

**DISJUNCTIVE PARALLELISM IN THE PSALTER, What it is, and Why it is important,
with special reference to Psalm 132**

ABSTRACT

“Disjunctive parallelism,” in contrast to line-adjacent “conjunctive parallelism,” refers to a perceived parallel line (the “B” colon) that occurs within a text at some point removed from its corresponding “A” line. This stylistic device functions to delineate structural units (strophes, stanzas) of different size within a poetic text and frequently also serves to highlight a certain important motif or theme. Four different types of disjunctive parallelism based on verbal recursion are described and illustrated in part one of this study: Enclosure, Juncture, Aperture, and Closure. Various kinds of supporting feature are also listed—poetic elements that help to confirm the internal compositional boundaries that have been posited. In the second part two of this paper, the methodology of textual demarcation is illustrated in a structural analysis of Psalm 132. In addition to its normal linear development, this prophetic prayer is shown to have a doubly terraced discourse arrangement that focuses upon Yahweh’s promise to David of an ongoing line of royal descendants in his “dwelling place” of “Zion.” In conclusion, the relevance of this study for evaluating the poetic organization of different Bible translations is pointed out.

INTRODUCTION

Most students of the Scripture, the Psalter in particular, consider the literary device of parallelism only when they see it within the confines of a single verse. This may be termed “conjunctive” or “adjacent” parallelism. But parallel cola may also be separated spatially within a poetic text where the lines function to form larger structures and topical units. This often unrecognized phenomenon may be termed “disjunctive” or “non-adjacent” parallelism. Such higher-level verbal correspondence (e.g., *inclusio* and related patterns) thus serves to demarcate boundaries and thematic peaks within a given psalm as a whole. It also operates to reinforce as well as to foreground crucial aspects of the semantic organization or development of an entire poetic composition. In other words, the related parallel lines are separated from

one another by a number of verses within the text and placed in positions that are essential for understanding the complete message of prayer, thanksgiving, praise, trust, or teaching being conveyed by the psalmist.

This type of disjunctive parallelism is based largely on the principle of selective *recursion*, usually involving some manner of synonymous, cause-effect, or contrastive expression. It is a compositional feature that undoubtedly enabled listeners to follow along more easily when psalms (or other poetic texts) were being sung, chanted, recited, or proclaimed in a public worship service or some other religious assembly. Verbal structuring of this kind also helps us today to discern the larger organization of a psalm and to see how the diverse parts fit together to comprise the whole. In this study the different macro-structural discourse features involving some manner of reiteration are described and exemplified, along with their associated communicative functions.

In addition to selected paired texts, the proposal of this investigation is illustrated in more detail with reference to Psalm 132. The aim is, on the one hand, to illustrate the patent poetic artistry employed by the psalmists in composing their prayer-songs to the Lord, and on the other, to enable interpreters today, whether scholarly or lay, to more readily recognize these parallel structures and their significance. Such knowledge of poetic technique is of considerable importance to Bible translators as they seek to reproduce these varied forms and their functions meaningfully in other languages. It is also helpful in the assessment of the different poetic structural arrangements that one finds displayed in contemporary Bible translations.

AN INITIAL PERSPECTIVE ON PARALLELISM

To begin with, I will summarize my understanding of parallelism in BH poetry: first, concerning its *definition* with respect to adjacent poetic lines, and then regarding an *extension* of the principle of parallelism to the discourse level of Psalmic organization, which is the special focus of this study. These reflections stem from my explorations in the biblical text from a literary-rhetorical perspective (Wendland 2002, 2004, 2011), an approach which may contribute a few additional insights concerning the dynamic, multifaceted character of Hebrew poetic composition, specifically its preferred mode of religious expression: the parallelism.

Definition

Conjunctive, line-adjacent, poetic parallelism may be defined as a complex of features. In essence, there are five main elements. Thus, *parallelism* is constituted by:

a) the distinctive, recurrent compositional coupling¹

b) of relatively short (terse) poetic (rhythmic) lines,

c) which exhibit a close semantic relationship between them.

d) This binary linkage of cola is normally marked by a greater or lesser degree of formal linguistic correspondence—

e) whether phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic, and/or structural.²

The connection between the two contiguous lines may be based on synonymy, some variant of this, antithesis, consequence (e.g., reason-result), or virtually any other type of meaningful correlation (cf. Wendland 2002:98-99). Furthermore, “in Hebrew parallelism, the norm is that the second element [B line/colon] is usually both echoing and extending the primary [A] element in some fashion” (Jackobson &

¹ I use the term “coupling” in the secondary sense of connecting, or conjoining, two or more, but usually a limited number, of items together. Two (or three) cola (poetic lines) realize one “couplet.” “Almost all Hebrew poetry is based on the couplet, the *minimum version* of the left and right speakers to create a stereo or three-dimensional idea. The first line of the couplet represents the right speaker, and the second line represents the left” (Gentry 20017:44, original italics).

