire books and letters. Most of the evidence speaks for itself so that little needs to be said in defense or in praise of understanding chiasmus in the New Testament. Particularly in the New Testament, where the first is already last, where death is life, gain is loss, and the lost is found, the correctness and importance of any given chiastic analysis generates its own credentials and convictions.

Due as much to this self-establishing characteristic as to the frequency and complexity of chiasmus in the New Testament, the present study will only display the basis chiastic outlines of longer New Testament passages. I am particularly concerned with the structure of the books of the New Testament as integral units and with the composition of their central passages. Chiasmus in shorter passages, of course, is not necessarily less interesting. It is, however, readily discernible and frequently noted by general textual commentators. In substantial compositions, on the other hand, it is easier for extended chiasms to go unobserved, both on account of the inadvertence of modern readers and on account of the greater complexity of the structures involved. Ironically, it is also the longer chiastic compositions which, once observed, are the most memorable and most significant.

The books of the New Testament will be examined in the approximate chronological sequence in which they were written beginning as a group with the New Testament Epistles and concluding with the Gospels and, finally, Revelation. The significance of chiasmus to these writings will ultimately be discussed in summation.

EPISTLES

James A convenient starting point is the Epistle of James. Although any attempt to date the composition of this epistle precisely presents serious problems of its own, the letter may be representative of the earliest Christian writings with its teachings concentrating primarily upon practical, ethical and religious instruction. Understandably, therefore, the Epistle of James has never won particular acclaim in the past for literary achievement. Nevertheless, the obvious parallelisms and the abundance of Hebraisms throughout the letter provide prima facie evidence that the letter was not composed in haste or without substantial literary precedents. One pervasive precedent upon which James appears to have relied is the Sermon on the Mount, in whatever textual form it may have existed when the epistle was written. Compare, for example, James 5:12 with Matthew 5:33, 37; James 3:11–12 with Matthew 7:16–22; James 1:13 with Matthew 6:13; and James 4:11 with Matthew 7:1–2. Given that James was consciously reworking or reorganizing a body of basic Christian teachings, it becomes plausible to anticipate that his epistle was written with some organizational concept or guideline in mind.
Numerous repetitions and recurring themes may be identified in the letter of James. So many, in fact, that the presence of chiasm here cannot be identified unequivocally. It appears, however, that the crux of the letter stands at chapter 2:14–26, expounding the doctrine that faith without works is dead. On either side of this section appear many teachings, each occurring once in the first and once again in the letter portions of the epistle. Thus, the organization of this letter may be approached as follows:


Without doubt, the organization of this epistle is far from exemplifying prototypical chiasmus. The inversion is not precise; there is no slavish adherence to this or any other literary form here. Yet how else can the complete balancing of elements in the first and second halves of this epistle be explained except by general reference to chiasmus? And indeed the equilibrium here is delicately maintained. Every section bears close affinities to its counterpart. Observe especially the use of complementary metaphors in C and C'; the recurrence of the *hapax legomenon* „doubleminded” (*dipsychos*) in B and B'; the strong similarities between H and H', both of which fall at the middle of their respective halves; the equally strenuous requirement of total righteousness elaborated in L and L'; and many other similar correspondences. Even the central exposition, M, begins and ends by duplicating the assertion, „Faith without works is dead.” (James 2:17, 26).

This is rudimentary chiasm within a context of extensive parallelism. Corresponding parts stand on either side of a clearly identifiable focal passage. Thus, even without attempting to establish the specific relationships involved between each matching pair of elements in this system, it is apparent that the faith-without-works theme of the letter becomes more obvious and each portion of the letter only comes to occupy a distinct position in relation to the development of that theme in the epistle as a whole when the composition is analyzed in the manner suggested above.

1 and 2 Thessalonians  
Paul's earliest letters, the two to the church in Thessalonika, appear to manifest little internal structure despite an early attempt by Thomas Boys in his *Tactica Sacra* to cast each of these epistles into a loose A–B–B–A arrangement. Although it can be said that these letters are composed of relatively discrete sections, no indications are forthcoming from these texts themselves to the effect that these sections were in any way intended to be read in parallel relationship with corresponding sections in other portions of the writing. Nor is there any climactic weighting of certain sections in these letters, whether centrally or terminally. For purposes of contrasting these letters with Paul's later writings, brief outlines of 1 and 2 Thessalonians are stated:

1 Thessalonians  
A  Epistolary (1:1)  
B  Thanksgiving for the conversion of the Thessalonians (1:1–10)  
C  Paul's defense of his missionary efforts and the equal status of his converts with the Judean Saints (2:1–16)  
D  Paul's devotion to the service of love, suffering, and perfecting the Saints (2:17–3:13)  
E  God's call unto a life of
Galatians

Paul’s first substantial epistle is his letter to the Galatians. The letter shows Paul’s thought in its early development as he began grappling with the theological problems of taking the gospel to those who were not people of the covenant. The letter also shows maturation in Paul’s literary techniques which he perhaps conscientiously promoted as he came to perceive the power which the written word could have in preaching and defending specific doctrines in the faith.

Chiasmus in Galatians has been studied exhaustively by John Bligh whose works on the subject are thorough and elaborate. Bligh divides the Epistle to the Galatians into the following major chiastic sections:

- A Prologue (1:1–1:12)
- B Autobiographical Section (1:13–2:10)
- C Justification by Faith (2:11–3:4)
- D Arguments from Scripture (3:5–3:29)
- E Central Chiasm (4:1–10)
- D’ Arguments from Scripture (4:11–4:31)
- C’ Justification by Faith (5:1–5:10)
- B’ Moral Section (5:11–6:11)

Bligh examines each of these sections in detail discovering abundant evidence of chiastic balances and overlays throughout the composition of this important letter. Although his meticulous examination of this letter may well be open to some criticism on specific occasions where the texts do not fit easily into the chiastic mold, Bligh, for the most part, has demonstrated the importance of chiasmus and concentric structure even in this, one of Paul’s earliest writings.

In Galatians, the central chiasm bears special attention. The passage may be viewed as follows:

(a) The heir remains a child and servant (4:1) (b) Until the time appointed of the father (4:2) (c) When that time came, God sent forth his Son (4:4) (d) Made under the law (4:4) (d’) To redeem those under the law (4:5) (c’) Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son (4:6) (b’) That ye cry Abba, Father (4:6) (a’) That ye are no more a servant but a son and heir (4:7);

Of all the arguments which Paul advances to show that salvation comes through faith in Christ rather than through obedience to the law of Moses, the most dispositive is his declaration of these principles of heirship. Analogies to Abraham (3:6–9) or Isaac (4:21–5:1) are pointless unless there is reason to think that believing in Christ makes the believer like Abraham or Isaac. Likewise, criticizing the law of Moses (3:19–29) does not yet affirm the effectiveness of faith in Christ. The required keystone of all Paul’s arguments concerning justification by faith in Christ is the all-important affirmation, found only in the central assertion of heirship (4:1–7), proclaiming the belief that God has sent both his Son and the Spirit of his Son to transform the heirs-apparent from children and servants into sons and heirs who now do call God their Father and not their Master. This positive, personal assertion is a strong declaration of Paul’s own faith. It is appropriate that such a statement should occupy the central position in this epistle. Indeed, we shall see that this type of affirmative, testimonial statement stands at the center of several of Paul’s letters.
In the past, the literary structure of 1 Corinthians has perplexed commentators. Since the letter deals with numerous, seemingly unrelated practical difficulties which had arisen among the Corinthian Saints, some have suggested that Paul is simply responding, point by point, to these problems as they had been reported to him. This, of course, removes all necessity of detecting literary structure in the epistle as a whole. On the other hand, since the letter goes on to develop major points of doctrine, others have suggested that only chapters 1–6 comprise the actual letter as it responds to the Corinthian situation while chapters 7–16 are an unsolicited excursion volunteered by Paul. Obviously this only bifurcates the problem of detecting elements of literary composition. Other theories have also been advanced to explain away certain sections of the letter as interpolations, additions, glosses, or accretions. The ensuing analysis, it is hoped, will dispel most of these proposals.

For a letter which itself admonishes that ,,all things be done decently and in order” (14:40), an unstructured presentation would seem wholly unbecoming. That the overall structure of the epistle should be chiastic should not be unlikely since the letter abounds in verses and short passages which are chiastic. Among its chiastic subsections, Paul’s ,,Hymn to Love” is surely one of the most pleasingly structured literary passages. This section, 1 Cor. 12:31–14:1, bears close examination and is strong evidence of Paul’s facility with chiastic composition:

A Seek after the greatest gifts, and indeed here is the greatest way: B If I speak in tongues with men, yea even with angels But have not love I am but raucous bronze and rattling cymbals. If I have the gift of prophecy and know mysteries all and all knowledge But have not love I am nothing. If I give away all I have or lay down my body to get glory But have not love I have gotten absolutely nothing. C Love is patient toward others Mercifully kind is love. D Not greedy Not a show-off Not conceited Not shameless Not with ulterior design, selfishness or cliquishness Not irritable Does not rationalize wickedness Has no joy when things are not right But rejoices in truth. C’ Love is patient under all circumstances Always believing Always hoping Love endures to the end. B’ Love will never lose its importance But prophecy will come to an end Speaking in tongues will cease And some day knowing mysteries will be nothing special. For now we just know little bits And we prophesy of little glimpses But when Christ comes all will be perfectly whole And all our partial experiences will be no more. When I was a child I spoke like a child I had the intellect of a child I gured like a child When I became a man I had no more use for childish things. For now we just see faint images of our real selves But then we shall see face to face Now we just know little bits But then I shall know and be known completely. What lasts are faith, hope, love, these three, A’ But the greatest of these is love.

The literary design of this chapter is impressive and effective. The key to the initial admonition in A, to seek after the greatest gifts, is contained in A’, ,,The greatest of these is love.” Both B and B’ compare the gifts of tongues, prophecy and knowledge to the gift of love. In B, the Apostle states that without love a person accomplishes nothing by exercising the gifts of tongues or prophecy or sacrifice. In B’, he explains why this is so, namely because all gifts of the spirit except love will eventually become inconsequential. B’ itself is nicely chiastic, contrasting the three gifts which will cease with the three which will last, and further balancing two quatrains (each with two lines describing man’s present situation and two others, the future), and centrally focusing on what it is that a man becomes when he does have love, having no more use for childish things. C and C’ are each chiastic sections describing what love is and does. D, at the center, describes eight things which love is not or does not, and concludes with the climactic colon: ,,But rejoices in truth.”

Seeing the extensive chiastic structure of this chapter, it is logical to ask whether Paul utilized a similar technique in organizing his first epistle to the Corinthians as a whole. The following outline suggests that he did.
Several significant observations can be made in respect to the organization of 1 Corinthians. First, it should not go unnoticed that both Paul’s discussion concerning authority in the church (chapter 1) and his exposition of the doctrines of the resurrection (chapter 15) were necessitated by divisions within the Corinthian church over these subjects. The contention over leadership is summarized, ,,Each of you says I am of Paul, or I am of Apollo, or I am of Cephas, or I of Christ” (1:13). Paul responds by asking, ,,Is Christ divided?” (1:13) Likewise, the contention over resurrection is stated, ,,How say some of you that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (15:12). Paul again responds by declaring, ,,If there be no resurrection of the dead, neither is Christ risen” (15:13). Only in these two sections, II and II’, does Paul deal with divisions in the Corinthian congregation over points of doctrine. If Paul had organized his letter thematically, both of these sections would have belonged together. Instead, these balanced sections serve as two pillars supporting the first and the last statements made by this letter. Both of these sections claim that all preaching of Christ would be rendered in vain should the attitudes at Corinth continue (1:17, 15:14). Both sections make strong statements against the powers of the world, either taunting the wisdom of the world as foolishness (1:20–27) or deriding the powers of the grave as swallowed up (15:54–57). Paul, in both sections, writes in an argumentative, victorious style, which lends itself readily to grandeur, if not always to precision.

Furthermore, these sections II and II’ themselves show chiastic tendencies. 1 Corinthians 1:10–2:5 appears to center on 1:22–24 with the following expansion:

A  Division over men’s authority and Paul’s cautious approach, baptising but a few (1:10–17)  B  God has promised he will destroy the wisdom of the wise (1:18–21)  C  Jews require a sign, Greeks seek wisdom (1:23)  D  We preach Christ crucified (1:23)  C’  To the Jews a stumbling block, to the Gentiles foolishness (1:23)  B’  Christ is the power and wisdom which destroys the wisdom of the wise (1:24–31)  A’  Paul’s cautious approach declaring only the testimony of God, that faith is not built upon men but in God (2:1–5)

Likewise, the thought in section II’, (15:1–58), is best followed if understood chiastically:

A  Witnesses to the resurrection of Christ (15:1–11)  B  Dispute over the reality of the resurrection (15:12)  C  Explanation that without the resurrection our preaching is in vain, we are false witnesses and we are most miserable (15:13–19)  D  Christ and Adam (15:20–23)  E  Christ has put all things under his feet including death (15:24–28)  C’  Explanation that without the resurrection our baptizing is in vain, our tribulations are worthless, and we may as well gratify ourselves (15:29–34)  B’  Possible dispute over the
nature of the resurrection and the problem answered (15:35–44) D’ Christ and Adam (15:45–49)
A’ Testimony of the mystery of the resurrection of all mankind (15:50–58)

The conceptual centerpiece of the foregoing passage is clearly found in its literary center, E. There it is told that Christ will put down all rule, all power, all authority, all enemies and all things, that God may be all in all (panta en pasi). This thought occurs nowhere else in the system. It also provides the logical underpinning for Paul’s belief in the efficacy of Christ’s resurrection unto mankind.

Sections III (2:6–4:21) and III’ (12:1–14:40) are also nicely balanced. Both discuss the operations of the spirit of God among men. In III, Paul explains the difference between the spirit of man (psychikos) and the spirit of God in man (pneumatikos) and how the latter is received. This section centers on chapter 3, which singles out Jesus Christ as the only foundation upon which an enduring spiritual life can be built. In counterpoint, section III’ explains the wide array of gifts of the spirit which are given to those in Christ and how each has its place in the body of his saints. The section readily appears to center on chapter 13, discussed in detail above, which singles out love as the only gift which will never lose its significance in the eternal course of spiritual existence.

The material contained in sections IV and IV’ is of particular interest. Although the modern mind easily loses the train of thought through these sections, due largely to the differences between the social and religious problems which preoccupy the modern believer and those which concerned the early church, these sections are in fact well organized and systematic. Section IV deals exclusively with sexual problems, and IV’ with idolatry. Both sections begin with blunt statements setting forth the problems of fornication and of eating meats offered to pagan idols. Both sections conclude with advice concerning the Christian approach to sexual conduct and to eating the body and blood of the eucharist. Central statements reiterated in both sections, especially the parallel assertions that no person can be joined to either harlotry or idolatry and to the Lord, indicate that these two sections were composed as a pair. Why these two subjects should be closely connected in Paul’s mind at this point in his ministry, and indeed why these two sections should stand at the center of this epistle to the Corinthians, may now be explained by James’ authoritative decree, recorded in Acts 15:19–29, concerning how the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles:

„Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them that they abstain from pollution of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood . . . Abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: From which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well.“

These verses define the central message of the gospel as it was to be taken to the Gentiles. They emphasize but two religious imperatives: keeping oneself free from fornication and avoiding idolatry. It is therefore no coincidence that the central passages of 1 Corinthians, written not long after that council at which James presided and issued the foregoing instructions, reflect precisely the same gospel message as it is taken to the Gentiles. This harmony, in addition to the many other precisely balanced aspects of this epistle, goes a great distance toward justifying the conclusion that Paul intentionally and successfully utilized chiastic principles in structuring both the composition of the individual sections as well as the full scope of this letter.

2 Corinthians and Romans Two major letters of Paul which appear to contain little chiastic structure are 2 Corinthians and Romans. Why chiasmus is not evident in either of these letters is, of course, open to speculation.

With respect to 2 Corinthians, it may be that the version which has survived into modern times has been edited, redacted or amalgamated by certain of Paul’s successors who reworked or combined earlier Pauline writings. Or
again, it may simply be that the substantial emphasis on biographical material in the letter precluded the author from utilizing a succinct chiastic (or any other) formal structure. In any event, 2 Corinthians differs from most other epistles of Paul in more ways than this one alone.

