Introduction

Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon: The Complete Text Reformatted comprises the entire text of the Book of Mormon formatted into (1) historical narrative or (2) parallelistic forms, consisting of a number of parallel and repetitious types. The narrative portions, representing the majority of the Book of Mormon, are formatted into regular blocked style. Parallelistic forms, however, are formatted into various patterns designed to aid the reader in visualizing the forms. A number of mechanical techniques have been employed in creating the patterns, including bold characters, underlining, indentations, italics, parentheses, spacing, adding letters of the alphabet, and others. On occasion, ancient poetic texts belonging to the Dead Sea Scrolls were also formatted in certain arrangements. The existence of parallelisms and figures of speech, of course, is not limited to formal poetry, but they are located in various types of biblical and Book of Mormon literature, including historical narrative, speeches and sermons, legal texts, prophecies, epistles, laments, blessings, curses, and prayers. That is to say, not all parallelistic forms are poetic, for parallelism serves in a variety of rhetorical and literary functions.

A vitally significant perspective to bear in mind when reviewing the forms of this book is this: there is no poetic, parallelistic, repetitious form or figure of speech that should become more important than the Book of Mormon’s chief message, which is to convince “the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God” (Book of Mormon title page). Rather, all of these forms and figures are designed to present this message regarding Jesus Christ and his gospel in an unforgettable, understandable, artistic, and fascinating way. The forms and figures gave writers of scripture unique methods of expression as they set forth religious doctrines, tenets, and principles. Apparently, the prophets and writers of the scriptures employed the repetition of alternating parallel lines for the purpose of reinforcing their teachings and doctrines. By hearing something repeated twice, albeit in different words, the hearer or reader is more apt to understand and remember the doctrine being taught. In this way, the teaching is conveyed with more impact, more force, and a greater level of intensity. But still, the forms and figures are no more than a means to an end, and that end is to impart truths regarding Jesus Christ, his atoning sacrifice, and his plan of happiness. The form of the message should never become of greater consequence than the message.

1. A few poetic texts belonging to the Dead Sea Scrolls library—including some psalms, proverbs, and lamentations—were formatted into poetic or stichometric arrangement, either one hemistich or one stich per line. See Emanuel Tov, "Hebrew Biblical Manuscripts from the Judaean Desert: Their Contribution to Textual Criticism" Journal of Jewish Studies 39 (1988): 26.
In order to insure that more than a single opinion is represented in this volume, it has gone through a rigorous review process. For instance, every single potential chiastic structure (there are more than 300 examples of chiasmus in the present edition of Poetic Parallelisms) was judged and graded according to fifteen criteria (see p. vii). Potential chiasmi that received low grades were disassembled and are not represented in the present text. Additionally, it should be noted that the chiasmi that remain are not equal in value—some examples received lower scores and possess a lower value of chiasticity, others have a higher chiastic value. It only stands to reason that each reader may value one chiastic structure over another. The same is true for all of the other figures and forms represented in this volume—each figure and form has experienced the review process.

Notwithstanding the review process, my arrangement and interpretation of the forms represents a single approach. Others may read a passage differently and come up with a contrary viewpoint. Just as biblical scholars do not always agree on certain viewpoints that are associated with biblical poetry, figures of speech, and rhetorical forms, so too Book of Mormon scholars and students possess differing opinions on the form, structure, and meaning of forms of parallelism and repetition. This study is only meant to demonstrate possibilities. It does not pretend to be comprehensive, but, rather, representative of certain forms that exist in the Book of Mormon.

Unlike the study of biblical parallelisms, which has existed for more than two centuries, the study of Book of Mormon parallelisms is still in its beginning stages. The present study, therefore, should be considered to be preliminary and may remain so for decades to come. Much work remains to be done in the field of scriptural poetics in the Book of Mormon, including the study of parallelistic and repetitious forms. Subsequent generations, no doubt, will discover additional rhetorical forms, figures of speech, and poetic types that shed light on the work of those who wrote and edited the Book of Mormon. Just as the study of biblical forms and figures has evolved much over the past two centuries, I anticipate that the same will occur in Book of Mormon studies.

Part One

Poetic Parallelisms

The prevalent poetic form of the canon of scripture is not the ode, the lamentation, nor the psalm, but parallelism. Each of these longer genre—the ode, the lamentation, and the psalm—may be composed of smaller individual units called parallelisms. Poetic parallelisms are regularly attested forms of poetry in the Old Testament. According to Bible scholar Wilfred G. E. Watson, “Parallelism is universally recognized as the characteristic feature of biblical Hebrew poetry.” In his book The Idea of Biblical Poetry, James L. Kugel points out that poetic parallelism is “the basic feature of biblical songs—and, for that matter, of most the sayings, proverbs, laws, laments, blessings, curses, prayers, and speeches found in the Bible.” As stated in Understanding Isaiah, it is evident that Isaiah, too, “consistently wrote in a form called poetic parallelism,” as evidenced by more than eleven hundred examples of parallelism in Isaiah’s writings. In fact, whole chapters of biblical books and entire literary units are composed of scores of individual parallelisms.

What are poetic parallels? “In poetic parallelism, the prophet makes a statement in a line, a phrase, or a sentence and then restates it, so that the second line, phrase, or sentence echoes or mirrors the first.”

Both lines in a parallelism are equally important. The second line, writes Kugel, was “not expected to be (or regarded as) a mere restatement” of the first half, but was meant to “add to it, often particularizing, defining, or expanding the meaning, and yet hearken back” to it. Understanding this form of poetry makes the prophets’ message more understandable and meaningful.

It was Bishop Lowth who is credited with calling attention to the importance and prevalence of biblical parallelisms. In his two-volume work entitled Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews, he introduced the idea of parallelismus membrorum, or “parallelism of the members.” In a later work Lowth defined parallelism:

The correspondence of one Verse, or Line, with another, I call Parallelism. When a proposition is delivered, and a second is subjoined to it, or drawn under it, equivalent, or contrasted with it in sense, or similar to it in the form of grammatical construction, these I call parallel lines; and the words or phrases, answering one to another in the corresponding lines, parallel terms.

Although this statement, given by this distinguished pioneer in the field of biblical poetics, has been the standard by which parallelisms are known and understood, many scholars of recent years have contended that Lowth was too narrow in his definition. And all parallelisms cannot properly be classified into three simple categories—synonymous, antithetical, and synthetic—as Lowth proposed more than two centuries ago. As Kugel has pointed out, “This classification, far from illuminating, simply obscured the potential subtleties of the form: everything now fell into one of three boxes.”

Adele Berlin, in her recent work, The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism, introduces a broader definition of parallelism. Perhaps inspired by Lowth’s explanation that parallelisms include “parallel lines . . . words or phrases,” Berlin wrote:

Once we admit smaller segments as being parallel—e.g., words, phrases, even sounds—though the lines to which they belong are not parallel, we raise the incidence of parallelism with a text. And if we do not restrict our search for linguistic equivalences to adjacent lines or sentences, but take a global view, finding equivalences anywhere within a text, we raise the incidence of parallelism still more.

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5. Parry, Parry, Peterson, Understanding Isaiah, 603.
7. Robert Lowth, Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews, 2 vol. (1787; repr., Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1969). Clearly, Bishop Lowth was not the first to discover biblical parallelisms. What sets him apart from earlier writers and scholars, however, was his remarkable two volume work which defined and developed the idea of poetic structures in Holy Writ. All of Lowth’s predecessors, who made mention of sacred poetry, did so only in a passing manner. Concerning the history of the study of biblical parallelism, see Kugel, Idea of Biblical Poetry, 96–170; and D. Broadribb, “A Historical Review of Studies of Hebrew Poetry,” Abr-Nahrain 13 (1972–73): 66–87.
10. Adele Berlin, The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 3. Berlin admits that “the definition of parallelism offered here is broader than that found in most biblical studies” (p. 3). However, broad as it may appear, her definition is more conservative than that of Paul Kraus, who once set out to prove that the entire Old Testament was composed of poetic forms. Upon failing to do so, he committed suicide. For this tragic account, see Robert Alter, The Art of
Thus we define poetic parallelism as words, phrases, or sentences that correspond, compare, or contrast one with another, or are found to be in repetition one with another. To be more precise, in scriptural parallelism there are various ways or configurations in which words or sentences are found to be parallel. To demonstrate the major ways, there are:

1. **Synonymous or near-synonymous terms or phrases.** Many parallelisms feature synonyms or approximate synonyms in the lines, such as the verbs *increased* and *magnified* or the nouns *rejoicing* and *joy* (Isaiah 9:3). Other examples of synonymous terms or expressions include “ox–ass” (both beasts of burden) (Isaiah 1:3), “way–paths” and “wilderness–desert” (Isaiah 43:19), “burdened you–wearied you,” “offerings–frankincense” (both offered in the ancient temple) (Isaiah 43:23), “orphan–widow” (both lost one or more loved ones) (Isaiah 1:17).

