

## Hebrew Parallelism Poetry Insert

Modern bibles use indentation and punctuation to indicate lines of Hebrew poetry. KJV only uses punctuation to indicate the lines.

Watch for patterns: AB; ABAB; ABBA; ABCCBA; AABBC...

Practise with Proverbs and Psalms then you will discover Parallelism is all through the entire bible and is very helpful for interpretation.

**Synonymous** - the second line repeats the first in different words having the same meaning. Psalm 19:1

The heavens declare the glory of God;  
and the firmament shows his handiwork.

**Antithetic** - the second line contrasts with the first. - "but"

Psalm 1:6

For YHWH knows the way of the righteous,  
But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

**Synthetic:**

- the second line (or following lines) adds to the first.

Psalm 15

YHWH, who may abide in Your tabernacle?  
Who may dwell in Your holy hill?  
He who walks uprightly,  
And works righteousness,  
And speaks the truth in his heart,  
He who does not backbite with his tongue  
Nor does evil to his neighbor,  
Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;  
... etc ..

- second line compares/illustrates the second.

Psalm 130:6 My soul waits for the Lord

More than those who watch for the morning...

Psalm 42:1 As the deer pants for the water brooks,

So pants my soul for You, O God.

- successive lines build to a climax or summary.

Psalm 29:1-2

Give unto YHWH, O you mighty ones,  
Give unto YHWH glory and strength.  
Give unto YHWH the glory due to His name;  
Worship YHWH in the beauty of holiness.

- the second line completes the first

Psalm 2:6

I have set my king  
on my holy hill of Zion

**(Acrostic)** - poem follows the letters of the Hebrew Alphabet.

Ps (9-10),25,34,37,111,112,119,145; Prov 31:10-31; Lam 1-4

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## NOTES

- It seems various scholars have keyed various terms to help label the forms of parallelism. No need to over-complicate.
- Parallelism is not limited to lines, it can also be applied to groups of lines. More than one form may be applied to the same set of lines.
- Sometimes parallelism is dropped in favour of having meaning and sense. The message itself is more important than how it is being expressed.
- Acrostic (Aleph, Beth, Gimel...) psalms will sometimes have very little parallelism.

If you can read Hebrew...:

- Psalms are written with two columns where each column makes up the two halves of the parallelism. Modern English bibles attempt to use indentation to assist the reader in Parallelism.
- No modern syllable counting or rhyming structure. Instead Parallelism is likened to a rhyming-of-thoughts rather than rhyming sounds.
- Sometimes each column will try to balance the other by word count: e.g. 4Words - 4Words.
  - However the word balance is often broken in favour of having the passage make sense.