With Romans, the absence of an overriding stylistic structure is also not surprising. Paul writes in Romans with a sense of doctrinal sophistication. His attention appears to turn to substance and content rather than form or style. Only in a loose sense is the letter divided into two halves: The first half, chapters 1–7, presents the problem of the human situation, and the second half, chapters 8–16, explains its solution. The problem, which is approached from several angles, is that man can only become righteous by becoming righteous inwardly; yet human conduct for Paul is not inward, but outward; therefore, the problem for man is to become „spiritually minded” when becoming such is not an inherent human capability. Paul discusses the inability of outward conduct to render man righteous, beginning with such vile conduct as is becoming to the Gentiles (chapter 1), then discussing such outward observances of the law of Moses and of circumcision which do not render man righteous (chapters 2–5), and finally discussing such inherent human weaknesses as tending to take advantage of exculpation and freedom (chapter 6) and being subject to the inevitable problems of the flesh (chapter 7). Surely the ultimate statement of the human plight comes at the end of chapter 7, at the point of furthest development of the first half of the epistle, as Paul cries out, „O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of death?” (7:24) The answer to this plea and the solution to the problem of the first half of the letter is given immediately, „through Jesus Christ our Lord” (7:25), and is then developed throughout the second half of the epistle. Paul expounds the course of salvation in Christ as a process of becoming spiritually minded sons of God (chapter 8), first in respect to the Gentiles and then the Jews (chapters 9–11), by accepting Jesus, believing unto righteousness and walking in the ways he prescribes (chapters 12–15). It may be that this letter is more chiastic than this brief outline suggests. But at a minimum it is proper to see the letter in its two halves with weighted emphasis at the central transition between the two.

**Hebrews**

Whoever the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews may have been, he was aware of basic chiastic principles and employed them in a manner which is consistent with other New Testament epistolary. The purpose and theme of this letter is to expound and proclaim the supremacy of Christ in the spiritual and salvic world order. Its author utilizes chiasmus not only in numerous short passages in the letter, but also in its overall organization to place central emphasis upon this one main message of this writing.

Most indicative of its centrally organized structure is the express declaration at its center of the most important point of the epistle: „The main point of this letter (kephalaion tois legomenois) is that we have just such a high priest, who sits on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in heaven, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” (8:1–2) The use of the word kephalaion is particularly significant here. What stronger indication could the author have given that the main point of the letter is to be found in nuce -- not in the letter’s terse introduction or in its discursive conclusion -- but here at its very center. At this central point stands the „head,” the „capitol,” the „summation,” the „principal point” of the entire letter.

The balance of the letter revolves around this crucial declaration, as this outline shows:

A Jesus is forever (1:8), so great a salvation we cannot neglect (2:3), who is a Son higher than the angels, whose house is more glorious than that of Moses (1:1–3:7)  
B The word preached unto the House of Israel did not profit them because they hardened their hearts and had no faith upon their day of temptation (3:7–4:13)  
C Christ’s priesthood is higher than that of Aaron or of the Levitical priests (4:14–7:28)  
D We have a high priest who officiates in the sanctuary built by God (8:1–2)  
C’ Christ’s covenant is the
eternal testament higher than the atonement administered in the temple by the Levites (8:3–10:35)

B’ The word preached to some did profit them by faith unto becoming heirs of righteousness and obtained good report by pleasing God (10:36–11:40) A’ Jesus is forever (13:8), so great a witness we cannot neglect (12:1), becoming sons (12:7–9), in Christ’s house which is the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22–28).

This general outline does not attempt to represent the numerous individual chiastic lines, the scattering of hortatory sections throughout the epistle, the many instances of inclusio and other stylistic nuances, many of which are discussed by Buchanan and others. It does, however, illustrate the fundamental character of the composition of this epistle, especially in regard to the centrality of the assertion that Jesus is the Eternal High Priest. Further it shows the contrasts between sections B and B’ (concerning the consequences of belief and unbelief) and between C and C’ (concerning the Christian concepts of priesthood authority and priesthood functions). Ephesians Several commentators have observed that the Epistle to the Ephesians divides succinctly into two halves. Chapters 1–3 expound points of doctrine, especially concerning the quickening of the spiritually dead and the reconciliation of the Jews and the Gentiles. Chapters 4–6, on the other hand, contain exhortation especially concerning the life of a follower of God and not of the ways of the world. A plausible reconstruction of the organization of this letter shows, again, Paul’s tendency to give special prominence to the central passages in each of these sections. Superimposed upon the bipartite structure of the epistle, moreover, there occurs a poignant central interlude which in its own way constitutes the main point of the entire letter. This epicenter of Ephesians (and of all of Paul’s theology for that matter) is a seven-fold declaration of the unity of the Christian’s faith. Its elements are arguably chiastic in their own right:

One body One spirit One hope One Lord One faith One baptism One Father in all (4:4–6)

The letter as a whole is, then, arranged as follows:

A  Introduction: All are gathered in Christ (1:1–14, focusing on verses 9–10) B  Doctrine: (a) Paul’s prayer for wisdom and revelation that the saints may know the hope, riches and power in Christ resurrected and established (1:15–23) (b) The quickening of the Gentiles, through faith by grace, from the the spiritually dead (2:1–10, focusing on 5–8) (c) The reconciliation of the Jews and the Gentiles (2:11–22, focusing on verses 14–16, „breaking down the partition” „abolishing enmity” „making peace”) (b’) Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles through gift of grace (3:1–12), focusing on verse 7) (a’) Paul’s prayer for love that the saints may comprehend the love grounded in Christ (3:13–21, focusing on verses 17–19) C  Interlude: One Lord (4:1–6) B’  Exhortation: (a) Unity in gifts from Christ (4:7–16, focusing on 4:13) (b) Walk not as the Gentiles (4:17–32, focusing on 24–25) (b’) Walk as followers of God (5:1–21, focusing on 8–10) (a’) Unity as members of Christ’s body (5:22–6:9, focusing on 5:30–32) A’  Conclusion: Gather Christ around you by putting on the whole armor of God (6:10–24, emphasis on 6:16).

From this we may see that, although this structure is perhaps not far removed from the basic A–B–B–A form of inverted parallelism, the letter to the Ephesians is clearly divided into two sections, each of which begins and ends with statements concerning the power, love and unity which the saints enjoy in Christ (the a and a’ sections in B and B’), and each of which centers on the problem of explaining and reconciling the role of Gentiles in the midst of early Jewish Christianity (the b, b’ and c sections in B and B’). In addition, the entire letter is crowned at its center with the seven-fold statement of the unity which all saints receive in Christ (4:1–6).
Although this organization does not follow a rigidly chiastic pattern, the structure of this letter is not inelegant, nor ineffective. The bipartite treatment of the Gentile question allows Paul to offer solutions to the same problem from both doctrinal and practical perspectives, without, however, losing sight of the main point upon which the entire solution rests, namely enhancing the sense of unity and homogeneity amidst the church. Without unduly extolling the systematic composition of this epistle, let it simply be said that the present analysis at least tends to show that the letter is not, as some have said, an ,,insipid production, tedious, and an unskillful compilation."

Colossians Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians in many ways is one of Paul’s most masterful statements of his faith. Written at a mature point in his ministry and in close proximity to his writing of Ephesians, this letter captures a solid portion of Paul’s deep relationship with his Lord and Savior.

That chiasmus pervades Colossians has previously been observed by Lund and hinted at even earlier by Dibelius. How this literary technique enhances the message of this important letter, however, remains to be further explored. Consider, in this light, the most salient chiastic features of this writing.

Setting the tone for the recurring structures in the Epistle, its introduction manifests pronounced chiastic characteristics. The following illustrates the basic form of the prologue (1:3–9):

A We give thanks, always praying for you (1:3) B Since we heard (1:4) C of your faith in Christ and love for all saints (eis hagious) D On account of the hope laid up in heaven (1:5) E Whereof you heard (proakousate) in the word of truth which was unto you F Which just as (kathos kai) in all the world (1:6) G It bears fruit G' It has grown F' Likewise (kathos kai) in you E' From the day you heard (akousate) and knew D' Of the grace of God in truth C' Which you also learned from Epaphras, faithful minister of Christ who reports your love in spirit (en pneumati) (1:7–8) B' For this cause, since we heard (1:9) A' We do not cease to pray for you (1:9).

The purpose of this introduction is to reaffirm the fruitfulness and dynamic growth of the faith in Jesus Christ. Thus, at the prologue’s center stands a distinctive doublet, ,,it bears fruit and it has grown” (G and G'). The growth of the faith is evident ,,in all the world”, but more specifically ,,in you” at Colossae (F and F'). It begins as the saints are first inclined toward (proakousate) the word of truth (E), and it progresses as they hear (akousate) and know (E'), first through hope laid up in heaven (D), but then by grace realized here upon earth (D'). This process begins with a general faith and love, and develops through faithful servants who foster that love (C and C'). To begin and conclude, the introduction is then embraced on both extremes by the assurance of Paul’s constant prayer on behalf of these saints (A and B, B' and A').

Building upon, and in character with this introduction, the letter to the Colossians approaches the Christian’s relationship with Jesus from three distinct perspectives. A separate section of the letter is devoted to each approach.

The first such section (1:1–29) approaches Christ as he relates to God the Father. In this section, Jesus is approached in his role as the mediator and as the reconciliator who was sent by the Father and who has pleased the Father in all things. Through his commission from the Father, Jesus became the representative of the Father on earth and became his firstborn, entitled to inherit the fullness of the Father’s kingdom. Also from the Father, Jesus acquired the full powers of God as Creator. These relationships with the Father make Jesus a sufficient condition of human salvation. Through him, the way has been opened; salvation is possible:
in the hope of the gospel you have heard (5–6), and we desire for you all wisdom and understanding (9) that you might walk worthy of the Lord being fruitful in all works, strengthened in all might unto all patience (11) B Thanks to God who has made us partakers of the inheritance and translated us into the kingdom of his Son through redemption by blood (1:12–14) C Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature (1:15) D For in him were all things created In heaven/in earth//visible/invisible Thrones/dominions/principalities/powers All things were created in him and for him (1:16) C’ And he is the head of the body, the church, being the firstborn from the dead (1:18) B’ For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell making peace and reconciliation through his blood, presenting us holy and un-reproveable in God’s sight (1:19–22) A’ If you continue in faith (23) having, hope in the gospel you have heard (23), as I Paul am a minister (25) preaching even the mystery hid from the ages, teaching every man in all wisdom (28), that we may present every man perfect in Jesus (28), striving with him mightily (29).

In the second section of the epistle (2:1–3:4), Paul approaches Jesus in his relationship to man. Here Paul describes how Jesus offers to man steadfastness, hidden knowledge, completeness, glory and power. Paul emphasizes now the necessity of Christ for salvation, explaining that this required condition can be spoiled by what Paul calls the rudiments of the world. Here Christ is the purifier of man, the one who offers circumcision without hands and washing unto life:

Col 2:1–3:4 A I suffer great conflict for you, as for those who have not seen me in the flesh (1:1,5), that all may be blessed in Christ, in whom are hid all treasures (3). I joy and behold your order and steadfastness of faith in Christ (4). B Walk in Christ, rooted and built up in him (6–7), for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in him, the head of all principality and power (9–10). Let no man spoil you with the rudiments of the world (8). C In Christ you are circumcised without hands in putting off the body of sins (11) Buried with him in baptism and risen with him through faith in God who raised him from the dead (12). B’ He quickened you, having forgiven you all trespasses (13) having spoiled principalities and powers (14). Let no man beguile you, for if you are dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, what need do you have of the doctrines and ordinances of men? (20). For the body is Christ (17). A’ Seek those things above in Christ, for your life is hid with Christ in God (3:3). We shall appear in glory when Christ our life appears (3:4).

The third and final section of the letter (3:5–4:18) presents Jesus as a model for the practical achievement of righteous living. This section abounds with exhortations, but it particularly stresses the admonition that the saints „do all in the name of the Lord . . . for ye serve the Lord.” Much is to be learned by the servant, the child, and the wife. As Jesus subjected himself to God’s will and pleased God, so man is to learn subjugation to his stewards and all are in turn to serve the Lord:


Compressed within these three terse sketches, Paul charts the fundamentals of his faith: first, the relationship between Jesus and God which makes salvation in Jesus a possibility; second, the relationship between Jesus and man which is necessary to make that salvation effective; and third, the response of man to Jesus which makes righteousness a reality. In each case, the central portions of each section bear special weight. Jesus’ divine creative
Powers (1:16) give him the ultimate powers to create in man a new spiritual existence. Jesus’ purifying powers (2:11–12) lift man from the body of sin and death to life. The strength of Jesus’ role as an exemplar of human conduct begins and ends with the injunction that all be done in Him (3:17).

To the extent shown above, the centrality of each of these crucial passages forms the basis of the chiastic arrangement of the terms and concepts within each of these sections of this epistle. By appreciating the divisions and development of these thoughts within this significant letter, one may follow Paul’s thought with added clarity. What would otherwise appear as pointless repetitions or reiterations, especially in 1:12–15 and 1:18–22, and 2:8 and 2:20, become framing passages leading up to or away from each central statement. The total effect is satisfying, both literarily and theologically.

Philemon One of Paul’s briefest letters is to Philemon. What this letter lacks in size, it makes up, however, in precision. Why Paul would have thought to use chiasmus in a short, seemingly business-like letter is hard to say. Perhaps he saw some irony in the way Onesimus had had to leave in order to return and had had to become a bondsman in order to become a brother. In any event, this change and his return are woven intricately into the text of this letter which requests Philemon to take Onesimus back as a brother.

Thomas Boys detected a double nine-part inverted system in this brief epistle to Philemon. Building upon his observations, the following outline demonstrates that this system, as Boys remarks, is indeed „a very remarkable specimen of introverted parallelism.” The letter is surely centrally focused and chiastically balanced with purpose and precision:

A Epistolary (1–3)
B Paul’s prayers for Philemon (4)
C Philemon’s love, faith and hospitality (5–7)
D Paul could use his authority (8) E But prefers to make supplications (9–10) F Onesimus a convert of Paul’s (10)
G Paul has made Onesimus profitable (11)
H Receive Onesimus as Paul’s own bowels (12)
I Paul retained Onesimus as Paul’s minister in the bonds of the Gospel (13) J Without Philemon’s willing consent Paul will not require Philemon to take Onesimus back (14)
J’ Perhaps the reason Onesimus left was so that Philemon could take Onesimus back forever (15)
I’ Not as a servant but as a brother in the Lord (16) H’ Receive Onesimus as Paul’s own self (17)
G’ Paul will repay any wrong Onesimus has done (18–19)
F’ Philemon indebted as a convert to Paul (19) E’ Paul makes supplication to Philemon (20)
D’ Although he could ask for obedience (21)
C’ Paul requests hospitality of Philemon (22)  

B’ Philemon’s prayers for Paul (22)  

A’ Epistolary (23–25)

The structure of this letter requires very little explanation. Each element is equally balanced in both halves of the letter. Towards the center, Paul reminds Philemon that he is like Onesimus inasmuch as both are indebted to Paul for their conversions (F and F’). This fact must weigh heavily upon Philemon, who was apparently apprehensive about Onesimus’ return. Paul, moreover, will vouch for Onesimus’ profitability now (G) to the extent of repaying any wrong he may have done (G’). At the center of the letter, Paul deals directly with the problem at hand: Only here does the letter clearly contain enough information for the reader to discover what the letter is about, namely Onesimus’ return. Paul approaches the problem in two ways: first, ecclesiastically, he places the burden upon Philemon to willingly consent to Paul’s request (J), and second, philosophically, he invites Philemon to consider the possibility that the prior problems were not all bad, since they led in the final analysis to a beneficial result (J’). These two central comments bind together the balance of the letter.

Philippians Written at approximately the same time as Philemon, this letter contains no overall chiastic structure, sharply contrasting with the tidy arrangement of the brief letter to Philemon. Shorter chiastic passages, of course, may be observed in Philippians, some of which have been discussed by Lund, but these structures are for the most part relatively insignificant and unremarkable.

1 Timothy Paul’s first epistle to his protégé, Timothy, is clearly chiastic, as if to inculcate the form itself alongside of the practical advice and counsel which this letter communicates. At its center stands Paul’s most intimate admonitions and personal declarations to Timothy (3:14–4:16), headed by an elegant Christological hymn (3:16). Before and after this central panel, Paul advises Timothy regarding the proper administration of certain ecclesiastical affairs (2:1–3:13; 5:1–6:2), both sections being practically identical in length and format. The letter is finally framed by two shorter four-part passages (1:1–20; 6:3–21), both addressed to the problem of overcoming sin and error in Christian doctrine, a theme which receives special emphasis again at the center (4:1ff). The organization of the letter may thus be displayed as follows:

I. Introduction (20 verses)  
   A Watch that no other doctrine is taught (1:1–7) (a)  
   shun fables (b)  
   be pure in heart, of good conscience, faithful (a)  
   shun vain jangle.  
   B The Law can help overcome basic sins (8–11) (a)  
   use the law lawfully (b)  
   to overcome many evils (a)  
   according to this glorious gospel.  
   B’ Christ ultimately overcomes sins (12–17) (a)  
   I obtained mercy (b)  
   from Christ, though the worst of sinners (a)  
   I obtained mercy  

A’ Hold the faith against false preachers (18–20) (a)  
   War well against them (b)  
   hold the faith in good conscience (a)  
   against Hymanaeus and Alexander.  
II. Ecclesiastical Affairs (28 verses)  
   C Offer prayers for political rulers (2:1–8)  
   D Public silence of women in the Church (9–15)  
   E-1 The calling of a Bishop (3:1–7)  
   E-2 The calling of a Deacon (8–13)  
III. Personal Declarations (19 verses)  
   (a) The Christological hymn (3:14–16)  
   (b) The prophecy of false doctrine (4:1–5)  
   (b) The charge to minister (6–11) (a)  
   Timothy’s ordination affirmed (12–16) II.  
   Ecclesiastical Affairs Continued (27 verses)  
   D-1 Treatment of Old Widows in the Church (5:1–10)  
   D-2 Treatment of Young Widows in the Church (11–16)  
   E’ Public visibility of the Elders (17–25)  
   C’ Obedience to masters (6:1–2a) I.  
   Conclusion (19 verses)  
   A Teach these things for others are perversions  
   (6:2b–5) (a)  
   teach and exhort; (b)  
   the many evils of disputations; (a)  
   withdraw.  
   B Contentment, not money, is gain (6–10) (a)  
   godliness with contentment is gain (b)  
   we can carry nothing out of this world (a)  
   let us be content.  
   (a) the rich fall into a snare (b)  
   love of money is the root of all evil (a)  
   the rich are pierced through with sorrows.  
   A’ Follow these things which are righteous (11–16) (a)  
   fight well for eternal life (b)  
   keep the commandment (a)  
   for the only King who hath immortality  
   B’ Convert the rich to be rich in good works (17–21)
(a) trust not in uncertain riches but God (b) be rich in good works (a) keep that which is committed to thy trust.