2. **Identical words or phrases.** Several parallelisms present words or phrases in one line then repeat the exact words or phrases in another line, such as *you have increased the nation*, which is repeated in (Isaiah 26:15). Other examples of identical words or phrases include “say, A conspiracy–say, A conspiracy” (Isaiah 8:12), “light–light” (Isaiah 9:2), and “gird yourselves, but you will be broken–gird yourselves, but you will be broken” (Isaiah 8:9).

3. **Antithetical words or opposites.** Many parallelisms include words or expressions that are opposites. For example, *willing* and *obedient* stands opposite of *refuse and rebel*, and *you will eat the good of the land* contrasts with the curse *you will be devoured by the sword* (Isaiah 1:19–20). Another example: *sing with cry out* are opposites as are *gladness of heart and pain of heart* (Isaiah 65:14). Other examples include *pleasing unto the world and pleasing unto God* (1 Nephi 6:5), *righteous and wicked* (1 Nephi 17:37), and *death and life and carnally-minded and spiritually-minded* (2 Nephi 9:39).

4. **Complements.** A complement is something that makes another thing complete. Many parallelisms are configured with complementary words or expressions, such as Isaiah 5:28, where *bow and arrow* are complements because a bow is not complete without an arrow, and vice versa.

5. **Metaphors.** A metaphor is a word or expression that represents something other than its literal meaning. Numerous parallelisms match metaphors in the two lines. Isaiah 5:7 has the metaphors *vineyard* and *delightful plant* representing, respectively, *the house of Israel* and *the men of Judah*. In Isaiah 2:3 the metaphor *mountain* is used to parallel *house*, having reference to the temple: “to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob.”

6. **Double similes.** A simile is a figure of speech that uses *like* or *as* to compare two different things in a symbolic manner. The prophets occasionally used similes in parallelism, as the following double simile illustrates: “we would be like Sodom, we would be as Gomorrah” (Isaiah 1:9).

7. **Resultative relationship.** From time to time a parallelism presents a resultative relationship between the two lines. For example, Isaiah 7:14 states that the virgin would conceive and then bear a son. Line one prophesies of a conception, and line two prophesies of the results of that conception—the birth of a son.
Another example of a resultative relationship is Isaiah 55:10, where line one speaks of seed that is sown and line two communicates that bread has become the product of the sown seed.

8. Gender-matched parallelism. The prophets occasionally present parallelisms in which genders are paired, such as sons and daughters (Isaiah 49:22); or the name Abraham is paired with Sarah (Isaiah 52:2).

In Hebrew all nouns are either feminine or masculine, a biblical distinction lost in English translation. Note that the nouns dust and chaff in Hebrew are masculine, and the nouns sword and bow are feminine. These words are presented in a particular pattern in the following poetic parallelism, with each line featuring a masculine noun followed by a feminine noun:

who makes them like dust [masculine] with his sword [feminine],
like driven chaff [masculine] with his bow [feminine]? (Isaiah 41:2)

In addition to the gender parallels in the example just cited, there are parallels between things blown in the wind (dust and chaff) and weapons (sword and bow). Isaiah 43:16 employs a similar pattern, with the feminine noun appearing first in each line:

Thus says the LORD, who makes a way [feminine], in the sea [masculine],
and a path [feminine] in the mighty waters [masculine].

9. Rhetorical questions. Rhetorical questions are used throughout the scriptures to instruct and enlighten the reader and they are now and again used in parallelism. For instance, Isaiah asks “Have you not known? Have you not heard?” (Isaiah 40:28). A second example uses the interrogative particle who to introduce each rhetorical question: “Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things?” (Isaiah 66:8).

10. Numbers. In poetic parallelisms, numbers correspond when the same number is repeated within the passage (fifty/fifty, thousand/thousand, and so on) or when the a fortiori, “how much more so” principle is in effect. A fortiori deals with “the peculiar sequence of two numbers, the second number being one unit higher than the first number (x/x+1).” An example occurs in Isaiah 17:6b, where the first line reads “two or three” and the second line, following the a fortiori principle, reads “four or five”:

two or three berries on the topmost bough,
four or five in the branches of a fruitful tree. (17:6)

11. Lists. On occasion the prophets present lists of things in parallelistic structures. In two parallelisms, one following the other, Isaiah listed four body parts—eyes, ears, heart, and tongues (see Isaiah 32:3–4). Isaiah 11:6–8 lists twelve animals in four separate parallelisms—wolf, lamb, leopard, kid, calf, young lion, cow, bear, lion, ox, adder, and viper.

12. Grammatical parallelisms. The prophets arranged a number of parallelisms into a particular grammatical word order; certain grammatical aspects of line one correspond with those of line two. For example, each of the two lines in Isaiah 1:10 features the same corresponding grammatical aspects: imperative, object, and subject. Both lines begin with an imperative (hear, listen to), followed by the object (the word of the Lord, the law of our God), and then the subject (rulers of Sodom, people of Gomorrah). In Isaiah 1:3 each line features the subject, negative particle, and verb: “Israel does not know, my people do not understand.”

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13. Opening a prophecy. The prophets occasionally opened prophecies with a parallelism (see, for example, Isaiah 13:1; 15:1; 17:1; 21:1, 11; 22:15). For instance, the second verse of the book of Isaiah opens a prophecy with a synonymous parallelism: “Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth” (Isaiah 1:2).

14. Domain and subcategory. A number of parallelisms feature a domain subcategory relationship (or superordinate relationship). For instance, wine is a subcategory of strong drink (domain) in the parallelism, “Woe unto the mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink” (Isaiah 5:22). A second example is a cedar tree is a subcategory of trees (domain) in Isaiah 44:14 and lion is a subcategory of beast (domain) in Isaiah 35:9. Other examples include breastplates, a subcategory of shields (), wine, a subcategory of drink (), and gold, a subcategory of metal ().

Types of Parallelisms

The preceding section served to define parallelisms and set forth the various forms and configurations that exist within various parallelisms (e.g., synonymous or near-synonymous terms or phrases, identical words or phrases, antithetical words or opposites, complements, metaphors, double similes, resultative relationships, gender-matched parallelism, rhetorical questions, numbers, lists, grammatical parallelisms, opening a prophecy, and domain and subcategory). In this present section I will present the types or kinds of parallelism that belong to both the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

Chiasmus and Inverted Parallelism

Chiasmus is an inverted parallelism, a presentation of a series of words or thoughts followed by a second presentation of a series of words or thoughts, but in reverse order. “Chiasmus is a term based on the Greek letter chi (x) which refers to an inverted parallelism or sequence of words or ideas in a phrase, sentence, or any larger literary unit.”

John W. Welch’s definition of chiasmus is instructive: “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.”

A simple chiasmus may consist of four lines only, i.e., ABBA; a complex chiasmus may comprise several lines, i.e., ABCDEEDCBA.

Not every chiasmus is equal in value, some are considered to be marginal, while others consist of strong chiasitic elements. For this reason Nils Wilhelm Lund, author of Chiasmus in the New Testament, proposed seven laws of chiasitic structure, a listing that John W. Welch has built upon and expanded to a considerable degree.

13. For additional biblical examples of various types of parallelisms, see the comprehensive study by E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech Used in the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1984). One can easily search for a specific kind of parallelism by consulting Bullinger’s table of contents or his various indices; see also, Watson, Classical Hebrew Poetry, especially pages 114–221.


15. Nils Wilhelm Lund, Chiasmus in the New Testament (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), vii. It should be noted that the English language lacks terminology sufficient to describe the manifold figures and poetic types found in the scriptures. Bullinger has pointed out that “the ancient Greeks reduced these new and peculiar forms to science, and gave names to more than two hundred of them.” Therefore, of necessity, we must turn to the Greeks for assistance with the various Greek words found in the present essay. See Bullinger, Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, v.


Welch’s proposed criteria for identifying the presence of chiasmus contains fifteen elements—objectivity, purpose, boundaries, competition with other forms, length, density, dominance, mavericks, reduplication, centrality, balance, climax, return, compatibility, and aesthetics. A strong chiastic structure will contain all or many of these elements. To pursue a path of responsibility and caution, qualified individuals directed a review of each example of chiasmus that appears in this volume, according to the proposed criteria for identifying chiasmus. In the course of the review, a great number of proposed chiasmus (perhaps upwards of one hundred) did not have sufficient elements according to the criteria to be included in this volume.

Bible: There are a great number of chiastic structures and inverted parallelisms in the Old Testament. The writings of Isaiah, for example, include more than one hundred examples.

An example of a brief chiasmus having an ABB’A’ structure is in Isaiah 5:20, where the terms evil and good are presented once and then again in reverse order:

A  Woe unto them that call evil
   B  good,
   B  and good
   A  evil;

In addition to the chiasmus just presented, Isaiah 5:20 has two more examples, each featuring the ABB’A’ pattern. One presents the terms darkness, light, light, darkness in chiastic order; the second has bitter, sweet, sweet, bitter.

