How Ancient Hebrew Poetry Works
A New Description*

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Abstract

This essay seeks to describe the prosodic regularities which define the way ancient Hebrew poetry works. A text model is advanced which identifies the shapes and sizes of the prosodic units that characterize ancient Hebrew verse. Regularities are described in terms of a prosodic hierarchy. The description is inscribed within the framework of the prosodic structure hypothesis of Selkirk and other linguists. The phenomenon of enjambment is explored. A rule governing the number of lines a poem normally has is stipulated. Three varieties of ancient Hebrew poetry are distinguished: common, qinah, and mashal.

1. *The Question*

A poem conveys a message in a finely wrought form. A hierarchy of repeated forms, an array of tropes, and a symphony of sound contribute to a poem's semantic organization. Assimilation of the message a poem conveys is enhanced by awareness of poetic form.[1]

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*I would like to thank Robert Alter, John Cook, Vincent DeCaen, Benjamin Harshav, and Ziony Zevit for commenting on drafts of this essay. Remaining shortcomings are my responsibility alone. An earlier iteration of the essay was presented at the meeting of the Midwest Region of the Society of Biblical Literature, February 18-20, 2005, Trinity International University Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, and at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, November 18-21, 2006, Washington, D.C. A longer version entitled "Regularities in Ancient Hebrew Verse: A New Descriptive Model" was accepted for publication in *ZAW* and is scheduled to appear in 2008. The same essay, with a review of the work of Terence Collins, James L. Kugel, and Michael Patrick O'Connor, appears under the title, "Retaining and Transcending: The Classical Description of Ancient Hebrew Verse," online at www.ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com.

[1] "[A]s soon as you want to know *how a poem works*, as well as what it says, and *why it is poignant or compelling*, you will find yourself beginning to study it . . . Soon, it becomes almost second nature for you to notice sentences, tense-changes, speech acts, tonal variants, changes of agency, rhythms, rhymes, and other ingredients of internal and outer structure. . . . Exploring a poem under the broad headings given above will almost always lead you to a deeper understanding of the poem as a work of art, constructed in a dense and satisfying and surprising way" (Helen Vendler, *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology* [Boston: Bedford Books, 1997] 127).

That being so, a reader of ancient Hebrew poetry will eventually ask: What continuously operating principles of organization define how ancient Hebrew poetry works?[2] What formal structures set poetry apart from narrative or speech as they otherwise occur in ancient Hebrew literature? Are there rules that govern the formation of a poetic line or composition, rules we do not fully understand, or have yet to be discovered?

2. *The Harshav-Alter Description of Ancient Hebrew Verse*

The most fitting description of ancient Hebrew verse known to the writer is that of Benjamin Harshav [Hrushovski] as summarized by Robert Alter:

> Hrushovski proposes a "semantic-syntactic-accentual rhythm" as the basis of biblical verse. "In most cases," he observes, "there is an overlapping of several such heterogeneous parallelisms with a mutual reinforcement so that no single element - meaning, syntax, or stress - may be considered as purely dominant or as purely concomitant." The result is what Hrushovski defines as a "free rhythm" . . . [nevertheless,] the freedom of the rhythm "is clearly confined within the limits of its poetics." These limits are in part numerically demarcated, as Hrushovski [notes]: "[Since] by rule no two stresses are permitted to follow each other . . . each stress dominates a group of two, three, or four syllables; there are two, three, or four such groups in a verset; and two, three, or four parallel versets in a sentence."[3]

Mutually reinforcing parallelisms of meaning, syntax, and stress, as Harshav sees it, are the hallmark of ancient Hebrew poetry. These occur within a system of "twos, threes, and fours": "stress-units" made up of two, three, or four syllables, "versets" made up of two, three, or four stress units, and "sentences" made up of two, three, or four versets. The rhythm of stresses is so strong, Harshav notes, that it sometimes serves as the sole

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[2] "[A]s soon as we perceive that a verbal sequence has a sustained rhythm, that it is formally structured according to a *continuously operating principle of organization* [my italics], we know that we are in the presence of poetry and we respond to it accordingly" (Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968], 23; quoted in Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* [New York: Basic Books, 1985] 6).

[3] Alter, *Art of Biblical Poetry,* 8, quoting from B. Hrushovski, "Prosody, Hebrew," *EncJud* 13 (1971) cols. 1195-1240; 1200-1202. Harshav's analysis benefits from his grasp of the entire history of Hebrew prosody. Not to be overlooked is his brief synopsis entitled, "Note on the Systems of Hebrew Versification," in *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (ed. T. Carmi; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), 57-72; the "Preface," "Introduction," "Note on Medieval Hebrew Genres," and "Table of Poems" by T. Carmi in the same volume, and the poems themselves; at least those in "Part One: To the Tenth Century," deserve a wide reading among biblical scholars (7-12; 13-50; 51-55; 77-143; 147-274).

support of parallelism across contiguous versets. A verset of two to four stress units is unfailingly followed by another verset of two to four stress units. Within and across the prosodic frames demarcated by stress parallelisms, a gamut of freely distributed sonic parallelisms also finds expression. As Harshav remarks elsewhere, the process of interaction of sounds and meanings encourages a selection and reemphasis of elements from both sides.[4]

Harshav's description is not ideal in all details. The concept of a "sentence" is a slippery one. Alter is right to speak more neutrally of "two or three parallel versets constituting a poetic line."[5] Alter is also not amiss in doing without the possibility of a line made up of four versets. Four verset units subdivide without fail into pairs of two verset units. The notion that a two to three part line is characteristic of ancient Hebrew verse is widely accepted for that reason.

Harshav and Alter reclaim the method of primary stress analysis associated with the names of Julius Ley and Eduard Sievers.[6] Innumerable scholars have engaged in the analysis of stress parallelisms. The work of George Buchanan Gray, Joachim Begrich, Hans Wildberger, Luis Alonso Schökel, and Leslie Allen might be singled out. All applied the stress-counting method to a large corpus of texts in a consistent manner.[7]

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[4] Hrushovski, "Prosody," 1202; idem, "The Meaning of Sound Patterns in Poetry: An Interaction Theory," *Poetics Today* 2/1 (1980) 39-56; 43.

[5] *Art of Biblical Poetry*, 9.

[6] I discuss the contributions of Ley and Sievers in "Meter in Ancient Hebrew Poetry: A History of Modern Research," www.ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com.