The precision of this chiastic system deserves some elaboration. Binding chapters 1 and 6 together, there is not only their equivalent use of a four-part organization in which each part is basically an a-b-a construct, but also their obvious repetition of important parallel expressions. For example, there is the doxology of the immortal, invisible God in 1:17, and its virtually identical counterpart in 6:16. There is a reference to pestering questions in 1:4, reiterated in 6:4; the charge to wage a good war (kala strateia) in 1:18, and the charge to fight a good fight (kalon agona) in 6:12; the purpose of the commandment to have charity and a pure heart is defined in 1:5, and the instruction to obey „the commandment” is given in 6:14; many sins are enumerated in 1:9–10, many evils resulting from riches are enumerated in 6:4–5; Paul gives himself as the chief sinner in 1:15, and identifies the love of money as the root of all evil in 6:10; Christ comes into the world to save sinners in 1:15, while we bring nothing into and take nothing out of the world in 6:7. These and other indications show that the opening and closing chapters of this epistle must be read hand in hand.

In both of these chapters, the A and A’ sections deal with combatting the serious threat presented to the Church by false preaching. The members of the opposition, alluded to in 1:1–7 and again in 1:18, are finally identified by name in 1:20. The problems which these false preachers had caused are described in 6:3–5, and the antidote prescribed throughout is for Timothy to preach the truth in purity, good conscience, faithfulness and in keeping with the commandment of love (1:5, 19; 6:14). In the B and B’ sections, Paul expounds on overcoming sin, first by proper use of the law (1:8–11), then by obtaining mercy of Christ (1:12–17), and finally by becoming rich in good works, realizing that it is futile to lay up one’s treasures on earth (6:6–10, 18–19).

Chapters 2 and 5 are devoted to matters of ecclesiastical administration. They are evenly balanced with corresponding focus on family life in respect to both the selection of male leadership in the Church and to the solution of social problems arising because of single women in the Church. Paul’s advice that women remain silent in Church (2:9–15) is incomplete without his corresponding advice that double honor (as well as public rebuke) be given to the men. In respect to both men and women, there is an express concern that neither assume authority improperly (2:12; 5:22).

The central material, finally, epitomizes the entire letter. It is here that Paul declares his deepest convictions about Christ, reveals his most pressing concerns, charges Timothy with his most critical obligations, and declares his deepest confidence in Timothy’s ability to succeed. The chiastic pattern here is evident by the twice mentioned reference to Paul’s coming to Timothy (3:14, 4:13), and further by two parallel five-fold descriptions, first of God’s appearance „in the flesh, in the spirit, in the nations, in the world, and in glory” and second of Timothy’s leadership „in word, in behavior, in love, in faith, and in purity” (3:15, 4:12). The crux of the entire letter is, therefore, the sharp contrast which Paul draws at the center between false teachers who work destruction (4:1–5) and the good minister who promotes the promise of life, both in respect to the present existence and future life (4:6–11). Around this contrast, and with it constantly in mind, this entire epistle concertedly revolves.

Titus

Paul’s letter to Titus is not chiastic. Most of this letter is directly related to material contained in 1 Timothy, and it can be assumed that the letter to Titus was abstracted from the more complete treatment of its topics given in 1 Timothy. If Titus had been written first, several statements which it contains probably would not have been made. For example, Titus 2:15, „Let no man despise thee,” appears to be a reiteration of the statement made quite fittingly and spontaneously to Timothy, „Let no man despise thy youth.” 1 Tim. 4:12. Therefore, it is indicative of
Paul’s conscious implementation of chiasmus that he undoes the chiastic structure of 1 Timothy as he condenses that letter for Titus’ purposes in organizing the Church in Crete.

Titus contains the following main sections:


Of these sections, all but the last, which is more general in character than the others, have direct antecedents in 1 Timothy. Nevertheless, the divisions in 1 Timothy are conflated and simplified in Titus. Where Paul discusses the need to combat false teachers who preach for money twice in 1 Timothy, this problem is mentioned only on one occasion in Titus. Where Paul’s instructions concerning men and women in the church are divided into two sections, one before and one after the central passage, in 1 Timothy, these matters are all handled together in Titus.

The absence of chiasmus in Titus is not inconsistent with the assumption that Paul utilized chiasmus as a higher form of literary style on other occasions. This letter to Titus is straightforward and pragmatic. Embellishing it with literary constructs of any sort might have detracted from its functionality, especially if Titus were less familiar with Paul, with his teachings, or with his approach to ecclesiastical writing than was a person like Timothy who knew Paul intimately.

2 Timothy

Second Timothy is a brief but penetrating letter which divides into four sections. The first and the last sections both contain personal statements about Paul’s desire to see Timothy, about Timothy’s ordination and ministry, and concerning Paul’s struggle to spread the gospel and his gratitude toward those who have helped the cause. The central two sections contrast the future life in Christ with the future life on earth. The A–B–B–A pattern of the letter is further augmented by the fact that several of these sections are centrally weighted, just as so many sections of Paul’s other letters have been chiastically structured. The suggested organization of 2 Timothy is, therefore, as follows:

A Personal Remarks (1:1–18) (a) The promise of life (1:1) (b) Desire to see Timothy (2–4) (c) The faithfulness of Lois and Eunice (5) (d) Timothy’s ordination by Paul (6–7) (e) Paul’s afflictions, not ashamed (8) (f) Salvation and light in Christ Jesus (9–10) (e) Paul’s sufferings, not ashamed (11–12) (d) Timothy’s instruction by Paul (13–14) (c) The unfaithfulness of Phygelus and Hermogenes (15) (b) The visit from Onesiphorus (16–17) (a) The promise of life (18) B Future Life in Christ (2:1–21) (a) The good soldier (2:1–6) (b) Predictions of future blessings: If we be dead with him, we shall live with him, if we suffer with him we shall reign with him (7–14) (a) The good workman who is prepared for every good work (15–21) B’ Future Life on Earth (2:22–3:17) (a) Instructions to the servant of the Lord (2:22–26) (b) Predictions of human evil (3:1–9) (a) Instructions to Timothy unto all good works (10–17) A’ Personal Remarks (a) The Lord shall judge at his appearing (4:1, cf. 1:18) (d) Timothy’s ministry (2) (c) Men will turn away (3–4, cf. 1:15) (e) Endure afflictions (5, cf. 1:2) (d) Make proof of thy ministry (5) (e) Paul’s sufferings (7, cf. 1:11–12) (f) The crown of righteousness at his appearing (8, cf. 1:9–10) (b) Desire to see Timothy (9, cf. 1:2–4) (c) Those faithful and unfaithful (10–20, cf. 1:5, 15–17) (a) The promise of life (18) (b) Desire to see Timothy (21)
The structure of this letter is similar to that of many of Paul’s earlier letters. It contains a carefully organized introduction. Its conclusion echoes all of the elements mentioned initially in the introduction to the letter, but it adheres less to formal structure at this point. The body of the letter is evenly balanced, first in juxtaposing one’s future in Christ against one’s future in the world, and second by interspersing exhortations to Timothy as a good soldier, husbandman, servant and student for the Lord.

Since this is one of Paul’s last letters, it is evident that Paul sustained his use of chiasmus throughout his apostolic career. Paul skillfully employs chiasmus here, as elsewhere, to give focus and organization to his writings. It is, therefore, no accident that Paul, as he faced his final hours of ministry and as his mind turned toward what might come next, saw to it that his final letter to Timothy centrally reflects his thoughts for the future. The Christian’s calling unto life and immortality draws central attention in the preface (1:8–10), and the Christian’s reward of a crown of righteousness remains central to the conclusion (4:8). The predictions of future life in Christ (2:7–14) and of future evil on earth (3:1–9) stand at the middle of the letter’s two central passages. Older battles are now mere memories for Paul. Broader contrasts are now to be dealt with. As these sections are well balanced and artfully drafted, they should be read in conjunction, one with the other. Paul’s prediction of evil forces gaining power in the world, particularly, cannot be viewed in isolation from the vivid hope which Paul maintains for overcoming that evil through Christ. Likewise, each part of this letter may be viewed in harmony with the overall structure of this writing as a whole. In this regard, this composition is certainly representative of and worthy of the best of the Apostle himself.

Jude and 2 Peter

Two closely related General Epistles, which contain a certain degree of chiasmus, are Jude and 2 Peter. Jude appears to be the earlier of the two for several reasons, especially because it is more likely that Jude was used to form the nucleus of 2 Peter than that 2 Peter was condensed to become Jude.

Jude was written for one major purpose: to issue a short but solemn assurance to the faithful that the Lord will destroy the wicked. This point is stated particularly forcefully at the center of the letter in a three-part woe (v. 11) and a four-part denunciation (vv. 12–13) of those who deny or abuse the faith. On either side of this central material stand two sets of historical sayings about the wicked (vv. 5–10, 14–19), and two groups of exhortations or encouragements given to the faithful to inspire them to remain stalwart in their faith (vv. 2–3, 20–23). This background provides the basic chiastic framework of this letter:


The symmetry here is not perfect in some minor respects, but perhaps this too was intended. Part B is noticeably shorter than B’, but Part C is longer than C’, possibly, compensating for the difference while at the same time leaving the second half of this letter free to reflect more of the writer’s positive, encouraging thoughts, and less of his harsh prophecies concerning the unrighteous. The centerpiece, D, is not itself rigorously structured, but it clearly stands as an independent unit at the middle of this letter. Here, Jude expresses his own thoughts concerning the Lord’s judgment of the wicked, whereas in the C parts Jude reiterates the thoughts of others.
concerning God’s punishment of evil. At the very center of section D stands the one statement in the letter regarding the insidious impact which ungodly men have upon the Church: „These are spots in your feast of charity, when they feast with you feeding themselves without fear.” The import of this statement, and equally of the entire letter, is that the Church must keep itself unspotted from such ungodliness. Hence the opening exhortation, „ye should earnestly contend for the faith,” and the closing admonition „hate even the garment spotted by the flesh,” both integrate smoothly into the full composition of this letter.

It is apparent that 2 Peter 2:1–17, 3:3 are related to Jude 4–13, 18. Less apparent is the manner in which the Jude material is utilized in 2 Peter. Second Peter does two things with the main passages in Jude: First, it removes the emphasis which Jude places on the central woes and denunciation in verse 11, which Jude surrounds with sayings and historical anecdotes regarding the destruction of the wicked; and second, it adds new material both before and after this central core of earlier writing by adding chapters 1 and 3 to the structure. In regard to the removal of central emphasis, 2 Peter 2 contains no clear candidate which deserves to receive particular attention. The chapter is not systematic. No concern for design is evident in this epistle’s unrestrained denunciation of those who walk after the flesh in lust and who reject lordship.

Despite the lack of unity within chapter 2, the entire epistle acquires an overall A–B–A pattern (perhaps by accident) as new material is added before and after chapter 2.¹⁴ Both chapter 1 and chapter 3 speak of the Second Coming of Jesus. Chapter 1 deals with the saints’ entrance into the everlasting kingdom (1:11), of putting off the tabernacle of flesh (1:14), and of the day dawn and day star arising in men’s hearts (1:19); Chapter 3 of the day of the Lord (3:10–12), and of the new heaven and new earth (3:13). The simple structure of the letter is therefore:

A  Sure promises regarding Christ’s Second Coming (ch. 1) B  Destruction of the wicked (ch. 2) A’ Sure promises regarding Christ’s Second Coming (ch. 3)

This arrangement is not particularly elegant, and indeed it can be accounted for in terms of the accretion of new material to the basic text of Jude without requiring any reference at all to literary form. Nevertheless, even this small amount of formal content may reflect a limited concern for literary structure, since the writer of 2 Peter could easily have combined the two A sections into one rather than dividing them into two and surrounding the (more authoritative?) material from Jude with them, had he been totally unconcerned with form.

1 Peter, 1 John, 2 John and 3 John The remaining epistles of the New Testament to be discussed are 1 Peter and the Epistles of John. Chiasmus has not been detected in the general structure of any of these letters to any significant degree, which places these letters along with the few other nonchiastic epistles of the New Testament in a clear minority.

First Peter is eclectic in both approach and content. The letter covers a variety of unrelated subjects. It even appears to end twice, once in 4:11 and then again in 5:14. Although it contains many early Christian notions, this letter does not feature any kind of organizational coherence.

The Johannine epistles, likewise, follow no systematic structure. They develop one theme: that the righteous must embrace and love the light and refuse to follow the ways of the wicked one. This theme touches practically every verse in these three letters, and its recurrent phrases and concepts surface again and again throughout them. Only by arbitrarily singling out certain words within this thematic development can one attempt to identify a chiastic drift or any other organizational pattern in the material presented in 1 John. There is, for example, a discussion of the Antichrist in chapters 2 and 4, and chapter 3 might be taken as a central comparison between the
fate of the anointed righteous and the doom of the hopelessly wicked. But again, the words and phrases used throughout this letter are homogenous and interrelated, making it all but impossible to speak of an organizational substructure here. The final two Johannine epistles are brief notes whose style is as simple as the letters are short.

Perhaps John, who saw the gospel message in terms of one clearly delineated contrast between light and dark, between good and evil, and that in turn in terms of obedience or non-obedience to the commandment that we love one another, had little use for chiasmus for the following reason: Chiasmus presupposes intensification, but all of John’s epistles are uniformly intense. Chiasmus could add little to John’s already fully polarized view of the gospel.

THE GOSPELS

Mark The Gospel of Mark has been examined for chiastic content on a number of occasions,15 and in most detail by David J. Clark.16 None of these commentators has insisted that this gospel, is, as a whole, chiastic, yet several have argued eloquently in favor of „tight and well-worked out concentric or chiastic structures“17 within certain sections of this writing. In regard to these subsections, it may be that the latter have overstated their case in certain respects, and in regard to the gospel as a whole, it may also be that the book is not entirely without internal organization.

Those who find chiasmus within the various subsections of the Gospel of Mark must recognize that they do so by making divisions of convenience rather than substance. The content of this gospel is heterogenous. Jesus’ miracles and teachings are interspersed throughout this writing in such a way that many possible configurations can be drawn up connecting or juxtaposing any one section of the gospel with many others. Therefore, it is not surprising that several inverted parallel structures have been suggested in the texts of Mark, sometimes even being said to overlap or to be superimposed upon one another. For example, Clark outlines one chiasm in Mark 1:16–2:17 (framed by the calling of four fisherman in 1:16–20 and by the calling of Levi in 2:13–17, centering upon Jesus praying and teaching in 1:35–39), but he also harmonizes this with Dewey’s different arrangement in Mark 2:1–3:6.

Clark goes on to divide Mark into eight sections.18 His sections vary widely in both length and complexity, making it difficult to balance or compare them. Six of his sections are drawn up around certain conspicuous doublets (i.e. the feeding of the 5000 is said to parallel the feeding of the 4000 in an inverted system centering on Jesus’ teaching regarding tradition and purity in 7:1–23; and the prediction of Peter’s denial is said to parallel his actual denial in a chiasm focusing on Jesus’ arrest in 14:43–52). But Clark himself recognizes that beyond these few obvious pairs, the other relationships called for in his arrangements in Mark are not very obvious, making the points of demarcation between any one section and the next uncomfortably obscure.

Of all the sections in Mark which may be chiastically significant, the most informative is, not surprisingly, at the center of the book. The section from 8:11–10:52 is clearly bounded at its end by Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. It is likewise defined at its beginning by the thematic quote from Jeremiah, „Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not?“ (Mk 8:18).

In between is found the following material:

A The healing of the blind man at Bethsaida (8:22–26) B Peter’s declaration about Jesus (27–30)
In Mark 8:22–10:52, the Apostles learn, albeit slowly, the major practical lesson of Christianity: that he who is greatest shall be the servant of all. The lesson is taught in many ways, from Peter’s failure to understand that whosoever will save his life must lose it (8:35) to James and John’s fully cognizant request that they be allowed to drink the same cup as Jesus (10:39, 44). The same theme is dominant in Jesus’ predictions of his own suffering and also in the central instructions regarding true greatness, service in the Kingdom, and the need to avoid offending even the least.