A longer chiasmus, featuring an ABC’B’A’ pattern, occurs in Isaiah 6:10. The body parts heart, ears, and eyes are each listed once, and then again in reverse order:

A  Make fat the heart of this people,
   B  and make heavy their ears,
   C  and shut their eyes;
   C  lest they see with their eyes,
   B  and hear with their ears,
   A  and understand with their heart, and turn, and be healed. (Isaiah 6:10)

Another ABC’B’A’ chiastic pattern is found in Isaiah 55:8–9, where the Lord reveals that his thoughts and ways are higher than those of humans. The chief pattern sets forth the terms thoughts, ways, heavens, earth, ways, and thoughts. Note the inner chiastic pattern in the two lines marked with B—your ways/my ways/ /my ways/your ways:

A  For my thoughts are not your thoughts;
   B  nor are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.
   C  For as the heavens are higher
   C  than the earth;
   B  so my ways are higher than your ways;
   A  and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8–9)

19. The bibliography that deals with chiasmus in the Old Testament is extensive. See John W. Welch and Daniel B. McKinlay, Chiasmus Bibliography (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999).
20. A list of chiastic structures found in the book of Isaiah, including key words and scriptural reference, is found in Donald W. Parry, Harmonizing Isaiah (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001), 257–65.
Isaiah 60:1–3 comprises a chiasmus that features the pattern ABCDEFF'E'D'C'B'A'.

A  Arise,
B  shine;
C  for thy light is come,
D  and the glory
E  of the LORD is risen upon thee.
F  For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth,
F  and gross darkness the people:
E  but the LORD shall arise upon thee,
D  and his glory shall be seen upon thee.
C  And the Gentiles shall come to thy light,
B  and kings to the brightness
A  of thy rising. (Isaiah 60:1–3)

The parallel lines A through F on both sides of the structure pertain to the Lord’s glorious light, as the following terms indicate: arise, shine, light, glory, and brightness. The two lines marked F, the pivotal point of the structure, feature the concept of darkness, which counterpoints light in this structure. Such antithetical relationships in chiasmus are not uncommon.

Book of Mormon: The Book of Mormon, like the Old Testament, contains a number of chiastic structures.21 In fact, more than 300 examples of chiasmus exist in the Book of Mormon. Second Nephi 9:20 contains a chiasmus possessing an ABBA structure:

A  For he knoweth
B  all things,
B  and there is not anything
A  save he knows it (2 Nephi 9:20)

While this example is brief, it contains clear-cut boundaries, is nicely balanced, and contains a forceful message regarding the omniscience of Deity.

The following chiasmus contains several parallel lines:22

A  And it came to pass that when they came up to the temple,
B  they pitched their tents round about,
C  every man according to his family,
D  consisting of his wife, and his sons, and his daughters,
D  and their sons, and their daughters, from the eldest down to the youngest,
C  every family being separate one from another.
B  And they pitched their tents
A  round about the temple. (Mosiah 2:56)


22. Chiasmi are of varying sizes and lengths. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, for example, set forth a chiasmus that spans several chapters in 3 Nephi (from 3 Nephi 11:8–18:39) in Christ and the New Covenant (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 275.
The parallel elements, located in inverted form, include the twice repeated phrases “temple,” “pitched their tents,” “family,” and “sons/daughters.” The chiasmus does not have clear-cut boundaries, yet the aesthetic appearance of the structure is presentable. The focus of the chiasmus focuses upon the family and the temple. The lines labeled C and D refer to “family” and “sons” and “daughters”; and the lines labeled A and B refer to the temple and the pitching of tents around the temple.

Simple Synonymous

Simple synonymous consists of two lines; line two being a synonymous repetition, an echo, or a symmetrical counterpart of line one. Synonymous parallelisms rarely, if ever, feature rhymes of assonance or consonance; rather they present a harmonious agreement of two synonymous expressions. Robert Alter describes simple synonymous as a “parallelism of meaning, observed by the poet with what seems almost schematic regularity in the opening line, every component of the first half being precisely echoed in the second half.”

Bible: Synonymous parallelisms represent a common poetic genre of the Old Testament. The prophets and inspired writers from many historic periods employed this mode of expression. In one of the earliest chapters of Genesis a well-structured synonymous parallelism is present:

Adah and Zillah hearken to my voice;  
Ye wives of Lamech listen to my speech. (Genesis 4:23)

Three separate elements of line one have parallels in line two. Adah and Zillah corresponds with wives of Lamech; hearken and listen are synonymous; and to my voice and to my speech have the similar meanings.

Genesis 49:7 includes another example of a synonymous parallelism.

I will divide them in Jacob,  
and scatter them in Israel. (Genesis 49:7)

In this verse, divide them and scatter them are synonymous expressions and Jacob and Israel refer to the same people. The pronoun “I” serves both lines.

Other biblical examples of synonymous expressions include:

Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (Micah 6:7)

He shall subdue the people under us,  
and the nations under our feet. (Psalm 47:3)

Truth shall spring out of the earth;  
and righteousness shall look down from heaven. (Psalm 85:11)

Book of Mormon: While literary units of the Old Testament contain hundreds of parallelisms, such structures are randomly scattered throughout the Book of Mormon. Why such a quantitative difference of parallelisms between the two books of scripture? The answer lies in the fact that approximately one-third of the Old Testament consists of poetic forms of various types (e.g., Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah), the Book of Mormon consists primarily of historical narrative.

Second Nephi 9:52 includes a synonymous verse where the prophet espouses the necessity of unceasing prayer.

pray unto him continually by day,
and give thanks unto his holy name by night. (2 Nephi 9:52)

In this parallelism verbs pray and give thanks correspond; him and his holy name parallel each other; and the antonyms day and night expresses how long one is admonished to pray. One should pray continually by day and then continue with a prayer of gratitude at night.

Second Nephi 25:2 contains another synonymous parallelism, where works and doings are synonymous as are darkness and abominations:

for their works were works of darkness,
and their doings were doings of abominations. (2 Nephi 25:2)

The writer of the following verse speaks of those who deny the works of God. The parallelism features a well-balanced pattern of three sets of synonymous expressions.

Wo unto him that spurneth at the doings of the Lord;
yea, wo unto him that shall deny the Christ and his works. (3 Nephi 29:5)

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<th>Line one</th>
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<td>Wo unto him</td>
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<td>at the doings of the Lord</td>
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Extended Synonymous

Extended synonymous constructions consist of three or more lines that have corresponding elements. Whereas simple synonymous parallelism consists of two parallel lines, extended synonymous extends beyond two lines and consists of more than two parallel lines.

Bible: Psalm 1:1 includes an example of extended synonymous:

Blessed is the man
that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,
nor standeth in the way of sinners,
nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. (Psalm 1:1)

The verbal expressions—walking, standing, and sitting—correspond as they pertain to one’s movement or posture. The words ungodly, sinners, and scornful also correspond, three descriptions of one who is not aligned with God. The three verbs, coupled with the synonymous expressions ungodly, sinners, and scornful create an extended synonymous parallelism.

Book of Mormon: Nephi wrote concerning his parents, Lehi and Sariah:

they were brought near even to be carried out of this time to meet their God;
yea, their grey hairs were about to be brought down to lie low in the dust;
yea, even they were near to be cast with sorrow into a watery grave. (1 Nephi 18:18)
Perhaps for artistic expression or for emphasis, Nephi expressed the aged condition of his parents and their proximity to death in three different ways—“they were brought near” to death, “their grey hairs were about to be brought down,” and, “they were near to be cast with sorrow.” These three phrases are united with three different euphemistic expressions of death—“time to meet their God,” “to lie low in the dust,” and, “into a watery grave”—to make up this extended synonymous parallelism.

Three different expressions describe the destructive forces that prevailed at the time of the crucifixion.

And the highways were broken up,
and the level roads were spoiled,
and many smooth places became rough. (3 Nephi 8:13)

While in English we may say, “The roads, highways, and fields were all destroyed,” in this passage the three lines are parallel with synonymous words. Highways, level roads, and smooth places have corresponding values, as do the verbal expressions, broken up, spoiled, and became rough.

Simple Alternate

Simple alternate consists of four lines, placed in an AB/AB pattern. In this formation, the As have corresponding elements, as do the Bs. The parallel lines may consist of synonymous or antithetical words, identical expressions, complements, or other corresponding elements.

Bible: Esther’s successful effort to influence King Ahasuerus so that her people would be saved from destruction is shown forth in Esther 8:5. Mention of the king alternates with Esther finding favor in the king’s eyes, creating two alternating parallels.

A  If it please the king,
B  and if I have found favour in his sight,
A  and the thing seem right before the king,
B  and I be pleasing in his eyes. (Esther 8:5)

Book of Mormon: More than one hundred examples of simple alternate forms can be found in the Book of Mormon. Our example comes from Mosiah 4:8:

A  And there is none other salvation
B  save this which hath been spoken of;
A  neither are there any conditions whereby man can be saved
B  except the conditions which I have told you. (Mosiah 4:8)

In this passage, the As correspond because the noun salvation parallels the verb to save. The lines labeled B also correlate: “which hath been spoken of” is equal in value to the phrase “which I have told you.”

Repeated Alternate

Repeated alternate structures are similar to the AB/AB simple alternate structures, but have two lines that repeat three or more times, as in AB/AB/AB. Like the simple alternate, the As correspond to one another, as do the Bs.