[7] Joachim Begrich, "Zur hebräische Metrik," *TRu* NF 4 (1932) 67-89; "Der Satzstil im Fünfer," *ZS* 9 (1933-34) 169-209; repr. idem, *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (ed. Walther Zimmerli; TB 21; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1964) 132-67; George Buchanan Gray (*The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1915; repr. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2002)]; idem, *Isaiah I-XXXIX* [chs. 1-27 alone are covered] [ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912]; Samuel R. Driver and George B. Gray, *Job* [Gray is responsible for the discussion of rhythms in the introduction and notes] [ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912]); Luis Alonso Schökel, *Estudios de poética hebrea* (Barcelona: Juan Flors, 1963) 165-88 [Isa 1-21]; 188-89 [Isa 43-44]; 451-87 [Isa 24-27]; 489-523 [Isa 28-30]; Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja: 1. Teilband: Jesaja 1-12* (2d ed., BKAT 10/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980 [ET *Isaiah 1-12* (CC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990)]; idem, *Jesaja: 2. Teilband: Jesaja 13-27* (BKAT 10/2, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978 [ET *Isaiah 13-27* (CC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997)]; idem, *Jesaja: 3. Teilband: Jesaja 28-39* (BKAT 10/3; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982 [ET *Isaiah 28-39* (CC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002)]; Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150* (2d ed.; WBC 21; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002).

3. *A New Description*

If there is a part of the description of ancient Hebrew verse as set forth by Harshav and Alter that requires qualification, it is, nevertheless, that which deals with patterns of stress parallelism. Alter's overview makes an excellent starting point:

> The rule is that there are never less than two stresses in a verset and never more than four and that no two stresses follow each other without an intervening unstressed syllable; and there are often asymmetrical combinations of 4+3 or 3+2.[8]

Alter is here restating a rule deemed well-established in the eyes of those trained in the system of Ley and Sievers, and applied, for example, to the poetry contained in Job by Gray, to that contained in Isa 1-39 by Wildberger, and to Pss 101-150 by Allen.[9]

The rule works remarkably well, but that doesn't mean it is beyond improvement. The assumption that no two stresses follow each other without at least one intervening syllable deserves re-examination. The rule abandons the patterns of stress retention reflected in MT insofar as it reduces two stresses to one where two stressed syllables in MT *do* follow each other without an intervening syllable. For example:

הוֹי־גּוֹי חֹטֵא	←	הוֹי גּוֹי חֹטֵא	Isa 1:4
עַם־כֶּבֶד עָוֹן	←	עַם כֶּבֶד עָוֹן	Isa 1:4
עַל־מֶה תֻכּוּ־עוֹד	←	עַל מֶה תֻכּוּ עוֹד	Isa 1:5
עָרֵיכֶם שְׂרֻפוֹת־אֵשׁ	←	עָרֵיכֶם שְׂרֻפוֹת אֵשׁ	Isa 1:7
צֶדֶק יָלִין־בָּהּ	←	צֶדֶק יָלִין בָּהּ	Isa 1:21

Isa 1:4	Oh sinner nation!	→ Oh-nation sinful!
Isa 1:4	Iniquity laden people	→ People-laden with-iniquity
Isa 1:5	Why shall-you-be-hit again?	→ Why shall-you-be-hit-again?
Isa 1:7	Your-cities consumed with-fire	→ Your-cities consumed-with-fire
Isa 1:21	Justice dwells in-her	→ Justice dwells-in-her

The "no two stresses in a row" rule looks like an overgeneralization. The received tradition's frequent *non*-avoidance of two stresses in a row is

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[8] Alter, "Characteristics of Ancient Hebrew Poetry," 613. For a description of the varieties of rhythmic stress patterns in ancient Hebrew poetry, modifiable along the lines I suggest here, see Gray, *Forms of Hebrew Poetry*, 157-85.

[9] Gray, *Job*; Wildberger, *Jesaja*; Allen, *Psalms 101-150.*

retainable in almost all cases without creating a conflict with the rule as a whole.

It may further be suggested that 4:3 and 3:4 bipartite lines are better understood as tripartite lines of (2:2):3 and 3:(2:2) format. Notwithstanding the fact that in lines of this type, the main caesura falls between a unit of 4 and a unit of 3, it is remarkable that 4's are consistently divisible into pairs of 2's. If instead we found units of 4 that must be analyzed as combinations of 1 and 3, units of 4 on a par with units of 2 and 3 would have to be accepted. Such is not the case. Exceptions to the rule that 4's are divisible into pairs of 2's in the received text are rare to the point that one may ask whether they might be the result of inopportune scribal embellishment or faulty textual transmission.

If the rule is modified accordingly, it reads as follows:

> There are never less than two stresses in a verset and never more than three.

This rule, taken together with Alter's definition of a line as being composed of two or three versets, amounts to a refinement of Harshav's system of "twos, threes, and fours." Further analysis suggests the following "general rule":

> Ancient Hebrew poetry is confined within a system of "twos and threes": two to three "stress units" make up a "verset"; two to three versets a poetic "line"; two to three lines a "strophe"; two to three strophes a "stanza"; two to three stanzas a "section"; and two to three sections a poem, or a more extensive section thereof.

The poetic line occupies the middlemost position in the hierarchy of the prosodic system canvassed by the general rule. Below it are the versets that make up the line and the stress units that make up the verset. Above it are the strophes, stanzas, and sections that make up a poem.[10]

The general rule may be restated in terms of a metrical grid and a set of rules that generate all known lines of ancient Hebrew verse. The results suggest the possibility of describing the line in terms of two minor and one major caesura if bipartite, and three minor, two major, and one super-major caesura if tripartite.[11]

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[10] I borrow the terms "verset" and "line" from Harshav [Hrushovski] and Alter, and the terms "strophe" and "stanza" from Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Poetry*, 37.

[11] Paul Vetter described these caesurae long ago (*Die Metrik des Buches Job* [Biblische Studien II.4; Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1897] 17; cited by Édouard Dhorme, *Le Livre de Job* [Paris: Gabalda, 1926]; ET *A Commentary on the Book of Job* [tr. Harold Knight; London: Thomas Nelson, 1967] clxxxv, n. 3). For a description of the line in terms of a metrical grid,

The levels of the prosodic hierarchy as defined in the general rule require further elucidation. I inscribe my discussion within the theoretical framework of the prosodic structure hypothesis formulated by Elisabeth Selkirk and other linguists.[12]

Translated into the terms of this hypothesis, a stress unit is equivalent to a "prosodic word," a verset to a "phonological phrase," a line to an "intonational phrase," and a strophe to an "utterance." These equivalences are discussed below.

4. *Prosodic Domains*

The fundamental building block of ancient Hebrew verse is the prosodic word. There are also prosodic levels below the word which impact ancient Hebrew poetry's rhythms and regularities. They are discussed further on.