Although the parallelisms are not always very strong here (particularly in D and D’), there is considerable unity of thought and form in this section of Mark, which is tied together by the healings of the blind man at Bethsaida and of blind Bartimaeus, both representing the awakening of understanding which comes to the Apostles in this central passage in Mark. All this suggests that the purpose of the Gospel of Mark is not just to tell the story of Jesus as such. It tells the story of how Jesus and God were understood by those who were willing to pay the price necessary to see and to hear what had to be said. Mark seems to indicate that the number of people who were willing to do so was small. When Jesus was finally confident that at least the Twelve had learned and seen what was to transpire, he was then able to commence with his final tasks in Jerusalem and finally on Calvary.

The Gospel of Luke, rather certainly, was written as an expansion with occasional modification of the Gospel of Mark. Luke follows Mark closely in six sections of his gospel, and he introduces seven new sections of his own composition. The three largest sections added by Luke in his expansion of Mark are found at the beginning, the middle and at the end of his book, with the largest being the central section (9:51–18:14). This in itself suggests a modest effort on Luke’s part to retain a certain degree of balance in his utilization of the Marcan material, but not much more can be said for the symmetrical structure in the gospel of Luke as a whole.

Perhaps there is some significance to the fact that the long Lucan insertion at the center falls between Mark 9:41 (Luke 9:49) and Mark 10:13 (Luke 18:15). These verses in Mark stand as close to its center structurally as any, emphasizing Jesus’ instructions to the Apostles regarding the costs of true discipleship. In Luke, on the other hand, its long central section devotes primary attention to the nature of true religious life rather than to the cost involved in achieving it. It is in this long central section, of course, that Luke presents the many memorable parables of Jesus, many of which are contained only in Luke. These parables are not given to the Apostles alone. Unlike Mark, who shows Jesus preaching to an ever narrower group of devoted disciples until finally they are prepared for the end, Luke shows Jesus teaching and proselyting among an expanding universe of believers. And just as the Marcan emphasis upon the Apostles’ securing understanding is largely eclipsed in Luke, so events like the transfiguration, which occupy a prominent position in Mark, are relegated to a lesser position by Luke, who for example treats the transfiguration in more mystical and dreamlike terms than does Mark.

Therefore, in several senses, Luke has opened up the gospel of Mark. Luke’s major expansion of the Gospel of Mark comes as if Luke had simply wedged Mark open at its center and enlarged its central structures. This in turn opens the gospel story itself onto a broader subject, showing Jesus and his message in a more public light than in Mark.

Matthew
Chiasmus in Matthew, especially in the Matthean Sermon on the Mount, has been studied by individuals such as Paul Gaechter, Nils Lund, John Forbes, and others. The results of their research has usually been informative, although not entirely conclusive.

Of all the sermons or discourses of Jesus recorded in Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount is by far the most structured. From the beatitudes to the golden rule, the Sermon is filled with poetically parallel statements of the highest literary quality. The fact that certain repetitions spring to mind readily as one reflects upon the Sermon as a whole (notably „the law and the prophets“ being mentioned twice, once in Mt. 5:17–18 and again in 7:12) invites further investigation into the possible existence of chiastic unities and correspondences within the Sermon on the Mount. With slight modifications, this is the organization which Lund has suggested:


This arrangement has much to commend itself. The correlations between sections Y and Y' are close, both in terms of content and of structure. These two sections go hand in hand in expounding the overt role of the Christian's life within the Church. In Z and Z', on the other hand, the Sermon explains the character of the Christian's inward life, both as it progresses beyond the ideals espoused by the Jews and the Gentiles, and secondly as it advances toward the ultimate objective of becoming like God by doing unto others as if they were oneself. Lund's analysis, however, lacks convincing data where it is needed most, namely at the middle of his proposed chiastic units. Alternate arrangements are therefore also possible. In particular, it may be that the Sermon elaborates each of the eight beatitudes, taking them one by one in the reverse order from that in which they are initially introduced:

Introduction: 8 Beatitudes (5:1–10)

(8) Persecuted (a) Reward in Heaven (11–12) (b) Salt of the Earth (13) (c) Light of the World (14–16)

Law and the Prophets fulfilled (17–19)
(7) Peacemakers
   (a) No anger, rudeness, insult (21–22)
   (b) Be reconciled with brother (23–24)
   (c) Settle with enemy (25–26)

(6) Pure in Heart
   (a) No lust (heart/eyes/hands) (27–30)
   (b) No remarriage (31–32)
   (c) No oaths necessary (33–37)

(5) Merciful
   (a) No eye for eye (38–42)
   (b) No hate (43–48, cf. Luke 6:36)
   (c) No parade in mercy (6:1–4)

(4) Hunger for
   (a) No parade in prayer (5–8)
   (b) How to seek in prayer (9–15)
   (c) No parade in fasting (16–18)

(3) Meek to Inherit
   (a) Treasures in Heaven (19–21)
   (b) The single eye (22–24)
   (c) No anxiety about daily needs (25–34)

(2) Mourners
   (a) Obtaining judgment as we judge (7:1–2)
   (b) Recognizing our own faults (3–5)
   (c) Avoid the unrepentant (6)

(1) Poor in Spirit
   Ask, seek, knock

Law and the Prophets (7:12)

Peroration: The either/or (7:13–27)
   (a) Two gates and ways
   (b) Two trees and fruits
   (c) Two builders and fates

This scheme too, although not without certain difficulties (for instance, it divides 6:1–8 between the fifth and fourth beatitudes, whereas those verses are considered inseparable under many other criteria), has many intriguing aspects to stimulate further thought about the meaning of the beatitudes. If this analysis is accepted, then the meaning of purity in heart, for example, is immediately linked to sexual and verbal integrity; the meaning of hungering and thirsting after righteousness is found in fasting and prayer; the concept of meekness does not entail weakness but simply relying upon God to provide all needs and rewards; and the meaning of mourning is connected with the recognition of one’s own sins and susceptibility to the judgement of God. The relationship between 5:48 and the beatitude of mercy is further reinforced by Luke’s rendering of the same verse: „Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.“ The consistent use of three-part subgroups also unifies this arrangement into a tidy system. Whether one prefers this analysis of the Sermon, or the former, it may in any event be concluded that the Sermon on the Mount demonstrates certain features of repetitive style which deserve close scrutiny.

As for the Gospel of Matthew in overview, the most that has been said appears in Paul Gaechter’s Die literarische Kunst im Matthäus-Evangelium. Beside discussing the artistic positioning of words and phrases in various passages throughout this gospel, Gaechter asserts that Matthew observes a seven part compositional pattern based upon the occurrence of Jesus’ major sermons, as follows:

Part I. No speeches (chapter 1–4) Part II. Speech to the People (5–7) Part III. Speech to the Disciples (10)
Transitional material between these major parts also fits into this pattern on several occasions, as Jesus’ testimony of John the Baptist in chapter 11 is answered by the account of John’s beheading in chapter 14. The balance of the gospel is said to be held together by a continuous flow of narrative including accounts of Jesus’ miracles and conversations with friends and enemies. At the center, the Parable Sermon contains seven parables, mostly dealing with the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth. This seven part center perhaps reflects the seven part structure of the gospel as a whole.

If Geachter’s observations are given weight, it follows that Matthew is to be distinguished from both Luke and Mark. Speeches to the people and to the disciples receive equal attention in Matthew’s perspective. Both are balanced around the center: neither comes at the center. Unlike Mark, Matthew does not make the conversion of the disciples the central preparatory event in the deliverance of the gospel message, for Matthew has Jesus return to the very end to preach to the people. Yet unlike Luke, Matthew does not transfer central importance to Jesus’s preaching among the people at large either. By centering on the Parable Sermon, Matthew achieves a broad and compelling approach to his proclamation of the coming of the kingdom, as his gospel states to all: ,,Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

A Note on the Parables

Several of the parables contained in the New Testament are written in a chiastic manner similar to that utilized in other Hebrew narratives.24 The parables often are built upon a pattern of action which rises to a central crisis and falls to a resolution of the conflict. The respective elements in these parables are first introduced in one order and then their implications and consequences are developed in the opposite order. The impact, as is usually the case in any good chiastic style, creates a rich sense of completeness and totality within the parable as a literary unit.

In Matthew 13:24–30, the parable of the wheat and the tares provides a good example:

A A man sowed good seed in his field (24) B The enemy comes and sows tares (25) C Crisis: Bad fruit is discovered among the good and the servants doubt the master (26–27) B’ The enemy is exposed and the tares left to grow (28–29) A’ The good seed is ultimately harvested safely (30).

The turning point of this parable is not the master’s decision to allow the wheat and the tares to grow side by side until the day of judgment. The central crisis of the parable is the servants’ doubting of their master: ,,Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field?” From this point of conflict develops the solution, first by exposing the source of the tares and second by assuring the servants that a good harvest will be reaped in due time.

Matthew 25:1–13, the parable of the ten bridesmaids, is also an illustrative example of this style of narrative within the New Testament:

A Ten bridesmaids went forth to meet the bridegroom (1) B Five were foolish and took no oil and five were wise (2–4) C They all slumber and sleep (5) D Crisis: At midnight there is a cry: ,,The bridegroom cometh.” (6) C’ They all arise and trim their lamps (7) B’ Five ask for oil and the wise five send them to buy (8–9) A’ The bridegroom comes forth and receives only those who were ready (10–12) Epilogue: Ye know neither the hour nor the day wherein the Son of Man cometh.

The crisis in this parable is clearly the cry at midnight, ,,He comes; go out and meet him!” The second half of the parable is a foregone conclusion once the first half has been laid out.
In Luke 14:16–24 a similar construction occurs in the parable of the great supper:

A Many are bidden to a great supper (16) B „Come, all things are ready” (17) C Antagonism: excuses are given for not coming (18–20) D Crisis: The master is angry (21) C’ Antagonism resolved: others invited (21) B’ „Yet there is room, let the house be filled” (22–23) A’ None of those bidden shall come to the supper (24)

Around the central crisis of the master’s anger stand several direct contrasts: The sorry excuses of those who had been invited oppose the sorry state of those who will be invited in their stead; the announcement of readiness requires the statement of fulfillment: and the invitation to many results finally with their prohibition. But it is the master’s anger which holds this narrative together, making it both coherent and meaningful.

Finally, in Luke 15:11–32, appears the great parable of the two sons. The moral of this parable, like the others, is particularly visible in light of its structure:

A One son takes his inheritance; conversation between Father and son (11–12) B One son goes out; his conduct (13–16) C The well-being of the Father’s servants recalled; „I perish” (apollumai) (17) D I will say „I have sinned” (18–19) E At the point of crisis, the Father runs to meet his son and is compassionate (20) D’ The son says „I have sinned” (21) C’ The Father instructs the servants to make well; the lost (apolos) is found (22–24) B’ One son refuses to go in: his conduct (25–30) A’ One son promised his inheritance: conversation between Father and son (31–32).

This parable, popularly known as the parable of the prodigal son, is not a story about one son, but about two. Both sons are equally important to the moral of this story, and one overlooks the impact of this parable by concentrating on the individual role or conduct of either son by himself. The central purpose of this parable is to illustrate the compassion of the Father, and he is equally compassionate to both sons. Each son occupies a position of equivalent weight in the structure of this narrative, and both sons commit their own sins: the one by squandering and the other by not forgiving. Yet the Father embraces them both: to the one he gives all, down to the fatted calf, and to the other he promises all. The point is not that there is any difference in the treatment given by the Father to either son. His compassion, standing at the center of this parable, unmistakably binds together this story of the Father’s love and understanding. When he says at the end, „All that I have is thine,” we must not forget that this is not the conclusion or focus of the story by itself, for in fact all that the Father has is both of theirs.

Not all of Jesus’ parables are chiastic, but many are. Where chiasmus is present, it is evidently not accidental. It unifies and intensifies the spiritual crises which stand so frequently at the turning point of the parables. It is fundamental to the beauty and power of these deeply motivating masterpieces of religious instruction. Without cognizance of the structure of these parables, it would not seem that they can be fully understood or appreciated.

John It is recognized that the Gospel of John divides into four basic sections: The Prologue (1:1–18), the Book of Signs (1:19–12:50), the Book of Glory (13:1–20:31), and the Epilogue (21:1–25).25 These four sections may be said to form an A–B–B–A pattern, whose parts deserve closer examination.

The chiastic structure of the Prologue has been explained by Peder Borgen,26 who presents convincing arguments for viewing the style of the Prologue in terms of certain aspects of targumic exposition, which on occasion proceeds by expounding upon a series of subjects in the reverse order from which the subjects may be initially introduced. Hence the structure of the Prologue of John: A The Word and God (1:1–2) B All things made by him
Although Borgen takes the presence of chiasmus in the Prologue of John as evidence of Jewish targumic influence upon its composition (and well one might conclude that the Prologue was heavily influenced by Jewish Christian concepts on numerous other grounds as well), there is more than enough chiasmus in all sections of the Bible to prove that the writers of the Targums had no exclusive claim to the use of chiastic composition. The abundance of chiasmus in the Bible makes it difficult to point to the presence of it in any one passage and ascribe specific source critical significance to it. Furthermore, the continued use of chiasmus throughout the Gospel of John detracts additionally from the hypothesis that the Prologue is to be identified with the Targums simply because of chiastic patterns there.

The chiastic structure of several sections of the Gospel of John has been explored in great detail by C. Talbert. He proposes dividing the Book of Signs into two chiastic systems, basically in the following manner:


These arrangements, by themselves, are quite compelling, and as Talbert correctly remarks, they become even more acceptable as further chiastic structures are identified in the latter half of the Gospel of John. Indeed, the division of the first half of the gospel into several chiastic panels is reinforced as it emerges that the second portion of the Gospel of John is likewise composed of several chiastic arrangements in succession. Talbert proposes an organization for the Book of Glory in which chapter 13:1–35 forms a short chiastic frontispiece, chapter 13:36–14:31 comprises a second chiastic system, and chapter 15:1–17:26 creates the longer conclusion. This in itself may be viewed as a balancing of the three chiastic sections which are contained in the first half of the Gospel of John, and in addition, each section deserves closer attention.

In the so-called frontispiece, Jesus discusses and attends to certain preparatory matters. He announces the fact that the hour of his departure has arrived, and removes the influence of Judas from the presence of the disciples. Most of all he washes the feet of this followers and quiets Peter’s objections with assurances that Peter will soon understand that which is transpiring. The chiastic composition of this section organizes the treatment of these matters into a coherent sequence:

A The hour of departing to the Father and Jesus’ love for his own (13:1) B Inspired by the Devil, Judas is to betray Jesus (2) C Jesus’ knowledge of the betrayal (3) D Jesus rises from supper, lays aside his garments and begins to wash their feet (4–5) E Peter objects, but will understand later (6–11) D’ When he has washed their feet, has taken his garments, he resumes his place at the table C’ Jesus’ knowledge of
Secondly, Jesus puts the minds of his disciples at ease by assuring them and by giving answers to their questions. Jesus recognizes the willingness of the Apostles to follow him, but he also understands their need for further strength. Questions are asked by Philip and Judas, which Jesus answers by giving assurances that his words are those of the Father. Above all, Jesus provides the disciples with the surest formula for their success: If they truly love Jesus and desire to follow him, they are to keep his commandments. The structure of this section, also, reflects chiastic characteristics:

A Peter claims that he can follow Jesus now (13:36–38) B Let not your hearts be troubled (14:1–7) C Philip asks a question. Jesus’ answer: My words are the Father’s (14:8–14) D If you love me, keep my commandments (14:15–21) C’ Judas asks a question. Jesus’ answer: My word is the Father’s (14:22–27) B’ Let not your hearts be troubled (14:27–30) A’ Jesus follows the Father’s commandment and goes forth (14:20–31).

Finally, Jesus discourses to the Apostles upon the eternal unity which exists between himself, the Father, and the disciples. Jesus explains the burdens of suffering and tribulation which must be borne by the Apostles because of this unity, but also promises great blessings which will flow from the relationship which the disciples will enjoy between themselves, the Father, and the Comforter. At the center of this section stands Jesus’ prediction that these relationships will take on this new, eternal dimension in but a very little while:


Although the individual sections of the Gospel of John are chiastic, the book as a whole is not. The Book of Signs deals with Jesus’ contacts and conversations with people in the world; the Book of Glory is limited in content to Jesus’ intimate advice to his select groups of disciples. Retelling the gospel story in these two halves restricts the operation of any overriding organizational principle in the Gospel of John. Nevertheless, the division of the book into two sections of divergent character is not inconsistent with the chiastic or parallelistic view of life and of literature, as has been demonstrated above in respect to the composition of several portions of the Old Testament as well. Therefore, the lack of a single complex chiastic structure in this gospel does not detract from the thoughtful and frequent use of chiasmus throughout the smaller units of this writing.