Bible: The apostle John used an alternating pattern to contrast “the love of the world” with “the love of the Father.”

A  If any man love the world,
B  the love of the Father is not in him,
A  For all that is in the world . . .
B  is not of the Father,
A  but is of the world. (1 John 2:15–16)

Book of Mormon: The following verse features a number of prophecies concerning the crucifixion and burial of Jesus Christ. The prophecies are set forth in an alternating pattern of four lines labeled A and four designated B.

A  the God of Jacob, yieldeth himself,
B  according to the words of the angel,
A  as a man, into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up,
B  according to the words of Zenock,
A  and to be crucified,
B  words of Neum,
A  and to be buried in a sepulchre,
B  words of Zenos. (1 Nephi 19:10)

Four messengers of the sufferings of Christ are here represented, an angel (who is not identified), Zenock, Neum, and Zenos. Placed in an alternating position are four prophetic messages pertaining to the atoning sacrifice of the Lord, and the documentary citations of the prophet who delivered the message. Thus we find the following AB/AB/AB pattern: the prophetic message—the messenger/the prophetic message—the messenger/the prophetic message—the messenger/the prophetic message—the messenger. In this manner, the burden of the scriptures—the atonement of the Redeemer—is inseparably connected with those who carried the good tidings to mankind—the prophets.

The alternating AB/AB/AB pattern in the following verse contrasts crimes—murder, robbery, thievery, adultery—with a punishment.

A  But if he murdered
B  he was punished unto death;
A  and if he robbed
B  he was also punished;
A  and if he stole
B  he was also punished;
A  and if he committed adultery
B  he was also punished;
A  yea, for all this wickedness
B  they were punished. (Alma 30:10)
Extended Alternate

*Extended alternate* belongs to the same family as simple and repeated alternate. It differs from the other two, however, in that additional alternating lines are present in extended alternate, as in ABC/ABC or ABCD/ABCD. Once again, the A lines correspond to one another, as do the Bs, the Cs, and so on.

Bible: In the following passage from Judges, the two A lines feature *children* ("children of Ammon," "children of Israel"); the B lines deal with *gathering* ("gathered together," "assembled themselves together"); the C lines pertain to *encampments* ("encamped in Gilead," "encamped in Mizpeh").

A  Then the *children* of Ammon  
   B  were *gathered* together,  
   C  and *encamped* in Gilead.  
A  And the *children* of Israel  
   B  *assembled* themselves together,  
   C  and *encamped* in Mizpeh. (Judges 10:17)

Book of Mormon: An example of the ABC/ABC pattern is found in Alma 5:19:

A  I say unto you,  
   B  *can you look up* to God at that day  
   C  with a *pure heart and clean hands*?  
A  I say unto you,  
   B  *can you look up*  
   C  having the *image of God engraven upon your countenances*? (Alma 5:19)

In this verse, repetition of the expression “I say unto you” makes up the two A lines. The B lines ask the question, “Can you look up?” The clauses “with a pure heart and clean hands” and “having the image of God engraven upon your countenances” are synonymous—both speak of saintly characteristics.

Note the longer abcdef/abcdef pattern as recorded in 1 Nephi 9:3–5.

A a Nevertheless, I have received a *commandment of the Lord*  
   b that I should *make these plates*,  
   c for the special purpose *that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people*.  
B d Upon the other plates should be engraven an account of the *reign of the kings*,  
   e and the *wars*  
   f and *contentions of my people*;  
   a wherefore these *plates*  
   b are for the more part of the *ministry*;  
   c and the *other plates*  
   d are for the more part of the *reign of the kings*  
   e and the *wars*  
   f and *contentions of my people*.  
A a Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me  
   b to *make these plates*  
   c for a *wise purpose in him*, which purpose I know not. (1 Nephi 9:3–5)
The lines label a feature *plates*; the b lines have *ministry*; the c lines deal with *other plates*; the d lines are concerned with *kings’ reigns*; the e lines highlight *wars*; and the f lines pertain to *contentions*.

**Synthetic Parallelism**

*Synthetic parallelism*, as a rule, is composed of two lines, neither of which are synonymous or antithetical. Rather, in this form, line one presents a declaration and line two gives the explanation or adds something new or instructive to the first line. It is called synthetic because a synthesis, or coordination between the two elements takes place. First the idea or event of line one is introduced, then follows the realization, the completion, or finish of the thought. Ridderbos has identified synthetic parallelism as being a form, “in which the second line develops or completes the thought in a way that could not be determined from the first line. The parallelism is looser and the corresponding terms do not line up as neatly.”

Bible: The Bible contains scores if not hundreds of examples of synthetic parallelism. Isaiah 3:9 presents an example:

> Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves. (Isaiah 3:9)

The declaration is “Woe unto their soul!” Then follows the reason for the declaration, “for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.”

A synthetic parallelism found in Proverbs 1:7 demonstrates the manner in which line two completes the thought of line one, producing a synthesis, or synthetic parallelism:

> The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge. (Proverbs 1:7)

Synthetic parallelism tends to favor a word-unit balance between the two lines, creating equality between both phrases of the parallelism. Unfortunately, such a balance between lines would appear only in the Hebrew texts.

> Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. (Proverbs 3:5)

Book of Mormon: The following verse is an example of synthetic parallelism:

> Adam fell that men might be, and men are, that they might have joy. (2 Nephi 2:25)

Line one, while complete in itself, is followed by additional explanation, found in line two. The prophet first introduces the doctrinal concept that mortality came about because of the fall of man, and then immediately gives further details—“and men are, that they might have joy.”

**Extended Synthetic Parallelism**

*Extended synthetic parallelism* consists of two or more simple synthetic parallelisms, connected together within a passage or collection of verses. Each of the parallelisms are bound together by a common theme.

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Bible: An extended synthetic parallelism is found in Psalm 19:7–9:

The law of the LORD is perfect,  
converting the soul:

The testimony of the LORD is sure,  
making wise the simple.

The statutes of the LORD are right,  
rejoicing the heart:

The commandment of the LORD is pure,  
enlightening the eyes.

The fear of the LORD is clean,  
enduring for ever:

The judgments of the LORD are true,  
and righteous altogether. (Psalm 19:7–9)

These three verses consist of six separate synthetic parallelisms. Each of the six parallelisms contains common elements that are shared with the other five. The name Lord is attested in each of the six first lines, belonging to the phrase “of the Lord.” The Psalmist employed six expressions to form the grammatical subjects—law, testimony, statutes, commandment, fear, and judgments. Each of the six is connected to the phrase “of the Lord.” The Psalmist also used six synonymous words to form the grammatical objects of each parallel clause—perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true.

Taking note of the six parts that make up the second line of each of the parallelisms, we find that the first four expressions are descriptive of benefits derived from the Lord’s law. He who has the law (or testimony, statutes, or commandments) of the Lord will become converted, wise, will rejoice, and receive enlightenment.

Book of Mormon: Second Nephi 9:31–38 provides eight examples of synthetic parallelism that are bound together by common themes.

And wo unto the deaf that will not hear;  
for they shall perish.

Wo unto the blind that will not see;  
for they shall perish also.

Wo unto the uncircumcised of heart,  
for a knowledge of their iniquities shall smite them at the last day.

Wo unto the liar,  
for he shall be thrust down to hell.

Wo unto the murderer who deliberately killeth,  
for he shall die.

Wo unto them who commit whoredoms,  
for they shall be thrust down to hell.
Yea, wo unto those that worship idols,
for the devil of all devils delighteth in them.

And, in fine, wo unto all those who die in their sins;
for they shall return to God, and behold his face, and remain in their sins.
(2 Nephi 9:31–38)

Several elements in these eight parallelisms bind them together into a literary unit. Wo is a common element in each parallelism. Its position is prominent, either beginning each first line (for the first six parallelisms) or located near the beginning of the first line (for the last two). Wo is directed to eight categories of transgressors—[spiritually] deaf, [spiritually] blind, uncircumcised of heart, liar, murderer, those who commit whoredoms, those who worship idols, and those who die in their sins. Each line one, then, provides a declaration.

The second line of each parallelism begins with for and provides an explanation or additional information for the first line. For example: why “wo unto the liar?” Because, as line two explains, “he shall be thrust down to hell.” Why “wo unto the murderer who deliberately killeth?” Because “he shall die.”

Gradation Parallelism

A gradation parallelism occurs when the same word or words are found in successive clauses or sentences. This duplication of words creates a continuation of thought from one sentence to the next, which adds power through repetition to the discourse, while at the same time connecting the lines into an inseparable body. Gradation parallelism is similar to progression parallelism (see below) because it demonstrates to the reader a progression of ideas but through the recurrence of several identical words. Bullinger calls gradation parallelism climax because

there is a climax where only words are concerned, and a climax where the sense is concerned. A climax of words is a figure of grammar, and a climax of sense is a figure of rhetoric. We have confined our use of the word climax to the former; as there are other names appropriated to the later. A climax in rhetoric is known as anabasis. Where the gradation is upward; and catabasis where it is downward.25

Bible: A biblical example of a gradation parallelism is found in Joel 1:3–4.