A *prosodic word* is a unit dominated by a single main stress whose dimensions are equivalent to an orthographic word to which free-standing prepositions and a few other short words may be cliticized. The concept of the prosodic word has proven to be of immense utility in the study of languages and verse around the world. Its existence is well-attested in Tiberian Biblical Hebrew (TBH). The phonological and syntactic combinations that play a role in the rules that determine the boundaries of

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see the writer's "The Poetic Line in Ancient Hebrew: A Grid Analysis" at www.ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com.

[12] The study of the prosodic structure of verse is a preoccupation of linguists. See *Formal Approaches to Poetry: Recent Developments in Metrics* (ed. B. Elan Dresher and Nila Friedberg; Phonology and Phonetics 11; Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2006); further, Bruce Hayes and Margaret MacEachern, "Are there Lines in Folk Poetry?" *UCLA Working Papers in Phonology* 1 (1996) 125-42; Bruce Hayes and Abigail Kaun, "The Role of Phonological Phrasing in Sung and Chanted Verse," *The Linguistic Review* 13 (1996) 243-303; Bruce Hayes and Margaret MacEachern, "Quatrain Form in English Folk Verse," *Language* 74 (1998) 473-507; appendices online at www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/linguistics/people/hayes/metrics.htm. For Selkirk's contributions, see my "Annotated Bibliography," at www.ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com. The standard introduction to prosodic structure theory is Marina Nespor and Irene Vogel, *Prosodic Phonology* (Studies in Generative Grammar 28; Dordrecht: Foris, 1986). Briefer treatments include Bruce Hayes, "The Prosodic Hierarchy in Meter," in *Rhythm and Meter* (ed. Paul Kiparsky and Gilbert Youmans; Phonetics and Phonology 1; San Diego: Academic Press, 1989) 201-260; Carlos Gussenhoven and Haike Jacobs, *Understanding Phonology* (2d ed.; Understanding Language Series; London: Hodder Arnold, 2005) 217-32. I argue elsewhere that ancient Hebrew verse instantiates a prosodic system in conformity with Selkirk's Strict Layer Hypothesis. See "In Search of Prosodic Domains in Ancient Hebrew Verse: Lamentations 1-5 and the Prosodic Structure Hypothesis," www.ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com.

prosodic words in TBH have been studied by Elan Dresher.[13] The rules that applied in ancient Hebrew must be inferred from the data in hand. As a first approximation, departures from the received tradition's rules are best kept to a minimum, unless they follow from historically probable phonological changes posited on independent grounds. Elsewhere I present a set of reconstructed rules for ancient Hebrew.[14]

<div align="center">Excursus on Tiberian Hebrew Phonology</div>

Recorded aspects of Tiberian Hebrew phonology include primary and occasionally secondary stress assignment, prosody-driven vowel alteration, sandhi, rhythm rules, lenition, fortition, and deceleration markers below the word level; and pausal and contextual forms and intonational pauses and liaisons at higher levels. Medieval texts documenting reading traditions record understandings of vowel length and phonological structure.[15] Analogues to many of these features undoubtedly existed in ancient Hebrew, and impacted the way ancient Hebrew poetry worked. Nonetheless, one must guard against relying on features like the lenition of stops that probably did not obtain in ancient Hebrew.[16]

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[13] Bezalel Elan Dresher, "The Prosodic Basis of the Tiberian Hebrew System of Accents," *Language* 70 (1994) 1-52; "The Word in Tiberian Hebrew," in *The Nature of the Word: Essays in Honor of Paul Kiparsky* (ed. Kristin Hanson and Sharon Inkelas; Cambridge: MIT Press, in press); online: http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~dresher/tibhebword.pdf. Of cross-linguistic interest: Draga Zec, "On the Prosodic Status of Function Words," *Working Papers of the Cornell Phonetics Laboratory* 14 (2002) 1-34; online: http://ling.cornell.edu/Zec/PaperLatest1.pdf; idem, "The Prosodic Word as a Unit in Poetic Meter," in *The Nature of the Word: Essays in Honor of Paul Kiparsky* (ed. Kristin Hanson and Sharon Inkelas; Cambridge: MIT Press, in press); online: http://ling.cornell.edu/Zec/PaperFinal1.pdf.

[14] "Stress in Ancient Hebrew: A Tentative Reconstruction" at www.ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com.

[15] On the phonology of Tiberian Hebrew, see Alan S. Prince, *The Phonology and Morphology of Tiberian Hebrew* (Ph.D. diss., MIT; 1975); John J. McCarthy, *Formal Problems in Semitic Phonology and Morphology* (1979 Ph.D. diss., MIT; Indiana University Linguistics Club ed., 1982; repr. New York: Garland, 1985); Geoffrey Khan, "Vowel Length and Syllable Structure in the Tiberian Tradition of Biblical Hebrew," *JSS* 32 (1987) 23-82; Joseph L. Malone, *Tiberian Hebrew Phonology* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1993); Henry Churchyard, *Topics in Tiberian Biblical Hebrew Metrical Phonology and Prosodics* (Ph.D. diss.; University of Texas, Austin, 1999), http://www.crossmyt.com/hc/linghebr/index/ html, 1-121; and Andries Coetzee, *Tiberian Hebrew Phonology: Focussing on Consonant Clusters* (SSN 38; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1999).

[16] The attempt of Jerzy Kurylowicz ("Three Semitic Metrics," in idem, *Studies in Semitic Grammar and Metrics* [Prace Językoznawcze 67; Wroclaw: Polska Akademia Nauk, 1972] 158-87), followed by Alan M. Cooper (*Biblical Poetics: A Linguistic Approach* [Ph.D. diss., New Haven: Yale University, 1976] 32-34) to infer a system of meter for ancient Hebrew poetry based on deformation, sandhi, and lenition/hardening in Tiberian Biblical Hebrew, was rightly judged a failure by W. Randall Garr ("The Qinah: A Study of Poetic Meter,

A *phonological phrase* as understood in prosodic structure theory is marked off from its context by pitch accents, focus tones, phonological caesurae, and/or other closure phenomena. A phonological phrase is a prosodic, not a syntactic unit. Especially in verse, phonological and syntactic phrases do not necessarily align.

A verset as defined in the general rule is equivalent to a phonological phrase. Its parameters, *ex hypothesi*, are fixed at 2 to 3 prosodic words. Others identify versets of from 2 to 4 prosodic words, and bipartite lines of from 4 to 8 prosodic words.[17] But once it is noticed that 4's are divisible into 2's, just as 6's are divisible into 3's or three 2's, and 5's into a 3 and a 2 in either order, it becomes clear that what 4's, 5's and 6's have in common is that they are all expressible in terms of 2's and 3's. The conceptual basis for a system of "twos and threes" at the level of "phonological phrase" should now be clear.