**REVELATION** The Apocalypse of John is easily the most enigmatic book contained in the New Testament. It is riddled with symbolism and imagery, which has enticed interpreters over the centuries into ascribing a whole host of meanings to this fascinating composition. While the import of the Revelator’s statements is not always ascertainable, the writer is meticulous in his execution of linguistic and numerical devices; he profoundly communicates an overwhelming sense of the eschatological cataclysm hanging over the heads of the agents of evil; he has a keen sense of artistry, rhythm, balance, and adherence to scheme, which produces an unfolding composition which truly bespeaks an artist of the highest caliber. All of this, John the Divine accomplishes while epitomizing both the optimism and immanence of Christian theology and fusing them with the pessimism and anonymity of Jewish apocalyptic literature.
Although it is difficult to generalize about the character of apocalyptic literature in the two centuries before and after Christ (largely because what one includes in this category of Jewish and Christian writing is already determined by somewhat arbitrary criteria), perhaps one of the most telling traits of the apocalyptists is their use of numerical schemes. The numbers three, four, seven, twelve, seventy, one thousand, and others, but especially seven, permeate this body of literature. And with an intense focus on numerology, it should come as no surprise that the better examples of such writing should be highly schematized from beginning to end.

This is certainly the case with the Revelation of John. Its structure is not only systematic, but indeed chiastic throughout. The presence of chiasmus in this apocalypse has been discussed at remarkable length by Lund, in his posthumously published Studies in the Book of Revelation. Lund shows many passages in the book to be elegantly chiastic, demonstrating quite readily the overriding poetical characteristic of this work. The important declarations initially introduced in the Candlestick Vision, for example, are all precisely repeated in reverse order in the ensuing Messages to the Seven Churches. As A. Farrer illustrates, the initial Vision progresses with the following statements:

A „One like a son of man . . . his eyes as flaming fire and his feet like burnished brass“ (1:13–15) B „And out of his mouth a sharp two-edged sword proceeding“ (1:16) C „I am the first and the last and the living, and I was dead and lo am alive“ (1:17–18) D „The secret of the seven stars thou sawest at my right hand and the seven golden candlesticks“ (1:20)

The subsequent exposition of the first four Messages to the Churches repeats and reverses the order of these statements:

D' To Ephesus: „Thus saith the holder of the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden candlesticks“ (2:1) C' To Smyrna: „Thus saith the first and the last who was dead and lived“ (2:8) B' To Pergamus: „Thus saith he who hath the sharp two-edged sword“ (2:12) A' To Thyatira: „Thus saith the Son of God who hath his eyes as flaming fire and his feet like burnished brass“ (2:18).

Precise inverted repetition such as this is common in the Book of Revelation, and the minor effects created by repetitive systems such as these lend the Apocalypse as a whole a strong flavor of completeness and help to render its message more all-inclusive. Even shorter passages, such as Rev. 10:9–10, utilize chiasmus to promote a sense of fullness and fulfillment of the prophetic utterance:

A And he said unto me, „Take and eat it up; B It shall make thy bitter belly C But it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. A' And I took the little book and ate it up; C' And it was in my mouth sweet as honey; B' And as soon as I had eaten it, bitter was my belly.

This is simple chiasm by any standard, but the device is employed effectively here to heighten the impact of the complete fulfillment of the angel’s two-fold prediction.

Although both of the examples given thus far are relatively facile, they are evidence of the writer’s proclivity to use chiasmus. This tendency becomes especially pronounced when we turn to examine the framework used by John in presenting his overall perspective on the destiny of the world. As above, we will not tarry longer to consider other chiasms in shorter passages in the Book of Revelation, but will turn directly to the broad overview of this panoramic book.
Sketching the most important elements in the outline of the book, we observe that Revelation begins by issuing promises to the Church which are contingent upon the Saints’ righteousness; the book correspondingly ends with the fulfillment of these promises as the New Jerusalem is established. Second, the book unveils a vision of certain events in heaven, whereby it is seen that the Lion of Judah, the Lamb, comes forth and is praised as the only one strong enough to break open the seven seals binding together the Book of Judgment; second to last, the book displays a vision of the fall of Babylon and the defeat of Satan on earth, wherein Jesus again is the central figure who is praised as the only one who could achieve such a victory. Third in the book, seven trumpets sound the judgment, killing one-third of the inhabitants of the earth; third from last, seven bowls pour out that judgment, in like manner killing and scourging all the inhabitants of the earth. Fourth, seven thunders rock the sky; and fourth from last, seven angels proclaim the gospel flying through the midst of heaven. Fifth, two emissaries of God perform great signs, are killed, and are resurrected; fifth from last, two dragons work their evil deeds, one is mortally wounded, yet is miraculously healed. At the center, Satan threatens to devour the virgin’s child as soon as he has been born, but the child is caught up to heaven; a war ensues and as a result Satan is cast out of heaven and thrust down to earth, where he pursues and makes war upon the remnant of the virgin’s seed. This chiastic structure may be displayed as follows:

A  Prologue (1:1–20)  a  John and the Angel (1:1–3)  b  The coming Jesus (1:4–8)  c  John’s commission to the Churches (1:9–20)
B  The Seven Letters (2:1–3:22)  Promises to the Church as it exists in the World
C  The Seven Seals opened in Heaven (4:1–7:17)  x  Christ praised around the throne as the only one strong enough to break the seals (4:1–5:14)  y  The Judgment commences: The opening of the seals (6:1–17)  x  Christ praised around the throne by the 144,000 as the only one through whom there is salvation (7:1–17)
E  Satan attempts to devour the virgin’s child (12:1–5)  The woman flees into the wilderness (12:6)  Satan is cast out of heaven (12:7–12)  The woman flies into the wilderness (12:14)  Satan pursues the virgin and the remnant of her seed (12:15–17)
C’  The Seven Angels Survey the Judgment on Earth (17:1–20:10)  y  The fall of Babylon and the kings of the earth (17:1–18:24)  x  Christ praised by the multitude as the King of Kings (19:1–16)  y  The fall of Satan and the kings of the earth (19:17–20:10)
B  The New Jerusalem (20:11–22:5)  Fulfillment of the promises made to the Church as it will exist in heaven

Surely it would be difficult to disregard the extensive and intricate chiastic structure of this book. In further elaboration of this chiastic arrangement, consider the following details:

In the Prologue and the Epilogue, one may favorably compare passages such as ,,And [Jesus] sent and signified [the Revelation] by his angel unto his servant John,” (1:1), with ,,I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things” (22:16). The Apocalypse begins with a blessing to those who read and keep the things written in the book (1:3), and it ends with a related invitation to all to read the book (22:17) and curse upon any person who changes the writing (22:18f). The coming Jesus is also described in similar detail in each instance: In the prologue it reads, ,,I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty” (1:8), and in the epilogue, ,,I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last” (22:13). Likewise, John’s description of his own experience before the Lord in the prologue parallels the comparable account given in the epilogue: ,,I John, your brother, heard behind me a great voice . . . when I saw him, I
fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon, me saying unto me, Fear not" (1:10, 17) This is echoed by ,,I
John heard these things, and saw them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of
the angel . . . . And he said, Do not, for I am thy fellowservant” (22:8–9). These refrains are surely distinct enough to
constitute strong evidence of an inclusio formed by the material contained in the first and last chapters of this
book.

In B, many promises are given to the Church as it struggles along in its present situation. The rewards for
faithfulness and endurance include the promise that one may eat of the tree of life (2:7), not be harmed by the
second death (2:11), eat of the hidden manna, receive a white stone and a new name (2:17), have power over the
nations (2:26), obtain white raiment and a new name which is not blotted out of the book of life (3:5), become a
pillar in the temple of the New Jerusalem (3:12), and sit with Christ upon his divine throne (3:21). The fulfillment
of these promises is specifically recounted in B’, the description of the New Jerusalem or the state of the Church
after the forces of evil have been annihilated. In particular, the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem eat of the tree of
life (22:2), are not harmed by the second death (21:8), behold the radiance of the city which is like unto a stone of
crystal (22:11), have power over nations (21:24–26), receive a new name (22:4) which is not blotted out of the
book of life (20:12-15), serve the temple which is none other than the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb (21:22),
and serve the Lamb in the presence of his throne and God's (22:3). Whatever else one thinks about the meaning or
origin of this material, it is evident that chapters 2 and 3 are intimately related to chapters 20:11–22:5. And the
evidence continues that this relationship is in no way coincidental.

Sections C and C’ both contain a wide variety of imagery and expressions. Strikingly common to both, however,
and equally unique in the book as a whole, is the attention which is given here to the preeminence of the Lamb.
Significant about the breaking of the seals in C is not so much the description of each individual seal as it is opened,
but rather the astounding strength of the Lamb, as he comes forth, takes the book out of the hand of the majesty
seated on high, and opens the seals to the very last one. Those surrounding the throne shout, ,,Worthy is the Lamb
that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing” (5:12). In
much the same way, crucial to the description of the fall of Babylon and the allies of evil is not the description of
the particular encounters between the forces of good and evil, but rather the resounding victory which belongs to
the Lamb, as he leads the way to victory. Those in heaven shout, ,,Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power unto
the Lord, our God . . . the marriage of the Lamb is come” (19:1,7). At the crowning moment of this section it is Jesus
who emerges bearing the title ,,King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (19:16).

As for the seven trumpets and the seven plagues of wrath, little need be said. From even the most casual
expositors, the similarities between these two sets of seven evokes comment. The announcement of the woes
proclaimed by the trumpets looks specifically forward to the execution of those woes poured out from the seven
bowls of wrath. The trumpets sound forth (1) hail, fire and blood upon the earth (8:7), (2) the turning of the sea to
blood (8:8), (3) the turning of the rivers to wormwood (8:10), (4) the darkening of the sun and the day (8:12), (5)
pit, smoke, locusts and torment (9:1ff), (6) armies from the Euphrates (9:14f), and (7) the announcement ,,It is the
Lord's” (11:15). In like manner, the vials pour out (1) noisome and grievous sores upon men (16:2), (2) the turning
of the sea to blood (16:3), (3) the turning of the rivers to blood (16:4), (4) the overheating of the sun (16:8), (5)
darkness in the kingdom of the beast, and pain (16:10), (6) the drying up of the Euphrates (16:12), and (7) the
announcement ,,It is done” (16:17). The interrelationships here, for the most part, need no qualification.

At the end of the Trumpet section stands a vision of two witnesses of God who preach for forty-two months (11:3)
and are eventually slain in the streets of Jerusalem and, after three days, ascend to God before the eyes of their
enemies. The inevitable suggestion of the present analysis is that the counterparts of these two witnesses are the
two beasts, described at the beginning of their respective sections regarding the Plagues. Not only is the number two significant in each case, but the fact that both the witnesses and the first beast overcome mortal wounds (11:12 and 13:3) and the fact that both the witnesses and the beast speak for forty-two months (13:5) ties these elements of the Apocalypse closely together. Without attempting to assign historical antecedents to the two beasts themselves, it becomes apparent that they are agents of Satan, just as the two witnesses are agents of Jesus. As the witnesses provide the world with final evidences and signs of the power of God in respect to the impending judgment, so the beasts represent the last efforts of Satan to prevail among men on earth.

At the center of the Apocalypse, Satan is expelled from heaven. This is the crux of the Apocalypse and its centrality is reinforced in many ways. First, it is the defeat of Satan in heaven which truly seals his fate. His efforts to pursue the remnant of the seed of the virgin on earth appear to be formidable, but this is only an appearance, for the forces of evil are handily expunged when the vials begin to pour out their wrath. Even following the millennial reign of the martyrs, when Satan is finally loosed a last time from prison, he is devoured without the faintest hint of resistance (20:9). Thus, the war and victory which transpire immediately after the child of the virgin is caught up to God and to his throne (12:5–8) stand at the center of the Apocalypse. Second, it is the transfer of the conflict from the battleground in heaven to a battleground on earth which is of particular concern to John the Revelator. It went without saying for him that Jesus had already defeated Satan by resisting the temptations in the wilderness, by driving out devils from those who were possessed, and by overcoming death by his own resurrection. Jesus had won, at least in theory; yet the problems of evil and weakness still continue to plague mankind, both inside and outside of the Church. Only by understanding that Satan had been driven out of heaven and had been forced to take a final futile stand on earth and to use mere mortals as his warriors does the defeat of Satan by Jesus remain consistent with the continuing disappointments which arise out of the sinfulness and unrighteousness of mankind. It is this transfer of conflict from heaven to earth which, therefore, is placed alongside of the keystone in the structure of this account. Finally, it cannot be entirely by happenstance that there are 194 verses in chapters 1–11, and 193 verses in chapters 13–22, making chapter 12, containing Satan's aborted effort to devour the child of the virgin, Satan's defeat in heaven, and his pursuit of the remnant of the seed of the virgin, the physical as well as the substantive centerpiece of the entire book.

Perceiving this overall chiastic structure of the Book of Revelation both accents the importance of viewing its individual sections in conjunction with their chiastic counterparts, and also highlights the central message and dominant characteristics of this work. Since the Apocalypse has proved puzzling in the past, it is significant that chiasmus is an effective tool in exposing some of its basic design and meaning. The following observations may be made:

First, the foregoing analysis provides a basis for recognizing a greater degree of unity in this work than many other approaches seem to allow. To many readers, the book appears to be disjointed and unsystematic. To most commentators, the book appears to be a collection of severable visions and distinct scenes. Especially the Messages to the Seven Churches are frequently singled out and treated as an unrelated vision not belonging to the body of the book as such. Other attempts have been made to segregate those sections of the book which are said to be of Christian origin from those passages thought to be attributable to John the Baptist. Each of these approaches may have some merit, for the influence of John the Baptist on Christian apocalyptic thought was undoubtedly profound and the Book of Revelation is indisputably composed of an arrangement of apocalyptic episodes. Yet each of these approaches stands to disregard, if not completely preclude, a comprehensive perception of the book’s overall design and scheme. The proposed interpretation, on the other hand, gives substantial grounds for seeing this Apocalypse as an integrated work of a single mind. It sees the book as a tightly focused composition, whose pattern is highly organized and consistently executed throughout.
Second, while not ruling out the possibility that the writer of the Apocalypse may have been guided by many principles operating simultaneously in his composition, the foregoing analysis points to the conclusion that the book is predominantly schematic, not historical, in character. Through imagery, numerology, analogy, as well as chiasmus, the book describes one panoramic vision of the destruction of evil. The order in which the events in the book occur is not dictated by chronology; references to time periods seem themselves to be abstractions, and the entire apocalyptic scene unfolds as if removed from earth's temporality and historicity. Do the events described in chapter 5 occur before the events in chapter 12? How can the servants who are sealed in chapter 7 be seen in all their glory praising the Lamb at that point in the book, when the cause for rejoicing is not supplied until chapter 19? The answer to these and many similar questions is found in the simple fact that dischronologies abound throughout this book. Time sequence is not the governing principle of the structure of this composition; chiasmus is. Thus it is that efforts to extract an eschatological timetable for the end of the world from the pages of this book have proved unsatisfactory, ad hoc and contrived.

Finally, when we turn to identify the ultimate meaning of the book, we find that it was not written in order to describe impending persecutions which were to befall the Christian church at the hands of either Nero or Jewish persecutors. Nor does the book appear to be written about Hitler, the Pope, or any other historical character. Central to the book is, much rather, the defeat of Satan and his expulsion from power. Whatever John may have actually seen or heard, this is what he tells and says. All else in the book revolves around this critical demise of the forces of evil. We need look no further to understand the message of the Apocalypse of John.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the foregoing examination of the books in the New Testament has been to demonstrate the presence of chiastic organizational patterns within the New Testament in such a way as to form the basis for an appraisal of the significance of chiasmus in this body of early Christian writings. As such, this study does not purport to be a complete examination of all possible chiastic structures within the New Testament. Nor does it attempt to impose upon or derive from such literary patterns any particular theological interpretations.

The evidence which has been compiled above, it is now submitted, amply substantiates the claim which was made at the outset of this essay: that serious readers of the New Testament cannot afford to proceed with these texts without an awareness of chiasmus as a basic element in the literary composition of the New Testament. Chiasmus has been found to be particularly influential in the books of James, Galatians, 1 Corinthians, Hebrews, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Jude, Revelation, and in certain respects in the four Gospels as well. Where chiasmus is present, it has been found to hold a key to the perception of the central message of the book in questions. This offers significant clues for understanding the unity of the writing, the personal quality of emphatic central declarations or assertions, and the meaningful relationships existing between seemingly repetitious sections in the book. Where present, chiasmus also offers insights into an entire way of thinking which was important, if not dominant, in antiquity, but which the modern mind easily overlooks when it happens to have been conditioned differently, e.g. to think syllogistically or to avoid repetitiveness.

Thus, students of the New Testament should not be reluctant to observe chiastic patterns in most portions of that book. The writings of the New Testament often have an air of self-evident importance and authoritativeness about them, but this is not always accompanied by an equally evident direction or meaning within the composition as a whole. As has been seen, however, chiasmus may often supply the needed element of order, or coherent structure, which draws to one’s attention the central meaning and fundamental artistry of the writing being studied. Such are benefits which, when found, cannot and will not be ignored.
1 See, e. g., J. Jebb, Sacred Literature (1820); T. Boys, Tactica Sacra (1824); J. Forbes, Symmetrical Structure of Scripture (1854); N. Lund, Chiasmus in the New Testament (1942).

