Glossary of Poetic Forms

**Antithetical Parallelism or Opposites**—A parallelism that is characterized by an opposition of words, expressions, or ideas, or an antithesis between two lines. The disjunction *but* commonly introduces the second line.

**Chiasmus and Inverted Parallelism**—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. A simple chiasmus may consist of four lines only, i.e., ABBA; a complex chiasmus may comprise several lines, i.e., ABCDEEDCBA.

**Contrasting Ideas**—A literary structure that compares one subject or idea against another, for the purpose of creating a contrast between the two ideas.

**Detailing**—This form 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.

**Duplication**—A figure of speech that features a word or expression that is twice repeated in an immediate sequence.

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

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

**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.

**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.

**Like Paragraph Endings**—A figure of speech that features a recurring phrase or sentence found at intervals, always at the end of a paragraph.

**Like Sentence Beginnings**—A figure of speech that pertains to an identical word or set of words that begin two or more consecutive clauses.
Like Sentence Endings—A figure of speech that features the repetition of an identical word or expression at the end of successive clauses or sentences.

Many Ands—A figure of speech used to describe the repetition of the conjunction “and” that is located at the beginning of successive phrases or sentences.

“Nor” and “Or”—The repetition of the disjunctives “either” and “or” or “neither” and “nor” at the beginning of successive expressions.

Parallelism of Numbers—A two-line parallelism that features a numeral in line one and a corresponding or parallel numeral in line two.

Progression Parallelism—A poetical devise where there is an apparent moving forward from one sense or idea to another, until at the pinnacle is a culmination of thought.

Random Repetition—A figure of speech that pertains to the irregular recurrence of the same word or words within a phrase or successive phrases.

Regular Repetition—A figure of speech that features an identical phrase, expression, or sentence repeated regularly throughout the paragraph.

Repeated Alternate—A parallelism that is similar to the AB/AB simple alternate structures but has 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.

Repetition of Words—A figure of speech that features 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.

Simple Alternate—A parallelism that 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.

Simple Synonymous—A parallelism that consists of two lines, line two being a synonymous repetition, an echo, or a symmetrical counterpart of line one.

Synonymous Words—A figure of speech that features a group of three or more words, similar in sense but not identical in meaning, that come together in a verse or passage with characteristics that parallel one another.

Synthetic Parallelism—Composed of two lines; 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.

Working Out—A figure where two or more lines deliberate or explain what was first said in line one.