A further basis for an analysis of ancient Hebrew verse into phonological phrases of two to three prosodic words is the prosodic parse preserved by means of the accent system of the MT. Long stretches of verse in MT present themselves as units subdivisible into 2 and sometimes 3 phonological phrases marked off as such by disjunctive accents and consisting of from 2 to 3 prosodic words (e.g., Prov 2; Lam 3; Pss 111-112; Job 5:8-27). To be sure, the unambiguous division of a line into *three* phonological phrases each of which consists of 2 to 3 prosodic words is rare. Examples include Ps 111:9; 147:1, 8; Prov 4:4; Job 8:6; 10:17; Lam 2:4a; Isa 26:2, 6; 50:4b; 8a; Joel 2:15.

3:(2:2) and (2:2):3 units in which a pair of phonological phrases is preceded or followed by a third illustrate the problem. The end of a verset as understood under the general rule is almost always marked by a disjunctive accent in MT, and the half-unit or major caesura within the unit marked with greater prominence than the caesura between the 2's of the (2:2) subunit. For example:

Prov 2:20   לְמַעַן תֵּלֵךְ   בְּדֶרֶךְ טוֹבִים   וְאָרְחוֹת צַדִּיקִים תִּשְׁמֹר׃ 3:(2:2)

That you may walk   in the way of the good
                                              and keep to the paths of the righteous

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Syntax, and Style," *ZAW* 95 [1983] 54-75; 57-8, n. 25) and Tremper Longman III ("A Critique of Two Metrical Systems," *Bib* 63 [1982] 230-54).

[17] E.g., Gray, *Forms of Hebrew Poetry*, 157-97.

The prosodic parse preserved by the accents captures a regularity easily established by independent observation, namely, that tripartite structures are, virtually without exception, 1:(1:1) or (1:1):1 in structure. But attention to the accents is not sufficient to identify lines. Knowledge of the general rule is needed in order to lineate properly.[18]

An *intonational phrase* in prosodic structure theory is marked off from its environment by intonational boundary tones, pauses, final lengthening, and/or other phonological features. It contains one or more phonological phrases.

A line as defined above is equivalent to an intonational phrase. Its parameters are fixed, *ex hypothesi*, at from 2 to 3 phonological phrases. The outer boundaries of intonational phrases are often but not consistently marked in the MT by its subdivision of the text into *pesuqim* or by major subdivisions of same.

An *utterance* in prosodic structure theory is a still larger intonational unit. The utterance level of the prosodic hierarchy delimits self-contained unities of discourse. Utterances are closed by intonational full stops or similar. A strophe as defined above is equivalent to an utterance. *Ex hypothesi*, it consists of 2 to 3 intonational phrases.

Strophes are often identifiable with relative ease in ancient Hebrew verse. In poetry outside of Psalms, Proverbs, and Job, a *pasuq* or masoretic verse normally consists of an utterance as just defined. Gray spoke of these units as "sections" and observed that the parallelisms that occur across distichs and tristichs occur across sections as well. His remarks are based on an analysis of Lamentations 1-4 in which strophes of 2 to 3 lines are marked by *pesuqim* and/or by the acrostic scheme.[19]

A number of text segments usually scanned as single poetic lines are scanned as pairs of lines under the general rule. The following sets of lines, 2 to 3 in number, each constitute a *pasuq* in MT and an utterance or strophe as defined above:

2:2	מָטוּ מַמְלָכוֹת	הָמוּ גוֹיִם	Ps 46:7
2:2	תָּמוּג אָרֶץ	נָתַן בְּקוֹלוֹ	
2:2	מֵחֵלֶב גִּבּוֹרִים	מִדַּם חֲלָלִים	2 Sam 1:22
2:3	לֹא נָשׂוֹג אָחוֹר	קֶשֶׁת יְהוֹנָתָן	

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[18] I demonstrate this point in "In Search of Prosodic Domains."
[19] *Forms of Hebrew Poetry*, 87-120.

2:3	לֹא תָשׁוּב רֵיקָם	וְחֶרֶב שָׁאוּל	
2:2	מָתְנַי חַלְחָלָה	עַל־כֵּן מָלְאוּ	Isa 21:3
2:2	כְּצִירֵי יוֹלֵדָה	צִירִים אֲחָזוּנִי	
2:2	נִבְהַלְתִּי מֵרְאוֹת	נַעֲוֵיתִי מִשְּׁמֹעַ	

Ps 46:7   Nations rage,
kingdoms topple;
he gives forth his voice,
the earth melts.

2 Sam 1:22   From blood of the slain,
from fat of the mighty,
the bow of Jonathan
did not turn back,
the sword of Saul
did not return empty.

Isa 21:3   Therefore my loins
are full with trembling,
pangs seize me
like a woman in travail;
I am too distraught to hear,
too frightened to see.

5. *Beyond the Level of Strophe or Utterance*

A unit consisting of two or three utterances, referred to as a stanza in the general rule, has no equivalent in prosodic structure theory. Stanzas also lack a firm foundation in the prosodic divisions preserved in MT. They are not as readily identifiable as strophes or sections. Nevertheless, the assumption that stanzas are composed of 2 to 3 strophes consistently yields acceptable results.

A unit consisting of 2 to 3 stanzas, referred to as a section in the general rule, also has no equivalent in prosodic structure theory. The outer boundaries of a section are nevertheless clear in many instances. Occasionally, sections coincide with the division into open and closed paragraphs preserved in MT. Often, sections coincide with readily identifiable macrosemantic units.

The largest identifiable prosodic unit of all under the general rule is a unit consisting of one or more sections. It goes unnamed in prosodic structure theory even if its existence is not questioned. In ancient Hebrew verse, the

largest prosodic unit, consisting of one or more sections or combinations of sections, is a poem or a cycle of poems. Sections often appear to be arranged in diptychs and triptychs.