Tell ye
your children of it, and let
your children tell
their children, and
their children another generation. That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.

25. Bullinger, Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, 256.
The first sentence sets forth four generations of a family—“ye,” “your children,” “their children,” and “another generation”; the second sentence lists four creatures—palmerworm, locust, cankerworm, and caterpiller. Joel commands his audience to inform four generations of a family regarding the destructive forces of the four creatures (representative of armies). Joel duplicates four expressions—your children, their children, locust, and cankerworm—in successive clauses to create a gradational parallelism. The duplicated expressions serve to give emphasis to both the four generations and the four creatures.

Book of Mormon: Moroni 8:25–26 duplicates a number of words in successive phrases—baptism, the fulfilling the commandments, remission of sins, meekness and lowliness of heart, and love. Holy Ghost is not duplicated but Comforter is set forth.

And the first fruits of repentance is
baptism; and
baptism cometh by faith unto the
fulfilling the commandments; and the
fulfilling the commandments bringeth
remission of sins; And the
remission of sins bringeth
meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of
meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the
Holy Ghost, which
Comforter filleth with hope, and perfect
love, which
love endureth by diligence unto prayer,
until the end shall come when all the saints shall dwell with God. (Moroni 8:25–26)

Many gradation parallelisms have an ascension of expression, from a beginning point to a climatic situation. In the passage just quoted, note that the series began with repentance, which is an essential step onto the path of eternal life. Repentance was followed by faith and baptism, then obedience (fulfilling the commandments) and a remission of sins. Then followed meekness, lowliness of heart, the Holy Ghost and love, and the sense of the passage culminates with the righteous receiving an eternal station with God.

Similarly, a climatic verse in Mormon 9:12–13 begins with the fall of Adam, but concludes with man being “brought back into the presence of the Lord.”

Behold he created
Adam, and by
Adam came the
fall of man. And because of the
fall of man came
Jesus Christ, even the Father and the Son; and because of
Jesus Christ came the
redemption of man. And because of the
redemption of man, which came by
Jesus Christ, they are brought back into the presence of the Lord. (Mormon 9:12–13)
Note that the passage begins with Adam and the fall, and concludes with Jesus Christ and the redemption of mankind. The expressions Adam, the fall of man, Jesus Christ, and redemption of man are each duplicated in successive clauses, creating parallel statements—Adam parallels Jesus Christ and the fall of man parallels the redemption of man. Through the alternating parallelism coupled with duplicated lines, Adam is seen as a character complementary to Jesus Christ, and the concept of the fall stands in antithesis to the redemption. Through Adam (the apostle Paul denominated Adam the “first man Adam”) came the “fall of man,” but through Jesus Christ (the “last Adam [1 Corinthians 15:45]), came the “redemption of man.” A similar passage is found in 1 Corinthians 15:22, where the elements “Adam”/“Jesus” and “die”/“alive” are found in the couplet. “For as in Adam all die, and in Jesus all shall be made alive.”

The passages’ climax is located at the end. Because of the eternal roles of Adam and Jesus Christ, we “are brought back into the presence of the Lord.”

**Progression Parallelism**

Progression parallelism is a poetical device where there is an apparent moving forward from one sense or idea to another, until, at the pinnacle is a culmination of thought. Progression parallelism is also called gradational (pertaining to a series of stages or steps) or staircase (having the sense of going up or down with gradual steps) parallelism.

Watson, in his appraisal of the effect that staircase parallelisms has upon the reader, has written that the effect of climax is “to increase tension in the listener. Once his attention and curiosity have been aroused by the incomplete nature of the first [part], the listener feels compelled to learn the outcome.”

Bible: Isaiah 3:13, a verse that is set in the context of a heavenly courtroom scene, serves to demonstrate a progression parallelism.

The LORD takes his place to plead a cause,  
and stands to judge the people. (Isaiah 3:13)

Line one of this verse depicts the Lord as an attorney who stands before the bar of judgment and pleads a cause; line two portrays him as a judge who postures himself (by standing) to judge the people. The progression is typical for any courtroom scene—an attorney first pleads a particular cause and later a judge renders judgment.

Book of Mormon: A characteristic often found in progression parallelism is the idea of progression from specific to general ideas. Second Nephi 29:12 is illustrative of this.

For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews  
and they shall write it;  
and I shall also speak unto the Nephites  
and they shall write it;  
and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel,  
which I have led away, and they shall write it;  
and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth  
and they shall write it. (2 Nephi 29:12)

The parallel ideas in this verse are as follows: The odd numbered lines (lines one, three, five, and seven) are parallel because they each have the words “I shall [also] speak unto the . . .” The even numbered lines (lines two, four, six, and eight) are parallel because they each have the words “and they shall write it.” The progression takes place in the words Jews, Nephites, other tribes of the house of Israel, and all nations of the earth. The Jews represent Judah, a single tribe of Israel. The Nephites consisted of two additional tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh. The “other tribes of the house of Israel” comprise the nine remaining tribes. Lastly, “all nations of the earth” consist of all other families of earth. The idea progresses, then, from a single tribe, to two, to nine, to Earth’s entire population.

Another example of a progression parallelism is found in Helaman 11:36–37.

And in the eighty and second year
they began again to forget the Lord their God.
And in the eighty and third year
they began to wax strong in iniquity.
And in the eighty and fourth year
they did not mend their ways.
And it came to pass in the eighty and fifth year
they did wax stronger and stronger in their pride, and in their wickedness.

(Helaman 11:36–37)

The odd lines (lines one, three, five, and seven) are parallel with the identification of the subsequent years of the reign of the judges: eighty and second year, eighty and third year, and continuing to the eighty and fifth year. The even lines (lines two, four, six, and eight) are parallel with a listing of iniquities: forgetting God, waxing strong in iniquity, failing to repent, and being prideful and wicked.

In a single passage of scripture, a view of the deteriorating condition of the Nephite nation is portrayed with parallel lines that also set forth a progression of the sense. With each succeeding year, the people become more and more wicked, moving from simple forgetfulness to becoming iniquitous, to refusing to repent to becoming more and more prideful and wicked. By creating progression parallelism the writer set forth an important truth in a dramatic way.

Parallelism of Numbers

In Semitic languages, “numbers have no synonyms, with the exception of twenty/score. Equivalents in English like twelve/dozen and fractions, half a hundred/fifty, do not exist.”27 Neither do numbers have antonyms. Therefore, they are parallel only when the same number is repeated within the passage, (fifty/fifty, thousand/thousand, and so on), or when the a fortiori, “how much more so” principle is in effect. A fortiori deals with “the peculiar sequence of two numbers, the second number being one unit higher than the first number (x/x+1)”28 such as the sequence one/two, three/four, or thousand/ten thousand. See below for examples.

Bible: In his article entitled “The Numerical Sequence x/x+1 in the Old Testament,” Wolfgang Roth has listed some thirty-one examples of number parallelism in the Old Testament.29 Although this type of parallelism

Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon

is not as prominent as synonymous, antithetical, or other types of parallelism, it holds an important place in scriptural poetics. An example of a number parallelism is found in Genesis 4:24:

If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,
truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.

Here the x/x+1 principle is involved with the numerical figure *sevenfold* in line one and *seventy and sevenfold* in line two. It is written that Cain is avenged so much (x), but Lamech is avenged much more so (x+1). When a numerical figure is given, then followed by a second larger number, this effects “an exaggerated comparison that heightens the sense of multitude.” In this way the reader gains a sense of the importance held by the writer for the thing being described (i.e., Lamech).

Most numerical figures of this parallelistic class, including the example just cited, are to be interpreted as being an indefinite number. “Some scholars,” writes Roth, hold that numerical parallelisms represent “either a number not exactly specified or an indefinite total.” The context of the verse dictates to the reader if and when the numbers should be taken as a literal or indefinite number.

Four additional examples of biblical antithetical parallelisms include:

(one/two sequence)
How should one chase a thousand,
and two put ten thousand to flight. (Deuteronomy 32:30)

(three/four sequence)
There are three things that are never satisfied,
yea, four things say not, It is enough. (Proverbs 30:15)

(six/seven sequence)
He shall deliver thee in six troubles:
yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. (Job 5:19)

(thousand/ten thousand sequence)
A thousand shall fall at thy side,
and ten thousand at thy right hand. (Psalm 91:7)

Book of Mormon: When compared with the Bible, the Book of Mormon contains very few instances of numerical parallelism. This may be due to the varied stylistic differences and preferences among authors; or a more probable factor relates to the types of literature found in either scriptural work. The Old Testament, unlike the Book of Mormon, contains large sections of poetry and wisdom literature, wherein are found scores of parallelisms.

An example of number parallelism found in the Book of Mormon simply repeats the numerical figure fifty.

Behold, he is a mighty man,
and he can command fifty,
yea, even he can slay fifty. (1 Nephi 3:31)

Here the number parallelism is used to heighten and embroider the principal theme of the verse. The passage’s author notes that Laban is a “mighty man,” so mighty that he is able to “command fifty,” in fact, so powerful is Laban, that he is even able to “slay fifty” (1 Nephi 3:31).