2 Boys, Tactica Sacra, pp. 18ff.

3 J. Bligh, Galatians in Greek and Galatians – A Discussion.

4 Bligh, Galatians – A Discussion, p. 39.

5 Lund, for example, identifies as chiastic 1 Cor. 6:12–14, 5:2–6, 9:19–22, 11:8–12, among several others.


7 G. Buchanan, To the Hebrews, p. xxvi–xxvii.

8 De Wett took this position, although it has been rejected by most others; see. e. g., S. Salmond, „The Epistle to the Ephesians,” Expositor’s Greek Testament, W. Nicoll ed., III, p. 208.


10 M. Dibelius, Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament: An die Colosser, p. 3.

11 Boys, Tactica Sacra, pp. 65–66.


14 A similar phenomenon occurs in the pseudepigraphic Narrative of Zosimus, in which three strata of composition can be identified. The earliest is the central section, the second level comes both before and after that, and the third level is found at the beginning and the end. This produces an onion-skin effect with the most ancient material at the center. See J. Charlesworth, Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research, pp. 224–25.


29 Certain manuscripts do not read „The beginning and the ending” in 1:8. It appears that transcribers attempted to harmonize the two verses, which again is further evidence of the strong affinity between these two sections of the book.

Chiasmus in Ancient Greek and Latin Literatures

John W. Welch

Notwithstanding the fact that most recent scholarly attention has dealt with the occurrence of chiasmus in ancient Near Eastern languages and literatures, a significant amount of chiasmus is to be found in ancient Greek and Latin literatures as well. Indeed, the word „chiasmus” itself stems from the Greek word *chiazein*, meaning to mark with or in the shape of a cross, and chiasmus has been earnestly studied in Greek and Latin syntax and style far more extensively and many years longer than is has even been acknowledged in the context of Semitic and other ancient writings.

That chiasmus has received more attention in the Classical setting than in other ancient literatures is at the same time both ironic and yet completely understandable. The irony lies in the fact that more scholarly acceptance and utilization of chiasmus is found in connection with the appreciation of Western literary traditions than in the study of other ancient literatures, whereas chiasmus is relatively simple and certainly less informative in respect to the Greek and Latin authors than it is in regard to many of the writers from other arenas of the ancient world. One would expect the greater efforts to be made where the rewards promise to be the more attractive. Yet this situation is also easily explained. For one thing, numerous Western scholars have exhaustively studied secular Greek literary texts since the thirteenth century, and Latin, since it was spoken in Rome. The use of literary devices in Hebrew literature, on the other hand, has only been given relatively sparse scholarly treatment in the West for something over two hundred years, and the study of figures of speech in most other ancient languages, dialects and literatures can still be said to be somewhat in a state of infancy. In addition, since the occurrence of chiasmus in the Classical European texts is often a relatively simple phenomenon, it has usually been an easy thing for commentators to detect, natural to comment upon, and relatively inconsequential and uncontroversial once observed.

This, however, should not be taken to imply that the study of chiasmus or related structural aspects of Greek or Latin literary art forms is merely a mechanical exercise without much interpretative or appreciative value. To the contrary, the study of chiasmus in European traditions can be rewarding in several respects, both as to the Classical literatures themselves and as to the other bodies of writing with which they are compared and contrasted. For example, the frequency of chiasmus in a given author’s writing can be used as a guide in evaluating the author’s tendencies to embellish upon or vary from direct, „natural” forms of speech, and when comparing literatures, one can see certain similarities between chiasmus in early Greek writing, particularly in Homer, and chiasmus in other ancient writings, such as those studied in the earlier chapters of this volume. Although, as this essay will show, the complexity of chiasmus diminishes markedly in the later Greek and Latin writers (setting the style for most Western writing ever since), it is still important to observe and appreciate the extent chiasmus was used by them in order to confirm and compare the use of chiasmus in other ancient, especially biblical, texts.

Chiasmus appears in Greek and Latin writing from the time of Homer to the later Roman authors. Not all Classical compositions, however, use chiasmus to the same extent, and frequently it appears to be more of a poetical device (as it often is when it occurs in English\(^1\)) than an independent structural principle or form. Nevertheless, certain authors employ chiasmus in a complex fashion and for them the form serves true structural, and not mere ornamental functions. This will be demonstrated as their writings are examined, first as to Homer and then as to the later Latin and Greek writers.
In many ancient literatures, as we have known since Bishop Lowth and as we have seen above, parallelism is one of the primary structural elements of literary style. In the Homeric epics, however, a different structural device is fundamental: the meter determines the basic structure of each of the 27,803 lines of the Iliad and the Odyssey; dactylic hexameter makes each line in and of itself a structural unit. Since meter is of primary importance to Homer, chiasmus is by necessity a secondary feature of Homeric style, and like all else, it conforms to the demands of the metrical scheme.

Nevertheless, even in this role, chiasmus functions both grammatically and structurally in Homer. It is normally contained within the structure of individual lines, although isolated cases exist in which complicated chiastic figures extend over a number of lines as well. Due to the large number of syllables with short metric values in Ionic Greek, the dactylic hexameter did not drastically restrict the flexibility of word order in Homer’s epic compositions, and thus grammatical chiasmus could often be used at the discretion of the bard.

When chiasmus is structural in Homer, it is sometimes called „hysteron proteron,” i.e., „the latter first.” Hysteron proteron describes passages which are constructed so that their first thought refers to some latter thought of a preceding passage, and their latter thought, to some preceding passage’s former thought. Even though Cicero was aware of this Homeric technique, and even though scholars such as Wilamowitz-Moellendorff and Cedric Whitman have concerned themselves with Homeric symmetries in general, modern scholars have only recently begun to realize the structural effects and nature of hysteron proteron. Such inversions, rising to elaborate chiastic levels, occur in Homer, as will be shown after an initial examination of simple chiasmus in Homer has been made.

When Homer uses chiasmus in arranging the order of his words, it is usually short and simple. This use of chiasmus seldom exceeds one line in length, since it is subordinate to the metric composition of the individual lines themselves. Moreover, chiasmus in Homer rarely introduces antithetical ideas in its inverted second half. Most often the inversion is noun-adjective, adjective-noun, whereas in Hebrew it is more likely to be subject-verb, verb-subject. Homeric chiasmus rarely embodies a turning point or escalation of thought, as chiasmus so often does in Hebrew and other ancient literatures. Here it functions predominantly as a grammatical, ornamental form.

This is illustrated by the fact that the presence of chiasmus in a Homeric line is often accompanied by the presence of té . . . té in that verse. The simple addition which is connoted by the usage of té . . . té typifies the basic nature of chiasmus in Homer, as is illustrated by the following examples:

- **II 3:179** Describing Agamemnon as „a king good and a mighty warrior”
- **II 9:443** „Of words a speaker and a doer of deeds”
- **II 16:224** „Cloaks windbreaking and fleecy blankets”
- **II 16:857** „Its lot mourning and leaving youth and manhood”
- **II 24:730** „Wives noble and innocent children”
- **Od 3:310** „Mother despicable and cowardly Aegisthus”
- **Od 10:235** „Pramnian wine she fixed and mixed in barley meal”
- **Od 24:340** „Pear trees thirteen and ten apple trees”

All these are examples of simple grammatical chiasmus. Of these eight examples, five are noun-adjective -- adjective-noun patterns, two are noun-participle -- participle-noun figures and one depends on case, namely, genitive accusative -- accusative genitive. All these examples of chiasmus are contained within single lines, and
with the exception of II 16:224, they are all found in speeches. These examples are typical of Homer's basic use of chiasmus.

On some occasions, Homer uses complex grammatical chiasmus involving several terms. This resembles the more elaborate chiasms studied in the preceding chapters. Although it is very difficult to isolate a rhetorical style from a poetic style in Homer (since the whole poem was spoken and all its speeches are poetic), chiasmus still seems to be employed by Homer as a predominantly rhetorical device. It was observed above that simple chiasms occur frequently in speeches; below is an example of an elaborate chiasm found in Phoenix' speech (II 9:434–606). This speech appears in the ninth book of the Iliad, which has been described as the book of the Iliad which contains more oratio recta than any other part of the Iliad. Coming from the hero's own tutor, this speech, of all speeches in the Iliad, should represent the paragon of Homeric rhetoric. In it, Phoenix presents a concise description of the heroic ideal: the hero should be a speaker of words and also a doer of great deeds. His speech is monumental in the Iliad. It sets the stage for Achilles’ decision to stay in Troy, which in effect is the turning point of the Trojan war. When it is seen that the initial lines of Phoenix’ speech revolve chiastically around a central turning point, one better understands the impact which this speech had on the heroic decision of Achilles, for in Phoenix' speech the focal point is the heroic ideal itself. Lattimore's translation of this passage, II 9: 437–445, reads as follows:

(a) How then shall I, dear child, be left in this place behind you all alone? Peleus the aged horseman sent me forth with you on that day when he sent you from Phthia to Agamemnon a mere child, who knew nothing yet (b) of the joining of battle nor (c) of debate (d) where men are made pre-eminent. Therefore he sent me along with you to teach you of all these matters, (c) to make you a speaker of words and (b) one who is accomplished in action. (a) Therefore apart from you, dear child, I would not be willing to be left behind.

This is a relatively complete chiastic composition coming within a stylistically unique passage in the Iliad (indicating that the use of chiasmus here was probably not accidental). Very little of the language in Phoenix' speech is formulaic, and its important words appear nowhere else in the Iliad. It follows that the passage, including its chiastic structure, was stylistically created especially for the purpose of embodying the description by Phoenix himself of the heroic ideal.

Examples such as these show the basic form of chiasmus in Homer. But his use of the form extends well beyond that which has been seen thus far. Frequently an inversion in the structural order of thoughts or events is found in Homer. When this occurs, the figure is referred to as hysteron proteron. As Bassett has described, hysteron proteron is formally equivalent to chiasmus, only functionally different. Where chiasmus gives order to words, hysteron proteron gives a structural order to the poet’s thoughts. Although the term hysteron proteron has been familiar to scholars since the first century B.C., until recently there has been little consensus of opinion about its meaning and nature. One of the most salient clues revealing its meaning, however, appears in Cicero. When Atticus asks two questions about the verdict of the trial of Clodius, Cicero answers the second question first and the first, second and explains his so doing by citing Homer as his model (Atticus 1, 16, 1). Homer was fond of this figure of inversion and repetition, but he was by no means bound to it. It was an ornamental, though functional, aspect of his style.

Some of the examples of hysteron proteron, detected by Bassett, Bowra, and also the ancient scholiasts, are found in volleys of questions which are answered in the reverse order. For example:
Od 24:106ff. Agamemnon asks Amphimedon (a) how the suitors came to die, and (b) whether he does not remember him. Amphimedon replies (b) that he does remember him well, and then he tells (a) of the slaughter of the suitors. Od 15:509ff. Theoclymenus asks Telemachus whether he shall go (a) to the home of a prince in Ithaca or (b) Penelope. Telemachus answers that (b) it is impossible to see Penelope but (a) that he might become a guest at Eurymachus. Od 14:115ff. Odysseus asks, (a) who was your master? (b) perhaps I can give you tidings of him, for I have wandered far. Eumaeus responds, (b) no wanderer’s tidings can have credence with my master’s wife and son; (a) my master was Odysseus. ll 2:758–69 It is asked (a) who is the best fighter and (b) who has the best horses. The Muse replies (b) the best horses are those of Eumelos and (a) the best warrior is Aias in the absence of Achilles. ll 19:139ff. Agamemnon commands, (a) so rouse thee to battle and (b) I will render the gifts. Achilles replies (b) as thou wilt about the gifts, now (a) let us think of the battle.

These are clear examples of chiastic structural inversions.

Other examples of hysteron proteron can be even more complex. In the catalogue of the troops in the third book of the Iliad, first the Achaeans are described, then the Trojans; the Trojans advance first, then the Achaeans. In the second onslaught it is the Achaeans who move first (ll 4:427 and 433). Similarly, in a series of five scenes, ll 15:55–322 contains another long chain of such inversions:

(55) When Zeus wakes on Mount Ida, he bids Hera to summon Iris (a) and Apollo (b). (143f.) She summons Apollo (b) and then Iris (a). (157, 221) After they report to Zeus, he dispatches Iris (a) and then Apollo (b). (229–232) The latter is given two commands: to take the aegis (c) and put the Achaeans to flight, and then to go to Hector (d) and rouse his strength. (308, 322) Then Apollo goes to Hector’s aid (d) and finally he takes the aegis (c) and routs the Achaeans.

This pattern, again, exemplifies a compound structural chiasmus and lends continuity to the narrative.

A most marked example of hysteron proteron is noted by Aristarchus, on Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1086, a fragment of commentary dating to the middle of the first century B.C. It is observed therein that the conversation between Odysseus and his mother, Anticleia, in the underworld, Od 11:170 ff., utilizes the principle of hysteron proteron in a most extraordinary fashion. Odysseus asks the shade of his mother:

(a) How she had died, (b) Was it by a disease, (c) Or by the gentle shafts of Artemis. (d) About his father, (e) About his son, (f) Whether another had assumed his royal power, (g) And about his wife, where does she stay.

Anticleia responds in exactly the reverse order:

(g) She stays in thy halls, (f) No man has taken thy honor, (e) Telemachus is a peaceful lord, (d) Your father remains in the fields, (c) Artemis did not slay me, (b) Nor did a disease, (a)

But I died of grief for thee.¹⁴

This is indeed remarkable and is not readily explicable except in the broader context of chiasmus in antiquity generally.

Although Homer does not always observe chiastic orders, he does use hysteron proteron on many occasions, and as Aristarchus has said, „the poet’s failure to use it is contrary to his wont.”¹⁵ Bassett concludes, „this inversion
cannot be accidental. The poet must invert intentionally.\textsuperscript{16}

Bassett offers four explanations for the use of \textit{hysteron proteron} in Homer, most of which are harmonious with the use of chiasmus generally. He states that it was used (1) for variety, (2) for economy of thought, (3) because of the point of view of the second speaker, and (4) due to the need for continuity of ideas. Without flowing continuity, the oral recitation of a poem of this length would be confusing to the listener. With \textit{hysteron proteron} the poet can direct the audience from one thought to the next, while the last is still fresh in its mind.

It is difficult to say which is more natural: the overlapping and connecting characteristics of an \textit{a-b-b-a-a-b} pattern, or the abrupt alternating and juxtaposing order of \textit{a-b-a-b-a-b}. Bassett chooses the former as the more natural, meaning the more primitive. He feels that the tendency to return to the last thought is ,,to be expected in all primitive speech.“\textsuperscript{17} This is probably true; children like chiasmus.\textsuperscript{18} From the position of a second speaker, the last thing mentioned will almost automatically receive the first attention. But in Homer’s style, \textit{hysteron proteron} comprises more than the simple tendency to return to the last idea mentioned. It continues on, returning backwards until the first idea is reached again. Bassett convincingly insists that this entails more than an innate tendency. Homer’s epics, he says, are not ,,a product of primitive speech, but were written long after the reasoning processes had been well developed.“\textsuperscript{19} Homer’s style was intentional and mature.\textsuperscript{20} Certain elements of primitive speech may lie in the distant origins of such an involved style as \textit{hysteron proteron}, and they may contribute to the audience’s natural appreciation of the work, but the whole style in its complexity owes its existence to much more than one inherent human tendency. To say that Homer used chiasmus and \textit{hysteron proteron} simply because of some vague inherent inclination toward inversion is to say that he chose dactylic hexameter because man has a natural sense of rhythm. Homer used \textit{hysteron proteron} as a purposeful structural device, and understanding it is important ,,in helping us to understand the secret of the poet’s art.“\textsuperscript{21}

Over the years, scholars have evaluated Homeric style, both internally and comparatively, in terms of his use of these devices. Contention has only arisen over defining the relationship of \textit{hysteron proteron} to chiasmus. Among the scholiasts themselves a series of propositions and rebuttals can be studied. Aristarchus of Alexandria treated \textit{hysteron proteron} as distinct from chiasmus and treated it with lawlike universality in Homer, applying it as a unique and compelling principle of textual criticism and interpretation in Homer.\textsuperscript{22} His rival Crates of Pergamum would not allow \textit{hysteron proteron} to pass as a figure unique to Homer and said: ,,The Homeric \textit{hysteron proteron} is nothing but rhetorical chiasmus.“\textsuperscript{23} Crates and the Stoics of Pergamum considered \textit{hysteron proteron} to be a rhetorical device which had been devised to give the lesser genre of rhetoric some of the majesty and order of poetry.\textsuperscript{24} In the Middle Ages, the Bishop of Thessalonica, Eustathius, disparaged the use of inverted orders in Homeric thought, but still associated it directly with chiasmus

\begin{center}
This is a novel order. It is chiastic . . . Homer’s order results in a lack of clearness: He has arranged four words, not in square order [Eustathius gives a diagram to explain this], but like the letter X. This is artificial and contorted. The poet has imitated the mind of a man whose mind is confused, and one who is not at home in arranging words naturally.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{center}

Hopefully, we need not accept Eustathius’ judgment that Homeric inversion reflects a state of confusion. But what of the equation of chiasmus and \textit{hysteron proteron}? Certainly \textit{hysteron proteron} is related to chiasmus, but to leave that relationship undefined or to suggest that \textit{hysteron proteron} is merely ornamental like grammatical chiasmus invites confusion and controversy.
The answer appears to be relatively simple. When the scholiasts use the term chiasmus, they apparently mean simple grammatical chiasmus, an unpretentious criss-crossing of words. When they use the term hysteron proteron they refer to a structural order of ideas or events in an inverted arrangement. There is more substance and significance to the latter, but the difference is only one of degree, not of kind. The problem basically arose because the scholiasts were cognizant that simple chiasmus played only a peripheral role in later Greek and Latin literary art, and thus they attributed little status to it in Homer. But this should not imply that hysteron proteron or other larger symmetrical structures are to be treated equally lightly. The great poet cannot be judged exclusively according to the preferences of first century Greek grammarians. Homer’s mind and his world thought differently from theirs. As will be seen next, Homeric literature was written within a deliberate framework of larger geometric precision. As a part of this framework, both chiasmus and hysteron proteron were structurally and grammatically influential as a principle of literary form.