6. *The Frequency of Enjambment at the Line Level*

Claims to the contrary notwithstanding, enjambment occurs frequently in ancient Hebrew verse. One third of the lines in the corpus studied by him, O'Connor remarks, exhibit enjambment. More than two thirds of the lines in Lamentations 1-5 are enjambed, according to a landmark study by F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp.[20] Under the general rule, enjambment recurs with greater regularity than usually thought. Pairs of enjambed lines occupying a *pasuq* are not unusual:

3:2	מִפְּנֵי זַעְמֶךָ	אֵין מְתֹם בִּבְשָׂרִי	Ps 38:4
3:2	מִפְּנֵי חַטָּאתִי	אֵין שָׁלוֹם בַּעֲצָמַי	
2:2	מֵרִבְבוֹת עָם	לֹא אִירָא	Ps 3:7
2:2	שָׁתוּ עָלָי	אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב	
2:3	גוֹי אֶל-גּוֹי חֶרֶב	לֹא יִשָּׂא	Isa 2:4b
2:2	עוֹד מִלְחָמָה	וְלֹא יִלְמְדוּ	
3:3	מִכָּל בָּנִים יָלָדָה	אֵין מְנַהֵל לָהּ	Isa 51:18
3:3	מִכָּל בָּנִים גִּדֵּלָה	וְאֵין מַחֲזִיק בְּיָדָהּ	

Ps 38:4   There is no soundness in my flesh
                on account of your fury;
            there is no wellness in my frame
                on account of my sin.

Ps 3:7   I am not afraid
                of myriad folk
            who around about
                are arrayed against me.

Isa 2:4b   Nation shall not lift sword
                against nation,
            nor they shall learn
                war anymore.

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[20] O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 409; Frederick W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Enjambing Line in Lamentations: A Taxonomy (Part 1)," *ZAW* 113 (2001) 219-39; "The Effects of Enjambment in Lamentations (Part 2)," *ZAW* 113 (2001) 370-95; 371.

Isa 51:18 None leads her
  of all the sons she bore,
 none takes her hand
  of all the sons she reared.

The division of single clauses into multipartite lines is not revolutionary. Isa 51:18 is so divided by NRSV and NJPSV. Further examples:

Lam 4:10[21]   יְדֵי נָשִׁים רַחֲמָנִיּוֹת   בִּשְּׁלוּ יַלְדֵיהֶן   3:2

הָיוּ לְבָרוֹת לָמוֹ   בְּשֶׁבֶר בַּת־עַמִּי   3:2

Obad 12[22]   וְאַל־תֵּרֶא   בְיוֹם אָחִיךָ   בְּיוֹם נָכְרוֹ   2:(2:2)

וְאַל־תִּשְׂמַח   לִבְנֵי יְהוּדָה   בְּיוֹם אָבְדָם   2:(2:2)

וְאַל־תַּגְדֵּל פִּיךָ   בְּיוֹם צָרָה   3:2

Zeph 1:2-3[23]   אָסֹף אָסֵף כֹּל   מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה   נְאֻם יְהוָה   2:(3:3)

אָסֵף אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה   אָסֵף עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם   וּדְגֵי הַיָּם   (3:2):3

וְהִכְרַתִּי אֶת־הָאָדָם   מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה   נְאֻם יְהוָה   2:(3:2)

Psalm 119:62-64[24]   חֲצוֹת לַיְלָה   אָקוּם לְהוֹדוֹת לָךְ   עַל־מִשְׁפְּטֵי צִדְקֶךָ   2:(2:3)

חָבֵר אָנִי   לְכָל־אֲשֶׁר יְרֵאוּךָ   וּלְשֹׁמְרֵי פִּקּוּדֶיךָ   2:(2:3)

חַסְדְּךָ יְהוָה   מָלְאָה הָאָרֶץ   חֻקֶּיךָ לַמְּדֵנִי   2:(2:2)

Lam 4:10 The hands of tenderhearted women
  boiled their children;
 they became nourishment for them
  in the breakup of my beloved people.

Obad 12 Would that you had not looked with satisfaction
  on the day of your brother,
   on the day of his calamity.
 Would that you had not rejoiced

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[21] Division of text as in BHQ, NJPSV, and NRSV.

[22] Division of text as in NJPSV. Here and elsewhere, stress retention and deletion patterns preserved in MT are not a reliable guide to the delimitation of stress units in the underlying text. Stress deletion occurs more often than seems to be required. *Maqqephim* deemed to join primary stress units have been omitted.

[23] Division of text as in NJPSV. MT Zeph 1:3 וְהַמַּכְשֵׁלוֹת אֶת־הָרְשָׁעִים is omitted as an early gloss. An equivalent is lacking in LXX and OL.

[24] Division of text as in Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 172.

over the people of Judah
    on their day of ruin.
Would that you had not distended your mouth
    on a day of distress.

Zeph 1:2-3   I will gather, gather up everything
    from the face of the earth –
        oracle of Yahweh –
I will gather up man and beast,
    I will gather up the fowl of the sky
        and the fish of the sea,
and cut off man
    from the face of the earth –
        oracle of Yahweh.

Ps 119:62-64   In the middle of the night
    I rise to praise you
        for your just decisions.
I am a friend
    to all who fear you,
        to those who keep your precepts.
With your favor, Yahweh,
    the earth is filled:
        teach me your laws.

Two-clause (2:2):3 and 3:(2:2) lines are common in Job, Proverbs, and elsewhere:

3:(2:2)	לֹא שָׁמְעוּ קוֹל נֹגֵשׂ	יַחַד אֲסִירִים שַׁאֲנָנוּ	Job 3:19
(2:2):3	וְעֶבֶד חָפְשִׁי מֵאֲדֹנָיו	קָטֹן וְגָדוֹל שָׁם הוּא	
(2:2):3	בֵּין שָׁדַי יָלִין	צְרוֹר הַמֹּר דּוֹדִי לִי	Cant 1:13
(2:2):3	עַל־אֵלֶּה חָשְׁכוּ עֵינֵינוּ	עַל־זֶה הָיָה דָוֶה לִבֵּנוּ	Lam 5:17
3:(2:2)	כִּיס אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לְכֻלָּנוּ	גּוֹרָלְךָ תַּפִּיל בְּתוֹכֵנוּ	Prov 1:14

Job 3:19   As one prisoners are at ease –
    none hear
        the taskmaster's voice;
Small and great,
    there they are;
        the slave, free of his master.

Cant 1:13   A bag of myrrh

<div style="text-align:center">is my love to me,</div>

<div style="text-align:right">between my breasts he lodges.</div>

Lam 5:17   Whereover we became
                 sick at heart;
                     over this our eyes grew dim.

Prov 1:14   Your lot you must throw in with us,
                 a common purse
                     there'll be for all of us.

The main caesura in lines of this type falls between a unit of 4 and a unit of 3. The unit of 4 is consistently divisible into a pair of 2's.