An example of the $x/x+1$ further demonstrates number parallelism in the Book of Mormon. Alma first records the figure “thousands,” and then exercises the “how much more so” principle, when he employs the larger figure “tens of thousands.”

And in one year were thousands and tens of thousands of souls sent to the eternal world. (Alma 3:26; see Alma 60:22)

Antithetical Parallelism or Opposites

Antithetical parallelism is characterized by an opposition of words, expressions, or ideas, or an antithesis between two lines. This “antithesis is not in terms of contradiction, thesis and antithesis, but in opposite aspects of the same idea.” In this structured device, the disjunction but commonly introduces the second line, and then follows the contrasting element. Antithetic has a notable effect upon the reader in the manner in which it presents opposites and contrasts between the persons, places, or things represented in the two lines. Comparisons and contrasts between two ideas has always been an accepted tool of rhetoricians employed for the purpose of invoking an involvement with the reader. Whether intuitively or consciously the alert reader can see in antithetic parallelism a unique reciprocity between the two parts. Krasovec calls this a “paradoxical linguistic phenomenon”:

Antithetic structure displays . . . not only the unifying, the conjunctive principle of a given text, but has also an opposite function: disjunction, disconnection. In fact, antithesis is a paradoxical linguistic phenomenon, for antithetic structure of any kind conjoins the terms, sentences and larger units by disjoining the sense regarding the nature, quality, or action of persons or things.

The class of parallelisms represented as antithetical constitutes one of the most prominent types of parallelisms in the Bible. In the appendix of his *Antithetic Structure in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, Krasovec references some 521 antithetic parallelisms in the Hebrew Bible. In addition to the appendix, Krasovec notes that “We quote here [some 521] units of all sizes, which are clearly antithetic, except the almost innumerable antithetic parallelisms in chapters 10–29 of the book of Proverbs.”

Bible: The writer of Genesis positioned an antithetic parallelism in the middle of the Cain and Abel pericope.

And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. (Genesis 4:4–5)

Abel’s offering had received the Lord’s “respect,” while Cain’s offering “had not respect” (Genesis 4:4–5). The two lines are separated by the disjunction but.

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In the following example, the expression *willing and obedient* of line one is opposite of *refuse and rebel* in line two, and the blessing *you will eat the good of the land* contrasts with the curse *you will be devoured by the sword*; and both lines read if you at or near the beginning of the line:

If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good of the land;  
But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword. (Isaiah 1:19–20)

Two antithetical expressions are found in the following parallelism, each introduced with *but*:

The bricks have fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones;  
the sycamores have been cut down, but we will replace them with cedars. (Isaiah 9:10)

Isaiah 65:14 contrasts *sing* with *cry out* and *gladness of heart* with *pain of heart* in the following verse:

Behold, my servants will sing with gladness of heart,  
but you will cry out for pain of heart. (Isaiah 65:14)


In the following examples, note the employment of the following contrasting units—“joy/sorrow,”  
“just/wicked,” “righteous/wicked,” “fear of man/trust in the LORD.”

Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart,  
but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart.” (Isaiah 65:14)

The memory of the just is blessed:  
but the name of the wicked shall rot. (Proverbs 10:7)

The light of the righteous rejoiceth:  
but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out. (Proverbs 13:9)

The fear of man bringeth a snare:  
but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe. (Proverbs 29:25)

Book of Mormon: Antithetic parallelisms of the Book of Mormon, similar to those attested in the Old Testament, contain rich and varied antonyms.

Ye are swift to do iniquity  
but slow to remember the Lord your God. (1 Nephi 17:45)

Here the word “swift” is an antonym to the word “slow,” and the phrase “to do iniquity” is the obverse side of “to remember the Lord.”

And I would not that ye think that I know of myself—  
not of the temporal  
but of the spiritual,
not of the carnal mind
but of God. (Alma 36:4)

This double antithetical parallelism demonstrates that the opposite of “temporal” is “spiritual,” and the idea of carnality and godliness are contrasting elements.

Detailing

The poetic pattern of detailing (Greek, prosapodosis) features an introductory phrase or sentence, followed by one or more subsequent lines that “detail” what was said in line one. Often, the first line of the verse is complete in itself, but additional lines are presented for the purpose of adding details to the first line. Detailing frequently answers one of the questions—who, which, where, why, what, or how?

Book of Mormon: Perhaps a statement in Alma best explains the purpose of this form.

And they are made known unto us in plain terms,
that we may understand,
that we cannot err. (Alma 13:23)

Lines two and three answer the question of why? Why are the things of God made known unto the children of men? So that “we may understand,” so “that we cannot err.” A second example of detailing is found in Mosiah 21:9:

And now there was a great mourning and lamentation among the people of Limhi,
the widow mourning for her husband,
the son and the daughter mourning for their father,
and the brothers for their brethren. (Mosiah 21:9)

Who participated in the “great mourning and lamentation?” The details for this passage are straightforward and not to be misunderstood. The widow, the son, the daughter, and the brothers all were found grieving for their loved ones.

Working Out

Working out (Greek, exergasia) is a figure where two or more lines deliberate or explain what was first said in line one. This is called working out because these subsequent lines “work out” or explain the words introduced in the first line.

Book of Mormon: Note Nephi’s usage of working out in 1 Nephi 8:1.

We had gathered together all manner of seeds of every kind,
both of grain of every kind,
and also of the seeds of fruit of every kind. (1 Nephi 8:1)

Line one mentions “all manner of seeds of every kind”; then lines two and three deliberate and explain that “all manner of seeds of every kind” includes seeds of both grain and fruit. Note that all three lines conclude with the expression “of every kind.”

Another example of working out exists in Helaman 1:31:

And now, behold, the Lamanites could not retreat either way,
neither on the north,
nor on the south,
nor on the east,
nor on the west,
for they were surrounded on every hand by the Nephites. (Helaman 1:31)

The fact that the Lamanites were not able to “retreat either way” is explained in the verses that follow—there were Nephites in every direction, on all sides, specifically, to the north, south, east, and west.

Contrasting Ideas

Contrasting ideas (Greek, antimetabole, “to throw against in a reverse way”) is a literary structure that throws or compares one subject or idea against another, for the purpose of creating a contrast between the two ideas. It may be that inspired writers employed this form to create comparisons between opposites, such as sin and righteousness, life and death, deliverance and destruction, good and evil, and so on. A simple example of contrasting ideas is found in 2 Nephi 9:39.

1 Remember, to be carnally-minded
2 is death.
1 and to be spiritually-minded
2 is life eternal. (2 Nephi 9:39)

The contrast created in these few words is obvious, a carnal mind versus a spiritual mind and spiritual death versus eternal life. One concept is opposed to the other, instructing the reader to be careful concerning the thoughts he allows to linger in his mind. These words are simple and easily understood.

Part Two

Repetition in the Book of Mormon

Repetition may be classified as a subcategory of the poetic forms called parallelism. While parallelism deals with synonyms, antonyms, complementaries, gradations, superordinates, and reciprocals, repetition is featured by the exact reiteration of words, expressions, or phrases. Repetitive forms are considered a parallelism because, by their unusual repetition of identical words within a short span, it creates a series of thoughts being parallel or connected one to another. This connecting element joins all similar phrases or sentences into a single group for consideration by the reader, thus enabling him or her to focus on the central message of the passage.

That repetition of exact words and expressions has an impact on the subconscious as well as the conscious mind is an assumption that cannot be verified. It is probable, however, that the impact of repeated statements is great, both to the cognizant reader who is aware of such repetition, and to the casual reader who does not perceive the repeated lines. For instance, it is known that repetition is a dominant factor in the aural and speaking learning processes of a child from his earliest years, and continues to aid the child’s progress throughout his educational development. It is due to repetition that the young child gains both speaking and listening skills, often without being aware that he is being endowed with the gifts of language. So it is with those who read scriptural repetitive statements—readers benefit from such, although they may be unaware of their existence.
Initially, the reader may assume that the repeated word or phrase denotes the exact same thing in every instance. This is not so. Rather, “in each occurrence [the repeated expression] takes on a certain coloration from the surrounding semantic material and from its position in the series.”36 In other words, the repetitive statement must be read in its immediate greater context, as it is influenced by the words both preceding and following it. Robert Alter has declared that repetition

shifts the center of attention from the repeated element to the material that is introduced by the repetition, at once inviting us to see all the new utterances as locked into the same structure of assertion and to look for strong differences or elements of development in the new material. There is, in other words, a productive tension between the sameness and difference, reiteration and development, in the use of [repetition].37

Although several types of repetition may be identified, only the following significant types38 are listed below: Like Sentence Beginnings, Many Ands, “Nor” and “Or,” Random Repetition, Regular Repetition, Like Sentence Endings, Like Paragraph Endings, Repetition of Words, Duplication, and Synonymous Words.

Like Sentence Beginnings

Like sentence beginnings (Greek: anaphora, meaning “to bring again,” or “to repeat”) is a figure of speech that pertains to an identical word or set of words that begin two or more consecutive clauses. Two classes of like sentence beginnings will be dealt with below. They are the repetition of the conjunction and (Greek: polysyndeton) and the repetition of the disjunctions neither/nor–either/or (Greek: paradiastole).