The symmetrical structure of the Odyssey has been analyzed by John L. Myres. Myres describes in great detail, which need not be duplicated here, the correspondences and intercalations between scenes in many sections of this epic. He is able to show significant evidences of concentric structures throughout the Odyssey, and frequently concludes that the number of elements involved is too great to be due to coincidence. In Books I–V, for example, in which Telemachus seeks Odysseus, the incidents take place at


In Books XVII–XXIII, Myres suggests the following structure in the Vengeance of Odysseus:

A Penelope – Theoclymenus: prediction B Argus: Melanthius and Antinous C Penelope invites Odysseus D The defeat of Irus E Penelope receiving the Suitors’ gifts F Insult of Eurymachus G Penelope receives Odysseus: bird omen H Decision to abide by the Test of the Bow G’Telemachus, Eurykleia, Philoetius: geese F’Insult of Ctesippus E’Penelope proposes test of the bow D’ Failure of the Suitors C’Penelope allows Odysseus’ claim B’ Massacre: Antinous and Melanthius A’Penelope recognizes Odysseus: prediction fulfilled.

Not only is the order of these events in the Vengeance of Odysseus, like other structures in the Odyssey, relatively clear, but one notices above that the centerpiece of this particular episode is not the massacre, as the modern mind would expect, nor Penelope’s ultimate recognition of Odysseus, but rather Penelope’s decision to abide by the Test of the Bow and the divine approvals which accompany that decision. Observing the chiastic character of this passage and the many other duplicative or parallel symmetries in the composition of the Odyssey is elementary to appreciating the literary achievements of this timeless epic.

Similar efforts have been made identifying inverted parallel arrangements in the Iliad as well. The patterns in the Iliad, however, do not appear to be as precise as those seen above in the Odyssey. Certain writers have attributed the presence of repetitive patterns in the Iliad to the direct influence of Geometric art on Homeric composition, though it is not certain that Homer composed as late as the period in which Geometric art was flourishing. Cedric Whitman is one of the foremost proponents of this school. His statement, „the real analogue of Homeric style is Geometric art,“ characterizes his study. „It is the spirit of the Geometric Age,“ he says, „which is at work here, and the form which it produced would have been all but impossible in any other time.“ It should be apparent that we no longer need to view such patterns as unique to the Homeric or Geometric age. Literary works from this age, like
those of many other periods, reflect a high propensity towards symmetry, as Whitman’s schematization of the structure of the Iliad has amply shown. Whitman expressed his conclusions concerning symmetry in Homer as follows:

Homer’s scenes are, furthermore, placed especially in the Iliad, in balancing positions, echoing each other either through similarity or contrast. The most obvious example, of course, is the balance of the Quarrel in Book I of the Iliad by the Reconciliation in Book XXIV. Thus there is a circular composition also of scenes themselves, scenes framing scenes in concentric rings around centerpieces, exactly as central motifs are heavily framed by borders in Geometric painting. Concentric circles are a universal device in Geometric art, and an especial favorite in Athenian Protogeometric; and the principle of balance around a central point which is implied in concentric circles is far and away the dominating formal principle in the Iliad. The poem as a whole forms one large concentric pattern, within which a vast system of smaller ones, sometimes distinct and sometimes interlocking, gives shape to the several parts.  

Whitman provides his reader with numerous examples and an expanded chart depicting the symmetrical structure of the Iliad. Most noticeable are the parallels between Books 9 and 16. Other parallels are not as distinct as these. Whitman recalls further:

It has been suggested that such „onion skin” design arose from a device originally mnemonic . . . but if this device was originally mnemonic and functional such a purpose is clearly superceded when it becomes the structural basis of a fifteen-thousand-line poem such as the Iliad. It has become an artistic principle.

Although Geometric art provides certain analogues for Homeric style, significant differences should also be observed between the geometric model, to which Whitman looks, and the chiastic mode. The similarity of vase paintings and temple friezes with Homeric imagery and structure is limited. In a geometric temple frieze, for example, the center image is always the most important, but in the Iliad and in the Odyssey, the central books are not climactic and are the most asymmetrical, as Whitman admits. As such they comprise a curious centerpiece in terms of Geometric art. Furthermore, the painted rings which border the central motif on geometric vase paintings do not themselves culminate in relative high points. Rather they repeat the same figure over and over again in a linear extension. This, again, is unlike the progressive subsections contained within these epics. Thirdly, the rings on the bottom half of most vases do not reflect those on the top half exactly. From this it would seem that symmetry in Geometric art is not strictly analogous to symmetry in Homer, and therefore, it may be erroneous to expect to find an explanation for all types of Homeric symmetry in Geometric art.

Furthermore, literary devices, such as chiasmus and hysteron proteron, for example, are not explained by the principles of Geometric art. Lord speaks directly to this point:

I doubt if the artistic pattern is dynamic to this degree and in this way. This is not to deny that such balances of pattern are felt by the singers -- we have seen them operative on the level of interlinear connections, where they play a part in determining the positions of words in a line and perhaps even thereby the choice of words. But to suppose that such patterns would be the cause of changes of essential ideas and meaning may be carrying their influence too far.

To explain Homer’s use of chiasmus and hysteron proteron, it would therefore appear necessary to find another precedent or pattern. And as Kosmala suggests, we should recall that the use of symmetry in composition „is not
an invention of the Greeks. Very probably it is a Semitic inheritance, like the alphabet." Bassett makes a similar suggestion:

There seem to be but two possible explanations. The first is that Homer and his predecessors were influenced by Asiatic peoples. This does not seem impossible. The Orient is the native soil of the raconteur: Ionia must have had some contact with the peoples of southwestern Asia and Mesopotamia. But until we have more knowledge of the channels by which this influence could have reached the bards before Homer, another explanation commends itself more strongly.37

The information concerning the possible chiastic influence of Eastern literatures on Homeric writing, which Bassett did not have when he wrote earlier in this century, has surely been exposed and explored in recent times and in the preceding chapters of this book. The conclusion which this suggests is that Homer’s use of chiasmus and symmetrical composition should not be understood as an exclusively Hellenic product or tendency. The pattern which is seen in Homer is, from many other contexts, a familiar one.

Latin and Later Greek Authors In the traditions which followed in Homer’s footsteps, chiasmus became a figure of syntax which served many Greek and Latin authors in a variety of ways. In general, chiasmus became a simpler figure in the later writers than hysteron proteron or symmetrical structure had been in Homer. It rarely functions as an element of structure, giving continuity to multi-termed passages. In the later writers, except in relatively rare instances, chiasmus was restricted to making individual sentences into stylistic units,38 and thus Nägelsbach calls chiasmus and anaphora „the ruling powers of the structure of the Latin sentence.“39 Since Greek and Latin are highly inflected, they permit flexibility in word order and accommodate the composition of simple chiasmus with relative ease. Nevertheless, chiasmus is not always found to be a natural, intrinsic aspect of Classical styles, for in some authors it is artificial.40 While some use it frequently, it appears rarely in others. Therefore, in those authors where it does appear saliently, it can be considered an important part of their stylistic artistry. Bernhard, after accusing Nägelsbach of exaggerating the point, does not exaggerate when he says:

„How an author relates to these principles of placing words is extremely important in judging his style, and it constitutes a significant deficiency in our stylistic research that so far only a few authors have been studied with this approach in mind.“41

If neglecting chiasmus constitutes a significant deficiency in our analyses of Classical style, the deficiency is currently greater in Greek studies than in Latin. Even though „the psychological effect of word order is stronger in Greek than in Latin,“42 most of the exhaustive studies of chiasmus in Classical literature have concentrated on Latin authors and little attention has been paid to chiasmus in the Classical Greek literature.

In these literatures, chiasmus served at least seven distinct stylistic purposes. Chiasmus aided in metrical composition, added variety to expression, placed emphasis on particular words, juxtaposed contrasting terms, brought corresponding thoughts closer together, gave simple prose a rhetorical tinge, and created passages which were aesthetically pleasing. Several commentators expound upon these purposes, illustrating them with examples from various authors. Such comments include the following. Concerning the first function of chiasmus, aiding in metrical composition, Steele observes:

[In the Aeneid] the chiastic arrangement gives a desirable succession of dactyls and spondees. In some verses this order of the words gives an available succession of long and short syllables.43
Secondly, Havers explains that chiasmus occurs to meet the need for variety, stating, „Furthermore, the need for variety leads to chiasmus.“ He continues by emphasizing that chiasmus not only can help an author avoid monotony, but it also creates a different rhetorical form through which emphatic statements can be made:

„The endeavor to avoid monotony coincides in many respects with the need for an especially penetrating style of speech.“

A style of speaking is forceful if it places emphasis clearly on central ideas, and chiasmus possesses an inherent characteristic which can juxtapose contrasting terms and draw emphatic attention to them. Hofmann considers emphasis and continuity the two most significant psychological moments of chiasmus. According to his terminology, important concepts are arranged by chiasmus on the Hochtonstellen im Satz and the ideas are connected in chiasmus by an Anknüpfung of one term to the next. Beside these functional purposes, chiasmus finally fulfills artistic purposes. As an element of style, it is an aspect of literary refinement and polish. Steele describes it as being able to impart even to simple narrative „somewhat of a rhetorical tinge.“ Elsewhere it is described as „strongly rhetorical“ and as „an additional ornament.“ Thus, through these seven purposes, chiasmus was available to serve Greek and Latin authors both practically and artistically. Because it has been more frequently studied in Latin, those authors will be considered first, and the Greek writers second.

Chiasmus was employed frequently and consciously by many Latin authors. It is observed that „the criss-cross arrangement of words is a common phenomenon in Latin.“ The literally thousands of examples of chiasmus which are observed in available commentaries on the classical Latin authors demonstrate the extensiveness of chiasmus throughout this body of literature. Steele lists 1257 examples of chiasmus in Livy; 211 in Sallust; 365 in Caesar; 1088 in Tacitus; 307 in Justinus; etc. Furthermore the consensus of scholastic opinion holds that such chiasms were consciously created for one or more of the purposes listed above. When the terms forming the chiasmus are near to each other and are not separated by a number of intervening terms, it must be agreed that the use of the figure is a part of „a conscious rhetorical art.“ For the most part it is only on occasions where many words intervene that chiasmus may be considered simply an inadvertent result.

Depending on its usage, chiasmus can be either a natural or an artificial form of speech in Latin. When a thought or a short sentence is fully enclosed in a chiasm, the figure is considered natural and unaffected. Examples of this are found in Cicero, Rep. 2, 33: „This mother we know but are ignorant of the father.“ Likewise in Ennius, Ann. 269: „Despised is the good orator, while the uncouth soldier is loved.“ Hofmann considers chiastic disjunction natural when, in effect, it takes the place of a conditional clause, as in Plautus, Trin. 250: „While a night she grants, she moves in with her whole household.“ But chiasmus becomes artificial when the impact of its inversion extends no further than to isolated words, genders, cases, or groups of words. Furthermore, chiasmus can become contrived when the same word is repeated as the means of creating the chiasm. This is characteristic of Sallust: „Defensoribus moenium praemia modo, modo formidinem ostentare.“

The reason that chiasmus in Latin and Greek is often called artificial is that its scope is relatively limited. Complex chiasmus is fairly rare in Latin authors. Steele concludes from his extensive studies, „Chiasmus is found chiefly with two pairs of words.“ Occasionally extended examples can be found in the form of alternating pairs, such as abba-ab-ba, e.g. Caesar, B. Gall. 3, 19, 3: „Opportunitate loci, hostium inscientia, virtute militum, pugnare
Nägelsbach also comments on this type of construction and gives the following example of an interesting chiastic arrangement in the form of ab-ba-cd-dc:

Lael. 15, 52: „Whoever he is, who hides, so that he esteems no one and no one esteems him, lives abounding in troops and rich in all things.” One sees here that chiasmus has penetrated the whole sentence and that it is wrong to limit chiasmus to short coordinated disjunctive clauses.  

Despite these types of structures, it is evident that chiasms which are composed of three or more pairs or groups of three or more are rare in Latin. This is shown by the following chart of the relative frequencies of three types of chiasms as they appear in four authors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Sallust</th>
<th>Caesar</th>
<th>Tacitus</th>
<th>Justinus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chiasms with two pairs of words:</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>887</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiasms with three or more pairs:</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiasms with groups of three or more words:</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third line of this chart includes all possible chiastic arrangements which involve two groups of three or more words (regardless of the order of the words in the second half as long as an inversion occurs somewhere among them). Even including all such varieties in what might be called extended chiasms, simple chiasmus still appears approximately twelve times more frequently than the extended forms of chiasmus here.

Thus it is evident that chiasmus is used by many authors. It is particularly employed to show contrasts and to connect phrases and clauses together without the use of transitional particles. In respect to each author, chiasmus may reveal a separate aspect of his style. Sallust, for example, utilizes chiasmus in his writings for the sake of variety: „He is continually striving after variety in words, constructions and arrangement. He freely uses chiasmus which is a conscious element of his style.”

In both the Catilina and Jugurtha, chiasmus appears frequently, although it is often contrived and artificial and depends upon the repetition of the same word at the center, e.g.: „Domum alius aliusagros cupere.” Many of Sallust’s chiasms are exclusively grammatical and do not depend upon content nor do they create marked contrasts in meaning, and to this extent they resemble the inversions present in the fragmentary writings of Claudius, the second century B.C. historian, who uses „die doppelte chiastische Umstellung … gern und oft.”

Cicero used chiasmus especially when writing carefully and deliberately. „In those epistles of Cicero which were most freely and rapidly written chiasmus does not often occur.”

Chiasmus in Cicero frequently employs pairs of adverbs such as umquam, semper (Att. 8, 1, 3) or prius, deinde (ad Fam. 3, 12, 1) or repeat the same word, such as tranquilla, tranquillissimus (Att. 7, 7, 4) or cogito, cogito (Att. 9, 5, 3). Cicero’s wry sarcasm is also enhanced by chiasmus, as in Att. 9, 12, 3: „Nos vivimus et stat urbs.”

Chiasmus was also useful to Caesar. It appears regularly in all his works, being slightly more prevalent in his more popular works, The Gallic Wars and The Civil War. But in general, Caesar’s chiasms are short and pragmatic, consistent with Caesar’s forthright style throughout:

In the use of chiasmus there are no features which are peculiar to Caesar… Nor do we find, as in Sallust, long sentences in which there is a chiastic arrangement throughout.
In Livy, chiasmus operates as a directing force of syntax. Characteristic of Livy is chiasmus which depends primarily upon grammatical constructions. Only a few depend upon content or introduce contrasting ideas; most simply repeat a parallel idea as in 24, 6, 7; 30, 26, 8 and 7, 4, 7:

„Finis regni Syracusani ac Punici imperii. The boundary of the kingdom of Syracuse and the Carthaginian empire. „Superavit paternos honores, avitos aequavit. He surpassed his father’s honors and his grandfather’s he equaled. „Vita agresti et rusticco cultu. In life rural and clownish in up-bringing.”

Concerning chiasmus in Livy, Steele states: „The words in the two members of the chiasmus are opposite in meaning or strongly contrasted in only a small number of the instances.” According to Steele, chiasmus occurs 1257 times in Livy. Nevertheless, chiasmus in Livy is little more than a grammatical device within which the historian arranges his diction and colors his interior sentence design.

Of Seneca, a Silver Age author, it is said, „Chiasmus is not a very prominent feature in the style of Seneca.” Tacitus used chiasmus sporadically in his different works. In works such as Germania and Dialogus, which are largely declarative, there are few contrasts and subsequently anaphora predominates over chiasmus. In the Annals and Histories, which show more frequent rhetorical touches, „chiasmus is more freely used.” Pliny the Younger uses chiasmus only in writings which he appears to have very carefully prepared. Apuleius, a second century satirist and philosopher, used chiasmus to conform the form of his sentences with their content. As Bernhard observes: „Besonders hervorzuheben sind diejenigen Stellen, in denen das Verbum zu einem zweiten Verbum in Antithese tritt.” Yet in Apuleius’ works other than the Metamorphoses, chiasmus is not apparent and he is never obsessed with carrying out „dies oder jenes Stellungstypus.”