7. *Prosodic Domains below the Word*

An account of regularities in ancient Hebrew verse cannot afford to ignore prosodic domains below the prosodic word. Analysis indicates that a prosodic word is made up of one to three feet; a foot, of one to three syllables; a syllable, of one to three morae. The analysis holds for ancient Hebrew in general, not just its poetry. A theoretical framework for the study of prosodic domains at the foot level is offered by Bruce Hayes; at the syllable level, by Matthew Gordon; at the mora level, by Abigail Cohn.[25]

8. *Syllables*

Under the general rule, prosodic word counts factor into any judgment concerning the wellformedness of a verset. But syllable counts are also metrically diagnostic. Qinah verse illustrates the point. It is characterized by lines in which the second half is shorter than the first. A typical line is 3:2 in terms of prosodic words. A frequent substitution consists of a 3:3, 2:2, or 2:3 line in which the line's second half is nonetheless shorter than the first in terms of syllable count. Qinah meter is adequately defined only if both prosodic word and syllable counts are considered. Qinah meter is described in more detail below.

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[25] Bruce Hayes, *Metrical Stress Theory: Principles and Case Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Matthew Gordon, *Syllable Weight: Phonetics, Phonology and Typology* (London: Routledge, forthcoming); idem, "Syllable Weight," in *Phonetic Bases for Phonological Markedness*, (ed. Bruce Hayes, Robert Kirchner, and Donca Steriade; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming); online at www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/faculty/gordon/syllableweight.pdf; Abigail C. Cohn, "Phonological Structure and Phonetic Duration: The Role of the Mora," *Working Papers of the Cornell Phonetics Laboratory* 15 (2003) 69-100. For a discussion of feet, syllables, and morae in ancient Hebrew, see the present writer's "In Search of Prosodic Domains" at www.ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com.

If a system of twos and threes is evident at the word level and above, at a more elementary level, that of syllables, the rhythm is freer, though not without constraints: one to six syllables is the syllable count up to and including the syllable receiving the dominant stress in a prosodic word. This measure of the maximum length of a prosodic word is important in the establishment of a threshold for the decliticization of proclitics.[26]

If one to six syllables make up a prosodic word, the number of syllables in a verset will hypothetically fall in a range that goes from two to eighteen in a system of two and threes (in a system of two, threes, and fours, a two to twenty-four range would obtain). The range is far narrower in fact. It has been customary to think in terms of averages. Analysis suggests that a prosodic word consists on average of between two and three syllables. On average, therefore, there will be between four to nine syllables to a verset. A statistical convergence in the range of four to nine syllables per verset is compatible with the findings of Freedman, Fokkelman, and Bartelt, to cite three major practitioners of the syllable counting method.[27] Nevertheless, despite claims made for averages, it seems unlikely that this convergence is more than an epiphenomenon of other regularities in Hebrew verse structure.[28]

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[26] Harm van Grol (*De versbouw in het klassieke hebreeuws: Fundamentele verkenningen, Deel 1: Metriek* [diss., Catholic Theological University of Amsterdam: Amsterdam, 1986] 148-51, 240) also sets an upper limit of six syllables per stress unit. Stress units of more than five syllables up to and including the maximally stressed syllable are atypical. For a reconstruction of rules governing the formation of prosodic words in ancient Hebrew, see the present writer's "Stress in Ancient Hebrew: A Tentative Reconstruction" at www.ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com.

[27] David Noel Freedman, "Acrostics and Metrics in Hebrew Poetry," *HTR* 65 (1972) 367-92; 392 (repr. in *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy*: *Collected Essays on Hebrew Poetry* (Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 1980) 51-76; 76 [six and a half to nine syllables per verset on average]; Jan Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Poetry,* 47-8 [seven to nine syllables per verset on average, with 8 indicated as "the central norm figure of prosody"]; Andrew H. Bartelt, *The Book around Immanuel: Style and Structure in Isaiah 2-12* (BJSUCSD 4; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996) 247 [8 syllable norm for a verset].

[28] For syllable count averages to be more than a byproduct of overall regularity, one has to assume that poets reworked their poems until calculations proved a normative syllable count average had been achieved. This is not a likely scenario. Nevertheless, to judge from Eusebius of Caesarea, according to whom "it is said" that Deut 32 and Ps 119 "are composed in what the Greeks call heroic meter," that is, "hexameters consisting of sixteen syllables" (*Praep. ev*. XI, 5), the practice of counting the syllables of ancient Hebrew verse is at least as old as the comparative study of Greek and Hebrew poetry.

9. *Varieties of Ancient Hebrew Verse*

Aggregate, not average syllable counts allow parameterization of varieties of ancient Hebrew poetry. Three meters or systems of constraint are identifiable.

In *common* meter - most extant ancient Hebrew verse is written in it - the length of versets and lines, with post-stress syllables not counted, is constrained as follows: a verset contains no less than 2 but no more than 10 syllables (absent the constraint, it might contain up to 18); a bipartite line, no less than 6 but no more than 18 syllables; a tripartite line, up to but no more than 24 syllables. Common meter is flexible but still constrained. Examples: Isa 1:2-20; 40:1-11; Zeph 1-3.

Qinah meter is more severely constrained. The "a" verset in a bipartite line normally contains 5 to 8 syllables, the "b" verset 3 to 7 syllables; in a tripartite line, each verset contains 3 to 5 syllables. Lines contain 9 to 14 syllables. Qinah poetry is dominated by lines with a shorter or syncopated second half, where "halves" or "half-lines" are defined as the text on either side of the major caesura (in a three verset line, the third or "c" verset constitutes the second half). Occasionally, halves are equal in length; rarely, the second half is longer than the first. A 3:2 line is typical, but syncopation may be achieved in more subtle ways. As a rule, lines with halves of equal length or a second half longer than the first by prosodic word count have a shorter second half in terms of syllables and/or absolute words. Compensation also occurs in reverse, such that lines with halves of equal length or a second half longer than the first by syllable count as a rule have a shorter second half in terms of prosodic words. Examples: Lam 1-4; Jon 2:3-10.

Mashal meter is dominated by lines with half-lines of approximately equal length, where "half-lines" are defined as the text on either side of the major caesura as above, and "approximately equal" is defined as plus or minus 3, or in some cases 2 syllables. Versets are characteristically 4 to 8 syllables in length. Examples: Prov 1:10-33; 2:1-22; 8:1-21; Pss 111-112.

Syllable counts reflect phonological length the parameters of which may reflect time worn convention rather than systematic counting. Judgments on the part of the individual poet were probably involved, but measurement of length may have been intuitive rather than analytical. Occasional outliers might thus be explained.