Bible: Clauses with like sentence beginnings are common in the scriptures. For example, the expression Praise him commences every verse in Psalm 150:1–5, the word against begins four clauses in Jeremiah 1:18, and the term cursed leads five thoughts in Deuteronomy 28:16–19. In the New Testament nine beatitudes commence with the word blessed (Matthew 5:3–11), and three questions begin with the word who (Romans 8:33–35). Paul employed the figure several times in his letter to the Corinthians, i.e., but three times (1 Corinthians 6:11), all three times (1 Corinthians 6:12), the head three times (1 Corinthians 11:3), to another eight times (1 Corinthians 12:8–11), charity three times (1 Corinthians 13:4), and whether three times (1 Corinthians 13:8).

A longer example of like sentence beginnings is found in the book of Zephaniah.

That day is

a day of wrath,
a day of trouble and distress,
a day of wasteness and desolation,
a day of darkness and gloominess,
a day of clouds and thick darkness,
a day of the trumpet and alarm . . . (Zephaniah 1:15–16)

36. Alter, Art of Biblical Poetry, 64.
37. Alter, Art of Biblical Poetry, 64.
38. For additional biblical examples of various types of repetition, see the comprehensive study by Bullinger, Figures of Speech Used in the Bible. Consult his table of contents and indices to locate specific forms.
In this passage the importance of the great day of the Lord is affirmed by the six-fold repetition of the expression ("a day of").

Book of Mormon: The figure of speech like sentence beginnings is presented on many occasions in the Book of Mormon in diversified passages. For instance, in Alma 11:44, the word both introduces four successive thoughts, which in turn join together to define and elucidate the meaning of the first line, “Now, this restoration shall come to all.”

Now, this restoration shall come to all,
both old and young,
both bond and free,
both male and female,
both the wicked and the righteous. (Alma 11:44)

A series of questions is begun by the interrogative particle “who.”

And now behold,
who can stand against the works of the Lord?
Who can deny his sayings?
Who will rise up against the almighty power of the Lord?
Who will despise the works of the Lord?
Who will despise the children of Christ? (Mormon 9:26)

In addition to the examples just cited, “believe” begins six clauses in Mosiah 4:9–10, “which” commences six thoughts in Helaman 7:10, and “wo” introduces six verses in 2 Nephi 9:31–36.

Many Ands

Many ands is a figure of speech used to describe the repetition of the conjunction and that is located at the beginning of successive phrases or sentences. The figure (Greek: polysyndeton, “many bound together”) refers to the many phrases that are bound together by the repetition of conjunctions. Although many ands is a form of like sentence beginnings, it is limited to the conjunction and. Thus this figure creates parallel lines by the many ands, and binds a passage or verse together into a central thought or unified idea.

Bible: It was the convention of the Old Testament period writers to employ the conjunction “and,” making this figure of speech common in the scriptures. The many ands are widespread in the Hebrew Bible, although they are not always translated in the King James Version and other English translations. Perhaps translators find the many ands repetitious or redundant and prefer to ignore many or most of them.

An example of many ands is found in Joshua 7:24:

And Joshua,
and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah,
and the silver,
and the garment,
and the wedge of gold,
and his sons,
and his daughters,
and his oxen,
and his asses,
and his sheep,
and his tent,
and all that he had. (Joshua 7:24)

Book of Mormon: There are numerous examples of many ands in the Book of Mormon.

And now, because of the steadiness of the church they began to be exceeding rich,
having abundance of all things whatsoever they stood in need—
and abundance of flocks and herds,
and fatlings of every kind,
and also abundance of grain, and of gold,
and of silver, and of precious things,
and abundance of silk and fine-twined linen,
and all manner of good homely cloth. (Alma 1:29)

The use of several conjunctions, each commencing a new phrase, is manifest in this passage. Here the riches and abundance of members of the church are listed and then bound together by the many “ands.”

“Nor” and “Or”

The repetition of the disjunctives either and or or neither and nor at the beginning of successive expressions (Greek: paradiastole) is attested in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon. This figure of speech belongs to the same category of other figures, such as like sentence beginnings and many ands because they deal with words or expressions that begin a sentence or clause.

Bible: Paul used this figure of speech many times in his epistles (see Romans 8:35; 1 Corinthians 3:21–22, 2 Thessalonians 2:2). To the Romans the apostle asked a rhetorical question:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation,
or distress,
or persecution,
or famine,
or nakedness,
or peril,
or sword? (Romans 8:35)

Then, answering his own question, Paul stated:

For I am persuaded, that
neither death,
nor life,
nor angels,
nor principalities,
nor powers,
nor things present,
nor things to come,
nor height,
nor depth,
nor any other creature,

shall be able to separate us from the love of God. (Romans 8:38–39)

In the first verse shown above (Romans 8:35) the word or was repeated six times. The second paragraph presented the word neither, followed by the word nor repeated nine times. Together, the paragraphs are enclosed with the phrase “separate us from the love of God,” which represents a figure called inclusio.

Book of Mormon: Jesus used “or” seven consecutive times during his post-resurrection visit to the righteous Nephites.

Have ye any that are lame,
or blind,
or halt,
or maimed,
or leprous,
or that are withered,
or that are deaf,
or that are afflicted in any manner? (3 Nephi 17:7)

Ironically, by using disjunctions, the inspired writers caused a junction (rather than a disjunction) or linkage between each succeeding phrase, thus creating parallel lines. Therefore, through the manifold employment of the word or, Jesus was able to classify several collateral topics, i.e., “lame,” “blind,” “halt,” and so on, under one head.

Note the use of the disjunctives “neither” and “no” in 2 Nephi 2:11.

If not so, my first-born in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness,
neither holiness
nor misery,
neither good
nor bad.

Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life
neither death,
nor corruption
nor incorruption, happiness
nor misery,
neither sense
nor insensibility. (2 Nephi 2:11)

Random Repetition

The figure of speech called random repetition deals with the irregular recurrence of the same expression within a phrase or successive phrases. The Greeks called this figure, epibole, which means “to cast upon,”
or “to cast one upon another”; hence, random repetition consists of one expression “cast upon another,” meaning an identical phrase is repeated after another.

Bible: In the following verse, the expression “did eat manna” is not found at the beginning of consecutive clauses, nor at the end of consecutive clauses, nor is the expression located at or near the center of two clauses; rather, this phrase is repeated in a random manner.

And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan. (Exodus 16:35)

Book of Mormon: Random repetition, like the Bible, is attested throughout the Book of Mormon. An example from 2 Nephi 29:8 demonstrates the manner which the phrase “the two nations shall run together” is written once at the center of the sentence, and is then repeated at the end of the same sentence. The repeated statement appears irregularly, yet effects the reader in a way similar to other repetitive figures.

Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another.

And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also. (2 Nephi 29:8)

Regular Repetition

Regular repetition features an identical phrase, expression, or sentence repeated regularly throughout the paragraph. The Greeks called it cycloides (meaning “circular repetition”) “because the sentence or phrase is repeated at intervals, as though in regular circles.”

Bible: The following three examples of regular repetition demonstrate the usage of this figure in the Bible. The sentence “Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved,” is repeated three times in Psalm 80 (see vv. 3, 7, 19); the phrase “The LORD of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge” is found twice in Psalm 46 (see vv. 7, 11); and the exclamation “How are the mighty fallen” is thrice expressed in 2 Samuel 1 (see vv. 19, 25, 27).

Book of Mormon: Mosiah 3:25–26 features regular repetition when “therefore they have drunk” is repeated: “therefore they have drunk damnation to their own souls. Therefore, they have drunk out of the cup of the wrath of God.”

To emphasize the excessive taxes being paid to the wicked king of the period, the chronicler of the book of Mosiah repeated the expression “fifth part” five times in the following passage:

And he laid a tax of one fifth part of all they possessed, a fifth part of their gold and of their silver, and a fifth part of their ziff, and of their copper, and of their brass and their iron; and a fifth part of their fatlings; and also a fifth part of all their grain. (Mosiah 11:3)

Alma 5:6 repeats the phrase “have you sufficiently retained in remembrance” three times to emphasize the concept of remembrance of God’s mercy, long-suffering, and deliverance. “And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, you that belong to this church, have you sufficiently retained in remembrance the captivity of your fathers? Yea, and have you sufficiently retained in remembrance his mercy and long-suffering

towards them? And moreover, have ye sufficiently retained in remembrance that he has delivered their souls from hell?"

Another example of regular repetition is located in Moroni’s epistle to Pahoron, where he three times inquired, “have ye forgotten . . .” (Alma 60:20).

**Like Sentence Endings**

*Like sentence endings* (Greek: *epistrophe*) is the repetition of an identical word or expression at the end of successive clauses or sentences. Like sentence endings is related to regular repetition and random repetition—all three figures of speech share rhetorical functions in scripture in emphasizing particular concepts.

Bible: Many biblical writers used like sentence endings in their writings. Paul utilized the figure of speech in 1 Corinthians 13:7 when he repeated “all things” at the end of four successive clauses (“Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things”). He also closed four consecutive expressions with “a child”: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child” (1 Corinthians 13:11).