Thus far we have seen chiasmus mostly in prose, but in much of Latin literature, chiasmus is also used in poetic works. Vergil’s use of chiasmus is perhaps one of the more ingenious aspects of his style. In the Aeneid, Vergil uses chiasmus in order to make his poetry smoother and more picturesque. Many lines could be quoted in which a chiastic order of words was necessary to maintain the dactylic hexameter. Nearly every page of Vergil furnishes a number of examples of chiasmus. A comparison of Vergilian hexameter to Lucretian hexameter reveals further some of the functionings of chiasmus in Vergil. Lucretius’ purpose was primarily to formulate his ideas logically rather than artistically. This gave his verses a different movement and sequence, and made it impossible for him to use chiasmus as frequently as it was used by Vergil. The fact that Lucretius rarely used chiasmus illuminates the following statement:

The flowing dactylic hexameters of the Aeneid represent an extraordinary triumph on the part of Vergil over his predecessor Lucretius, whose De Rerum Natura is in dactylic hexameters which seem to be forcibly carved out of the spondaic Latinate rock.

The phrase „spondaic Latinate rock” here refers to the fact that long syllables occur more frequently in Latin than in Greek, making Greek more compatible with dactylic hexameter than Latin. By employing chiasmus, however, Vergil was able to make his poetry more flowing than Lucretius and at the same time more like Homer’s, which was Vergil’s epic model.

Up to this point, attention has been paid almost exclusively to the presence of very short chiastic passages in Latin authors. This was required because of the relatively extensive history of scholarly attention which has been given
to this type of chiasmus in Latin literature. In addition to these shorter chiasms, however, longer chiastic passages have also been suggested to exist in certain Latin texts. In some of these cases, the pattern is identifiably chiastic. Charles Talbert refers to several of these analyses in support of his claim that the chiastic passages which he observes in the Gospel of John are analogous to the „chiastic architectural pattern for larger units” found in Classical sources. Actually, however, as Talbert seems to have later recognized, most of the instances of structural organizations in Classical writings supply evidence only of the architectonic principle of balance, but rarely of inversion or chiasm.

In the Aeneid, for example, the balance between the first six books and the last six is in the form of direct, not introverted, parallelism. Similarly, although it has been claimed that relationships exist between the first and last books of Vergil’s Georgics, this observation is only offered to extend parenthetically a general argument that Books I and III are a pair, as are Books II and IV. (More particularly, this argument is advanced to rebut Drew’s assertion that Books I and II of the Georgics, concerning inanimate objects, form a unit unrelated to Books III and IV, about living creatures.) Likewise, the suggestion that Catullus 68b is chiastic is not particularly persuasive. Wohlberg proposes to find an A–B–C–B–A pattern here, but the proposed arrangement is not far removed from a simple dramatic prologue – central action – epilogue pattern. Furthermore, his proposal’s strength lies primarily in the occurrence of a simple triad of similes at the center and in his disregard of a significant portion of lamentation. These passages manifest elements of balanced composition, but not chiasm.

In a fairly small number of cases, however, a case can be made that extended chiasmus was used by some Latin authors. In Vergil, Georgics IV, 453–527, for example, Gilbert Norwood observes the following structure in the speech of Proteus:

A Death beside a stream owing to rejection of love B Impressive Greek geographical names C Persistent singing, utterly indifferent to the world around D Simile of birds E The infernal streams F Heart of the Story E An infernal stream D Simile of a bird C Persistent singing, utterly indifferent to the world around B Impressive Greek geographical names A Death beside a stream owing to rejection of love.

Norwood concludes:

„It is difficult to believe that so large and well-balanced a structure is nothing but illusion. Vergil, with entire consciousness of what he was doing, set out an arrangement analogous to an elaborate Greek stanza, so as to suffuse a narrative, beautiful and touching in phrase, rhythm, and piercing splendor, with the additional glory of lyric form.”

This passage, although only 65 lines long, comes close to the more intricate chiastic creations which one encounters in the earlier ancient literatures.

In Catullus 64, Clyde Murley and C. W. Mendell see a general structure as follows:

A Introduction B The Human guests at the wedding B’ The Divine guests at the wedding A’ Conclusion.

Both sections B and B’ center on a song, one the Lament (132–201), the other the Song of Parcae (323–381). Although the balance overall is imprecise (the A–B section are over twice the length of the B’–A’ sections), the
central portion of B may contain a certain degree of chiasmus, if we allow the affairs in Crete and the travels to Dia
to parallel the affairs and travels in respect to Athens.

Finally, expanding Skutsch’s analysis of Propertian’s *Monobiblos*, Courtney finds certain relations to exist between
several of the 22 poems contained in Propertian’s Book I. The order, however, is less than precise, and the
evidence of any rigorous application of chiasmus here must be discounted.

Less attention has been paid to chiasmus in late Greek than in Latin. Perhaps this is because the phenomenon of
chiasmus in Latin is more striking, since it is created without the aid of particles like *men . . . de*, with which chiasmus
often appears in Greek. Nevertheless, the love for contrast and polarity is just as marked in Greek thought and
syntax as it is in Latin. Chiasmus is a natural mode of expression or many Greek authors. It has been said that it is
„as natural to the Greek as mother’s milk; not to us.”

The use of chiasmus varies greatly from one Greek author to the next. Some authors have a special proclivity for
using the form, others seem to avoid it. Still others use chiasmus for promoting special philosophical ideas or
achieving certain literary goals. Heraclitus, for example, used chiasmus to accentuate his notions of eternal flux
and opposition. In the three examples which follow, it can be seen that Heraclitean chiasmus is not dependent on
form, but on content, e.g. grammatically Fragment 22 is noun-verb—noum-verb but the thought pattern is a-b-b-a:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fr. 22</th>
<th>Cool things become warm, and the warm grows cool; The moist dries, the parched becomes moist.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fr. 66</td>
<td>Immortals become mortal, mortals become immortal. They live in each other’s death and die in each other’s life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. 98</td>
<td>Opposition brings concord. Out of discord comes the fairest harmony.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plato appears to use chiasmus and symmetry „more than any other prose writer,” and since Plato’s style is
exceedingly free and unaffected by the influence of rhetorical tricks, his use of chiasmus is probably best
explained as an attempt at variety or emphasis or economy of thought. Plato, who in his meticulous style was
extremely conscious of word choice and word order, created the following chiasms:

„Will they not any deed or any word say and do?” *Rep. 494e* „The soul to rule and govern, the body be
governed and to be ruled.” *Phaedo 80a* „His children and others of his household; I too have a household, yea
two sons . . .

who are still children.” *Apo. 34cd*

Most of Plato’s chiasms are compact units. Some rely on content, others rely on form to create the inversion. They
are literary embellishments which serve a structural function, although less rigidly or extensively than either
Homeric *hysteron proteron* or Near Eastern complex chiasmus. Bassett queries whether Plato derived his fondness
for the inverted order from Homer, but this query has not been answered and if such were found to be the case
it would show the durability of the form in spite of Plato’s otherwise harsh criticisms of Greek education based on
Homeric models. Other explanations of Plato’s fondness for chiasmus may lie in his reaction against Gorgian
antithesis, or in the possibility that his use of chiasmus is a smaller scale production of the cyclic structure of
longer passages and dialogues, although this possibility has never been seriously explored.
Although chiasmus is frequent in Plato, it appears to be rare among the other Greek authors.

In Attic orators and in Greek prose writers in general after the fourth century the occurrences of chiasmus are negligible, except where there is a logical reason for the inversion.\textsuperscript{101}

Equally rare are other Greek passages which have been analyzed as chiastic in an extended mode. Some have viewed the rising action and falling action in structure of certain Greek tragedies as chiastic, but this is only a broad generalization of the drama. \textit{Prometheus Bound}, for example, contains four scenes, each of which is a trilogy of sorts. The first and last speak of punishment; the second discusses the past, and the third, the future.\textsuperscript{102} But this is only a remedial application of chiasmus, at best. In the \textit{Medea}, it has been observed that the order of main attention toward characters follows the sequence children-Creon-Jason-Aegeus-Jason-Creon-children.\textsuperscript{103} This draws attention to the unique position of Aegeus as the pivot of the drama, but even Buttrey attributes this phenomenon to little more than ordinary dramatic characteristics and assumes that it went unobserved. Elsewhere in Greek literature, an occasional chiasm is perhaps observable. In Plutarch's \textit{Marius}, 43:3–44:6, a short section containing two rhetorical statements about certain pitiless murderers and three anecdotes (the second of which is central and most important) is said to be chiastic.\textsuperscript{104} Further, one is reminded of the fact that Herodotus, Plutarch and others were conscious of balance and architecture within the units of their literary compositions.\textsuperscript{105} But little here is distinctly chiastic in form.

Examples of other structural aspects of Greek and Latin literature could be given, and indeed there are probably many other chiastic passages yet to be discovered and analyzed as such. But the result of the present study should already be apparent: chiasmus is present in Classical Greek and Latin, but its role is secondary, at least in the writers who followed Homer. Although the complexity of chiasmus diminishes in the later texts, so that chiasmus cannot be said to play as great a role here as it does, e.g., in biblical literature, its observance lends a significant dimension to the modern reader's appreciation of an important aspect of classical Greek and Latin syntax and stylistics. Its acceptance and utilization here corroborates the claim that chiasmus was consciously observed and intentionally employed on all levels of complexity in antiquity.

**FOOTNOTES**

1. Chiasmus is often employed by English poets. For example, in Pope's Essay on Man this short chiasm appears: „.

. Flame lawless through the void destroying others, by himself destroyed.” In English, chiasmus often may seem stilted, but this is not always so -- and it certainly was not the case when used in antiquity. Even in English, chiasmus can still capture a sense of natural rhythm and immediate appeal, as in the nursery rhyme: „Old King Cole was a merry old soul And a merry old soul was he.” Likewise maxims such as „He who fails to prepare, prepares to fail” Sound solid and convincing, largely because of the sense of completeness and tautology which the form seems to convey.

2. Cicero, \textit{Atticus} 1, 16, 1.


5 Bassett, HSCP, 31:47. Older schools have asserted that intricacy of form is Alexandrine, and wholly un-Homeric. See C. W. Mendell, YCS, 12:213. This view is no longer tenable.

6 Smyth, Greek Grammar, p. 666f. Like the Latin et...et, or the English „both...and,” this expression links two equivalent classes of objects or types of actions to each other. The particle te is usually used with a correlative conjunction and although té . . . té most often connects clauses, it may be used to collate single words, especially in poetry.

7 George W. Elderkin, Aspects of the Speech in the Later Greek Epic, p. 6.

8 Il 9:443, quoted above.


10 Bassett, HSCP, 31:54.

11 The Roman commentators Servius and Donatus both used the term hysteron proteron, but the Greek grammarians used prothysteron or hysterologia. See Scholia Euripides Orestes 702; Scholia Euripides Phoenissae 887; and also Choeroboscus Grammaticus Peri Tropon.

12 Bassett, HSCP, 31:39

13 Ibid., p. 41.

14 For further discussion of this passage see Ibid., pp. 46–47. See also Od 11, 210–14 answered in 11, 216–22; Od 7, 237–39 answered in 7, 241 and 7, 290–96 and 9, 19.

15 Scholia A on Odyssey 56.


17 Ibid., p. 128.

18 See note 1 above.

19 Bassett, loc. cit.


21 Bassett, HSCP, 31:51.

22 Scholia T on Psi 679.


38 R. B. Steele, „Anaphora and Chiasmus in Livy,” *TAPA*, 32:166.


41 Max Bernhard, *Der Stil des Apuleius von Madaura*, p. 31.


43 R. B. Steele, *Chiasmus in Sallust, Caesar, Tacitus and Justinus*, p. 4f.


Nägelsbach calls attention to a chiasmic arrangement in Caesar’s _Gallic Wars_ 1, 1, but upon closer examination it becomes apparent that there are 14 words between \( a-b \) and \( a'-b' \), casting some doubt on the intentionality of this particular chiasm. Hofmann, _Lateinische Umgangssprache_, p. 123 also comments: „To a certain extent chiasmus occurs only accidentally where the verb is repeated for the sake of a parallel scheme.”


56 Hofmann, _Lateinische Umgangssprache_, p. 122.

57 _Ibid_. „Compared with this more or least unaffected form of chiasmus, it is hardly natural or native to contrapose bare words or groups of words, for example, Cic. Att. 14, 12, 3: 'a man adverse to _dialectic_ but in _arithmetic_ he is sufficiently trained'.”

58 Leumann, Hofmann, Szantyr, _Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft_, p. 696.

59 Steele, _Chiasmus in Sallust, et al._, p. 16.

60 Steele, _TAPA_, 32:185.

61 Nägelsbach, p. 681.

62 Leumann, Hofmann, Szantyr, _Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft_, p. 696. „Chiasms of two members which are longer than two words each are rare. Even rarer is chiasmus involving three members.”


64 See also Leumann, Hofmann, Szantyr, _Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft_, p. 697. „Often chiasmus and anaphora are bound to each other, specifically when there are three or more members.”


68 Steele, _Chiasmus in Sallust, et al._, p. 29.
69 Steele, TAPA 32; such chiasms often form patterns such as adjective-noun-noun-adjective, verb-adverb-adverb-verb, etc.

70 Ibid., p. 173.

71 Steele, in Studies in Honor of B. L. Gildersleeve, p. 342.

72 Steele, Chiasmus in Sallust, et al., p. 38.

73 Ibid., p. 41.

74 Steele, in Studies in Honor of B. L. Gildersleeve, p. 346f.

75 Bernhard, p. 32.

76 Ibid., p. 34.

77 Ibid., p. 38.

78 Steele, Chiasmus in Sallust, et al., p. 4f. „His verses are often composed of two half-verses, between which chiasmus is frequent.”

79 Ibid.

80 Charles Rowan Beye, The Iliad, the Odyssey and the Epic Tradition, p. 10.

81 This fact further illuminates the character of chiasmus in Homer: since Homer could compose dactylic hexameter „chiasmus for chiasmus' sake,” but Vergil was more often compelled to create „chiasmus for the hexameter’s sake.” Cf. A. Wace and F. Stubbings, A Companion to Homer, p. 23.


84 G. E. Duckworth, Structural Patterns and Proportions in Vergil’s Aeneid. Indeed, evidence shows that Vergil tended to disregard any elaborate structure in material from which he borrows. See C. W. Mendell, „The Influence of Epyllion on the Aeneid,” Yale Classical Studies 12:218.


89 Ibid., pp. 354–55.


92 Courtney relates 1 to 19; 2–3–4–5 to 15–16–17–18; 6 to 14; 7 to 9; 10 to 13, and 11 to 12.

93 J. D. Denniston, The Greek Particles, p. xliii.

94 George G. Loane, A Short Handbook of Literary Terms, p. 38.

95 P. Wheelwright, Heraclitus, pp. 29, 68, 90.

96 Bassett, HSCP, 31:60.

97 Nordon, Kunstprosa, I, 3.

98 Cf. Dionysius Hal., De Comp. Verb., XXV. „Plato did not cease, when eighty years old, to comb and curl his dialogues and reshape them in every way. Surely every scholar is acquainted with the stories of Plato's passion for taking pains, especially that of the tablet which they say was found after his death, with the beginning of the Republic arranged in elaborately varying orders.”


100 Robert S. Brumbaugh, Plato's Mathematical Imagination, p. 167.


105 John L. Myres, Herodotus, Father of History, pp. 81–91; Richard Lattimore, Greek Lyrics, p. 57.
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American Journal of Philology
AJSL
American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures (1896–1941)
Anglia
Archiv Orientální
ATR
Anglican Theological Review
BASOR
Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research (1919–)
Bibbia e Oriente
Biblica
BM
Beth Mikra (1955/56–)
BYUS
Brigham Young University Studies (1959–)
BZ
Biblische Zeitschrift
BZNF
Beiträge zur Namenforschung (1949–)
CBQ
Catholic Biblical Quarterly (1939–)
Classical World
CP
Classical Philology
Christ. Today
Christianity Today
CQ
Crozer Quarterly
CTJ
Calvin Theological Journal
Dialogue
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EI
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Ensign (1971–)
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ET
Expository Times
ETL
Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses (1924–)
GRBS
Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies
Helicon
Hermes
HJ
The Heythrop Journal
HSCP
Harvard Studies in Classical Philology
HTR
Harvard Theological Review (1908–)
HUCA
Hebrew Union College Annual (1924–)
IEJ
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Int
Interpretation
JANES
Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University
JAOS
Journal of the American Oriental Society (1843–)
JBL
Journal of Biblical Literature and Exegesis (1881–)
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Journal of Egyptian Archaeology
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Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JHS
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JJS
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JNES
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JPOS
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JPT
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Jewish Quarterly Review (New Series)
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Journal of Royal Statistical Society
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Ni Nippur


OB Old Babylonian


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SM See Kramer.


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TB "Talmud Babli* (Babylonian Talmud).

TJ "Talmud Jerushalmi* (Jerusalem Talmud).


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UM University Museum, University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia).

Urk. I See Sethe, 1903.

UT Ugaritic Text; see Gordon, UT.


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