10. *What the General Rule Does Not Require*

The general rule does not require that a poem repeat itself measure for measure in exactly the same way. Many forced attempts have been made to identify a pattern such as 2:2, 3:3, or 3:2 as the dominant or exclusive one of a given poem. With the exception of qinah meter, this can only be accomplished by *ad hoc* promotion of secondary stresses to primary stresses and vice versa, unnatural divisions, and made to order textual emendation, or by establishing an unacceptably low threshold in terms of what qualifies as a dominant pattern in a given poem. Intermingling of 2:2's, 3:3's, 3:2's, etc. is constitutive of the artistry of ancient Hebrew verse. Identifiable constellations of the permissible rhythmic patterns occur locally, not globally, within the framework of a given poem. Variation in the number of prosodic units (prosodic words, feet, syllables, or mora) within continuously repeated prosodic frames should not surprise. Earlier periods of several poetries are characterized by precisely such variation.[29]

Asymmetrical features counterpoint symmetrical features in ancient Hebrew verse. The twined acrostic poems of Pss 111 and 112, for example, make use of a compositional technique whereby a letter of the alphabet according to a conventional order initiates a unit consisting without exception of 3 or (2:2) prosodic words. Units of 3 and (2:2), but

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[29] For the distinction between meter and rhythm, see the present writer's "Glossary and Definitions" at www.ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com. Not unlike ancient Hebrew verse, verse in Shor, Uzbek, and other Turkic languages, and Khanty, Mordvin-Moksha, and other Uralic languages, is characterized by a tolerance for lines of varying length within measurable limits and a wealth of semantic and syntactic parallelisms. See Victor M. Zhirmunsky, "Rhythmico-Syntactic Parallelism as the Basis of Old Turkic Folk Epic Verse," in idem, *Selected Writing: Linguistics, Poetics* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1985 [orig. Russian, 1964]) 320-62; Ger. tr.; "Syntaktischer Parallelismus und rhythmische Bindung im alttürkischen epischen Vers," in *Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft, Volkskunde und Literaturforschung. Wolfgang Steinitz zum 60. Geburtstag am 28. Februar dargebracht* (ed. Alexander V. Isacenko et al.; Veröffentlichungen der Sprachwissenschaftlichen Kommission, Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin 5; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1965) 387-401; Wolfgang Steinitz, *Der Parallelismus in der finnisch-karelischen Volksdichtung* (Folklore Fellows Communications 115; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1934) 4-14; idem, *Ostjakologische Arbeiten* (ed. Gert Sauer and Renate Steinitz; 4 vols.; Janua linguarum Series practica 254-57; Den Haag: Mouton, 1975-89). Early Japanese, early Slavic, early Spanish, and Old Latin poetries likewise exhibit constrained variation in terms of the number of metrical units that make up a line or a colon. Orientations are found in the relevant articles of *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (3d ed.; gen. ed. Alex Preminger and Terry V. F. Brogan; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

approximately equal in terms of syllable count, are the compositions' building blocks. The variation adds pleasantness to what would otherwise be a monotonous sequence. Syntactically, an acrostic unit corresponds to a clause – except when it doesn't. Prosodic and syntactic asymmetries across units of approximately equal phonological length make the poetry less tedious. Adjacent acrostic units combine to form lines and strophes in accordance with the general rule, but do so in unpredictable ways.[30]

11. *Regularities beyond the System of Twos and Threes The Length Rule*

Once the lines of a poem are correctly identified, a length rule, that is, a set of regularities involving aggregate numbers of lines, is discernible:

> A poem, if it contains more than 10 lines, typically consists of 12, 18, 22, 28, or 36 lines, or combinations thereof. Among the Psalms, 14 lines is also a common length.

The rule delimits macro-units of poetry in terms of 12's, 14's, 18's, 22's, 28's, and 36's.[31] Its validity cannot be demonstrated here. In conjunction

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[30] Pss 111-112 are composed in a kind of mashal meter in which half-lines of approximately equal syllabic length consist of 3 to 4 (not 2 to 4) prosodic words. See the writer's "Psalms 111-112," online at: www.ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com.

[31] With respect to the number of lines a poem in ancient Hebrew typically has, I am indebted, if only indirectly, to Yehoshua Gitay (*Prophecy and Persuasion: A Study of Isaiah 40-48* [Forum Theologiae Linguisticae 14, Bonn: Linguistica Biblica, 1981]; "Reflections on the Study of Prophetic Discourse: The Question of Isaiah I 2-20," *VT* 33 [1983] 207-221; *Isaiah and His Audience* [Assen: Van Gorcum, 1991]). His insistence that we seek to identify fully formed compositions in ancient prophetic literature, and not assume, as many do, that all we have are snippets of prophetic discourse strung together and reworked for a different purpose by another hand, emboldened me early on to consider the possibilities. According to the length rule, larger compositions conform to strict conventions, confirmation of the correctness of David Noel Freedman's intuition that large poetic structures work within rigid constraints in terms of length ("Another Look at Biblical Hebrew Poetry," in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry* (ed. Elaine R. Follis; JSOTSup 40; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987) 11-28; 26; repr. in *Divine Commitment and Human Obligation: Selected Writings of David Noel Freedman, Volume Two: Poetry and Orthography* (ed. John R. Huddleston; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 213-226; 225). 22 line poems were identified in non-acrostic contexts by, among others, R. B. Y. Scott (*Proverbs-Ecclesiastes* [AB 18; Garden City: Doubleday, 1965] 71 [Prov 2:1-22]; Mitchell Dahood (*Psalms I: 1-50* [AB 16; Garden City: Doubleday, 1966] 234 [Ps 38]); David Noel Freedman ("Acrostic Poems in the Hebrew Bible: Alphabetic and Otherwise," *CBQ* 48 [1986] 408-31; repr. in *Divine Commitment and Human Obligation: Selected Writings of David Noel Freedman, Volume Two: Poetry and Orthography* (ed. John R. Huddleston; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 183-204; 197-202 [Ps 33]); Delbert R. Hillers (*Lamentations* [2d ed.; AB 7A; New York: Doubleday, 1992] 25 [Lam 5, Pss 33, 38, and

with the general rule, the length rule unlocks the structure of poem after poem in ancient Hebrew literature.

12. *Precursors of the Description Offered Here*

The general rule and the "seven-storied hierarchy" Harshav discerned in ancient Hebrew verse are much alike. Harshav noted that each level of the hierarchy contains a group of units, usually 2 or 3, of the level below it, with the order of 2's and 3's, as stressed above, ever-changing and unpredictable. Another scholar who has paid attention to prosodic hierarchy is Vincent DeCaen. Harshav developed his insights on the basis of a keen understanding of poetry per se and in the context of a comprehensive literary theory. DeCaen develops his in the context of contemporary linguistics.[32]

The text model proposed here and Jan Fokkelman's text model overlap to a large degree. At the line, strophe, and stanza levels, but not at the verset level, Fokkelman perceives a system of twos and threes to be instantiated in biblical poetry.[33] Given the difference at the verset level, my analyses differ decisively from his.