Psalm 136 presents an example of like sentence endings with the phrase “for his mercy endureth forever,” located at the end of every verse.

Book of Mormon: In Ether 2:17, the writer uses like sentence endings to make clear that the Jaredite barges were built "like unto a dish."

And they were built after a manner that they were exceeding tight, even that they would hold water like unto a dish; and the bottom thereof was tight like unto a dish; and the sides thereof were tight like unto a dish; and the ends thereof were peaked; and the top thereof was tight like unto a dish; and the length thereof was the length of a tree; and the door thereof, when it was shut, was tight like unto a dish. (Ether 2:17)

Another example of one identical phrase paralleling another is found in Alma 21:4, where the expression “after the order of the Nehors” is repeated:

And he began to preach to them in their synagogues, for they had built synagogues after the order of the Nehors: for many of the Amalekites and the Amulonites were after the order of the Nehors. (Alma 21:4)

**Like Paragraph Endings**

*Like paragraph endings* (Greek: *amoebaeon*, “refrain”) features a recurring phrase or sentence found at intervals, always at the end of a paragraph. While like sentence endings feature successive expressions found at the end of a sentence, the refrain or like paragraph endings represents the recurrence of phrases or sentences at the end of successive paragraphs.

Bible: The Old Testament includes numerous examples of the refrain. Psalm 118 serves as an example, where the phrase “his mercy endureth forever” is attested four times (see Psalm 118:1–4). Another example
of a refrain is found in Psalm 67: “Let the people praise thee, O God: let all the people praise thee” (Psalm 67:3, 5) is twice repeated. The expression “yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD” is repeated on five occasions in Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11.

Book of Mormon: An example of a refrain is attested in 3 Nephi, in the context of report of the destruction of several Nephite cities during the period of the crucifixion. After the terrible atmospheric upheavals and destructive forces of nature had taken their toll, the Lord’s voice was heard by the survivor. The Lord’s words form an elaborate extended alternate (abcd/abcd) pattern, the summary and principal elements being identified as follows:

a  identification of the city
b  type of destruction
c  mention of the inhabitants of the city
d  purpose for the destruction

The a’s mention a city or several cities, such as Zarahemla, Gilgal, Mocum, and Gadiandi. Each city had been destroyed in one manner or another (the b’s), by fire or by sinking into the sea. The c’s refer to the city’s inhabitants and the d’s, which make up the refrain, reveal the purpose of the destruction. Repeated six times, the refrain “to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints should not come up any more unto me against them” concludes each section of the repeated alternate model (3 Nephi 9:3–11).

Another example of refrain, found in 3 Nephi 8:5–7, demonstrates that the repeated phrase represents the culmination or summary of what has been said.

There arose a great storm, such an one as never had been known in all the land.
And there was also a great and terrible tempest; and there was a terrible thunder, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it was about to divide asunder.
And there were exceeding sharp lightnings, such as never had been known in all the land.
(3 Nephi 8:5–7)

Repetition of Words

Repetition of words is the frequent appearance of the same word within a passage of scripture. This repeated word may be found at irregular intervals, i.e., at the beginning, middle, or end of the sentence. Similar to other types of repetition that are discussed in part 2, the chief purpose for the repetition of individual words is to draw attention to the word being repeated, or to cause the repeated word to become a principal theme of the passage. Such repetition tends to join the several expressions of the paragraph into a unified body—the various parts connected by the repeated word. Often this is done in a subtle way, so that a cursory reading of the text may cause the reader to miss its significance.

Bible: In the following passage, the pronoun “thou” refers to Timothy, the recipient of an epistle written by the apostle Paul. Presumably, the pronoun is here repeated to accentuate the role of the subject (Timothy) in learning and knowing the scriptures.

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures. (2 Timothy 3:14–15)
Book of Mormon: 1 Nephi 9:2 illustrates the usage of repetition of words in the Book of Mormon, where *plates* is repeated six times within a single verse. *Plates*, the key content word, serves to tie together all other words of the passage.

> And now, as I have spoken concerning these *plates*,
> behold they are not the *plates* upon
> which I make a full account of the history of my people;
> for the *plates* upon
> which I make a full account of my people,
> I have given the name of Nephi;
> wherefore, they are called the *plates* of Nephi,
> after mine own name;
> and these *plates* also are called the *plates* of Nephi. (1 Nephi 9:2)

Similarly, *voice* in 3 Nephi 11:3 emphasizes Jesus Christ’s speaking to the Nephites who are gathered at Bountiful’s temple. Nephi carefully describes the voice by providing us with six statements: it “came out of heaven,” at first the Nephites did not understand the voice; the voice was not harsh; it was not loud; it was a small voice; the voice’s qualities pierced the people:

> They heard a *voice* as if it came out of heaven;
> and they cast their eyes round about,
> for they understood not the *voice* which they heard;
> and it was not a harsh *voice*,
> neither was it a loud *voice*;
> nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small *voice* it did pierce them. (3 Nephi 11:3)

Examples of the figure of speech repetition of words are plentiful in the Book of Mormon. For instance, the word *filthy* is found five times in 1 Nephi 15:33–34; *names* six times in Alma 5:57–58; *order* thirteen times in Alma 13:1–16; *light* seven times in Alma 19:6; *joy* seven times in Alma 27:17–18; *man* seven times in Alma 48:11; *remember* eleven times in Helaman 5:6, 9–10; *treasures* five times in Helaman 13:19; and *lifted* five times in 3 Nephi 27:14–15.

**Duplication**

*Duplication* is made up of a twice-repeated expression cited in an immediate sequence. When a word or group of words is introduced, and immediately thereafter the same word or words are repeated, this is called duplication. Duplication or “immediate repetition is used to convey a sense of urgency,” explains Watson. In speech and conversation one can demonstrate emphasis by using voice inflection and intonation. In modern day writing the author accentuates by employing italics, bold letters, or underlining. In the scriptures, however, a primary method of word stress is by duplication.

Bible: Several examples of duplication can be given from the Bible. In most instances the figure of speech is used by the subject desiring to emphasize the expression being reiterated. Perhaps this explains Jesus Christ’s cry of anguish while upon the cross “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

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(Matthew 27:46). His use of duplication, the repeated “My God, my God,” accentuates the duplicated phrase. As Christ expressed a sense of urgency, so had his disciples. Sensing that they might drown in the sea, the disciples importuned the Lord, “Master, master, we perish” (Luke 8:24). In the Old Testament, King David lamented the loss of his beloved Absalom by repeating the words “my son” five times, “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (2 Samuel 18:33).

Many times proper names are duplicated. Such is the case in Genesis 22:1: “And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham” (Genesis 22:11). Other names repeated twice include the name of Jacob (Genesis 46:2), Moses (Exodus 3:4), Samuel (1 Samuel 3:10), Martha (Luke 10:41), Simon (Luke 22:31), Saul (Acts 9:4), Lord (Matthew 7:21), Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37), and Eloi (Mark 15:34).

Book of Mormon: By duplicating the word “repent,” Alma was admonishing sinners to feel a sense of urgency to forsake their sins and return to God: “Yea, even wo unto all ye workers of iniquity; repent, repent, for the Lord God hath spoken it!” (Alma 5:32). In connection with these words, the expression “repent ye, repent ye” is found five times in 2 Nephi 31:11. Other instances of duplication in the Book of Mormon include:

- Wo, wo, wo unto this people. (3 Nephi 9:2)
- O remember, remember, my sons. (Helaman 5:9)
- Behold, I, I am the Lord’s. (2 Nephi 28:3)
- Verily, verily, I say unto you. (3 Nephi 11:39)

Synonymous Words

When a group of three or more words, similar in sense but not identical in meaning, come together in a verse or passage with characteristics that parallel one another, this is called *synonymia,* or *synonymous words.* All synonyms found in a verse do not make up synonymia—the proper form and function are needed, and "then it is for the purpose of enhancing the force and fire of the passage."

41. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible,* 324.
and distress,
a day of wasteness
and desolation,
a day of darkness
and gloominess,
a day of clouds
and thick darkness,
a day of the trumpet
and alarm . . . (Zephaniah 1:15–16)

Book of Mormon: Examples of synonymous words exist in the Book of Mormon. First Nephi 22:24 presents the words “dominion,” “might,” “power,” and “glory.” The four words do not have the same meaning, but they have analogous meanings and the purpose of each is to emphasize the future magnificent reign of the Lord.

the Holy One of Israel must reign
in dominion,
and might,
and power,
and great glory. (1 Nephi 22:24)

Six words—thunder, earthquake, noise, storm, tempest, and fire—employed by the prophet in 2 Nephi 27:2 are similar in that they describe the great and frightening atmospheric conditions resulting from God’s judgments. Although these six words do not express the same meanings, they all pertain to the earth’s elements.

And when that day shall come they shall be visited of the Lord of Hosts,
with thunder
and with earthquake,
and with a great noise,
and with storm,
and with tempest,
and with the flame of devouring fire. (2 Nephi 27:2)