103]); Pieter van der Lugt (*Rhetorical Criticism and the Poetry of the Book of Job* (OTS 32; Leiden: Brill, 1995) 124, 165, 299 [Job 10, 14, and 27]); idem, *Cantos and Strophes in Biblical Hebrew Poetry with Special Reference to the First Book of the Psalter* (OTS 53; Leiden: Brill, 2006) 421, 424 [Pss 33, 103]; Klaus Seybold, "Akrostische im Psalter," *TZ* 57 (2001) 172-183 [Pss 72, 103, 66]); Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse* (JSOTSup 170, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994) 90 [Lam 5; Ps 38]; Jan Fokkelman, *Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible: At the Interface of Prosody and Structural Analysis. II. 85 Psalms and Job 4-14* (SSN 41; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2000) 522 [Pss 33, 38]. I omit from this list poems thought by others to have 22 lines that in my view do not. So far as I know, the other details of the length rule went unrecognized in the past.

[32] Benjamin Harshav [Hrushovski], "Prophecy" (unpubl. ms., Berlin, 1983) 1-18; 4-5. Harshav shared his research with me after I shared mine with him. I summarize his conclusions in "Regularities in Ancient Hebrew Verse: An Overview," at www.ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com. His "word – colon – cluster – phrase – period – move – chapter" sequence corresponds to the "stress unit – verset – line – strophe – stanza – section – poem" sequence in my research. DeCaen's sequence, though he does not present it in a single graph, goes like this: syllable (σ) – foot (F) – metron (M) - prosodic word (ω) – colon (φ) – line (I) – verse (U) – stanza (Σ) - psalm (ψ). See graphs 1, 9, 14, and 20 in Vincent DeCaen, "Head-Dependent Asymmetry and Generative Metrics for Biblical Hebrew: Tetrameter, Pentameter, Hexameter, Heptameter," 2002, at www.chass.utoronto.ca/~decaen/papers. DeCaen has developed an alternative sequence in which the level of metron does not appear and a new level, between the word and the colon, is introduced. See "Theme and Variation in Psalm 111: Metrical Phrase and Foot in Generative Perspective," 2006, www.chass.utoronto.ca/~decaen/papers.

[33] Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Poetry,* 37, 45-46.

Fundamental similarities are evident between the text model proposed here and Harm van Grol's text model. But van Grol's model envisions versets with four stress maxima, lines with from two to twelve stress maxima, single verset lines, single line strophes, and single strophe and four strophe stanzas.[34] My text model diverges from his on all these points. The analytical results differ accordingly.

13. *Next Steps*

The text model outlined above is the outcome of trial-and-error inductive analysis of a large portion of the corpus of ancient Hebrew poetry. The model works line after line and poem after poem with few or no necessary changes to the extant text. Often, previously proposed textual subdivisions based on rhetorical analysis, a hypothesis of textual or literary development, or delimitation markers in ancient manuscripts, find confirmation. Rarely, a novel subdivision of a poem, or delimitation of the whole, is suggested. Discussions of examples appear elsewhere.[35]

The model is compatible with the phonology and stress patterns of ancient Hebrew insofar as we might reconstruct them. A sizeable corpus of ancient Hebrew inscriptions and texts beyond the Hebrew Bible from the First and Second Temple Periods is now available, such that diachronic and synchronic study of ancient Hebrew is on a firmer footing than before. As the language evolved, sound changes occurred and stress patterns changed, but the general rule and length rule are such that they did not necessarily obsolesce as a result. A reconstruction of the phonology of 6th century BCE Hebrew is offered elsewhere.[36] Many unanswered questions remain, and probably always will. The reconstruction of ancient Hebrew phonology is nonetheless a necessary propaedeutic to serious investigation of regularities in ancient Hebrew verse. More reconstructive attempts are a desideratum.

The proposed text model is expressed within the framework of the prosodic structure hypothesis of contemporary linguistic theory. The discussion offered above is rudimentary. A fuller discussion appears elsewhere.[37] Linguists currently apply a variety of formal approaches to

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[34] Van Grol, *Versbouw*, 239-46; 250-51 (Engl. summary).

[35] Analyses available to date: "Isaiah 1:2-20," "Isaiah 1:21–2:5," "Isaiah 5:1-7," "Isaiah 40:1-11," "Jonah 2:3-10," "Psalm 6," "Psalm 8," "Psalm 104," "Psalms 111-112," "Psalm 137," "Song of Songs 1:2-14," and "Lamentations 1," online at www.ancienthebrewpoetry. typepad.com.

[36] "In Search of Prosodic Domains."

[37] "In Search of Prosodic Domains."

poetry. More formal linguistic analyses of ancient Hebrew poetry are a desideratum.

The work of cross-linguistic comparison with Ugaritic, Aramaic, Phoenician, Punic, and Akkadian poetry, and with poetries farther removed, remains largely undone. The model promises to reveal conventions that governed other ancient Semitic poetries.[38]

14. *Summary*

This essay began with a question about continuously operating principles of organization in ancient Hebrew verse. A provisional answer was given, which may be summarized as follows.

Ancient Hebrew verse is characterized by a series of continuously repeated forms. The forms are prosodic units. The central form is termed a line. It consists of two to three parts. A part is termed a verset. A verset consists of two to three prosodic words. A set of lines, two to three, is termed a strophe. A verset ends in a pause, however minor. A line ends in a stronger pause or a full stop. A strophe usually ends in a full stop.

Prosodic, semantic, syntactic, morphological, and sonic parallelisms recur across versets, lines, and strophes. Prosodic parallelisms alone are obligatory: a verset of two to three prosodic words is unfailingly followed by another verset of two to three prosodic words, until a poem's conclusion.

A prosodic hierarchy of twos and threes structures a poem. Two to three stress units form a verset, two to three versets a line, two to three lines a strophe, two to three strophes a stanza, and two to three stanzas a poem or section thereof. A poem, if it contains more than 10 lines, typically consists of 12, 18, 22, 28, or 36 lines, or combinations thereof. Among the Psalms, 14 lines is also a common length.

Three varieties of ancient Hebrew verse are identifiable, the common, the qinah, and the mashal. They are distinguishable from each other by the varying patterns of verset and line length they instantiate.

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[38] For preliminary observations, see the writer's "Regularities in Ancient Hebrew Verse: An Overview," www.ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com; and in reference to rule-constrained variation in verset and line length attested in other ancient poetries, fn. 53 above. Analyses of examples of Ugaritic and Aramaic poetry are in a preliminary stage of preparation. Analyses of examples from Ben Sira and Hodayot suggest that the general rule and the length rule were still operative in Hebrew poetry of the Hellenistic period.