² The biblical poet typically composed his text in chunks according to a recurrent lineal grid of 2–3 short predicative units (cola, or “rhythmic utterances”) that are consequently positionally related in meaning. The connective “correspondence” between (among) cola may involve various semantic relationships, depending on the poetic topic being expressed and the pragmatic intention of the author. Furthermore, as Kugel observed some time ago: “Parallelistic lines appear throughout the Bible, not only in ‘poetic’ parts, but in the midst of narratives (especially in direct discourse)” (1981:3). There is thus a gradient in literary character, ranging between prose and poetry such that any text may be classified as being more (less) prosaic or poetic in nature. A “poetic” text will manifest not only recurrent A + B (+/- C) lined parallelism, but also a large variety of stylistic features that are often associated with parallel cola (cf. Wendland 2011:105-119; Berlin 1996:302–314), such as: the lack of certain “prose particles,” phonological play, stress rhythm, imagery, linguistic condensation, and as Lunn has so well documented, a higher incidence of “defamiliarised” word orders (2006:276–277).

Jacobson 2013:19).³ Or as Robert Alter puts it: In parallelism “the characteristic movement of meaning is one of heightening or intensification...of focusing, specification, concretization, even what could be called dramatization” (Alter 1985:19). According to the principle of parallelism, however, it is not the *semantic* quality of interlineal *similarity* (*contrast* or whatever) that primarily motivates or initiates parallelism. Rather, it results from the purely *syntactic* procedure of deliberately juxtaposing the two (or more) rhythmic lines that express an appropriate religious idea or plea within some larger poetic framework, including that of lyric genre.⁴ “Hebrew poetry...is based upon placing lines in parallel pairs” (Gentry 2017:22). The relatively restricted length and concise construction of these lines is an outcome of the so-called “pressure towards symmetry principle” in language systems, which is governed by the implicit literary norms of biblical Hebrew poetry. For example, there is a preference for cola that range between two to five accent, or “word,” units, as determined by the immediate textual context and the author’s artistic creativity.⁵

Do both speakers of a stereo system provide the *same* music or does each give *different* music? The answer is both—the music is different *and* the same. In one sense the music from the left speaker is identical to that of the right, yet in another way it is slightly different so that when we hear the two together, the

³ However, the semantically “primary” element may in fact be the second colon [B], e.g. Ps 132:2b, 5b, 10b, 17b, 18b. In essence, the B line conceptually “reframes” the A line to a greater or lesser extent, and the two (three) cola together present a greater, augmented perspective on the topic under poetic consideration. Gentry offers a helpful analogy to describe the nature and function of parallelism: “Do both speakers of a stereo system provide the *same* music or does each give *different* music? The answer is both—the music is different *and* the same. In one sense the music from the left speaker is identical to that of the right, yet in another way it is slightly different so that when we hear the two together, the effect is stereo instead of just one-dimensional or monaural. In Hebrew literature the ideas presented can be experienced in a similar manner” (2017:42).

⁴ In other words, my hypothesis is this: The Hebrew poet did not begin to compose a psalm by saying, “OK, I’ve got a line A in mind, so let me compose a line B that is similar (or contrastive) to it in some way.” Rather, (s)he would say, “I have a complete thought that I want to express poetically in two (or three) rhythmic lines; how can I best do this in keeping with the general topic and psalmic genre in mind?”

⁵ For some documentation regarding the phonological data, see Korpel & de Moor, 1988:1–6. Thus, the *parallel* nature or status of any couplet is displayed to a greater or lesser degree, depending on how strongly line B demonstrates a perceptibly close formal and/or semantic relationship with line A as part of the psalmist’s deliberate poetic compositional strategy.

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To conclude: the *semantic* relationship that is established between Hebrew contiguous poetic lines is a function of their *syntactic* juxtaposition, B to A.⁶ The *formal* arrangement of these sequential cola leads the listener to search also for some meaningful connection between them. However, from another perspective, “parallelism can be defined as the repetition of elements within a grammatical unit” (Jacobson and Jacobson 2013:9), which in Hebrew poetry is generally constituted by two short, sequential utterances. In most cases, this is quite obvious—provided that one knows the conceptual background underlying the text’s vocabulary plus any important theological assumptions that are relevant to the paired lines in their immediate context. But such clarity or precision does not always apply to the relation that links one bicolon, or a set of them (strophe), with another in the discourse at large, e.g., verses 5b and 6a Psalm 132 (“...a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob. We heard it in Ephrathah...”). In such cases, a higher-level principle of poetic organization is normally operative, e.g., 132:6 being the onset of a new strophe and stage in developing the psalm’s theme. This may be distinguished from the broader function of poetic discourse—parallelism and all that goes along with it—which is to imbue a text with special communicative significance (e.g., rhetorical impact, aesthetic appeal, affective expressiveness, memorability, fluency, etc.).

Extension

Nicholas Lunn applies the term “extending” to one of three “additional features of parallelism” that he calls attention to (the other two being “gapping” and “embedding”; Lunn 2006:18-20). Accordingly, “[a] parallelism can extend beyond the confines of the basic bicolon,” with particular reference to the occurrence

⁶ The relationship between *disjunctive*, or *non-contiguous*, parallel lines is just the reverse—that is, where some patent, frequently prominent correspondence in *meaning* serves to signal, hence also to forge a *formal* link between the A and B cola, e.g., as in the case of an *inclusio* (e.g., the reference to “David” in Psalm 132:1a and v. 17a; see Extension below).

of tricola and, rarely, longer sequences of poetic lines (2006:20).⁷ However, the pattern of parallelism may be expanded much further from the prototypical norm of adjacency to include non-contiguous sets of cola, a characteristic of Hebrew poetry that may be termed “disjunctive,” or “*distant*,” parallelism (cf. Wendland 2002:chap. 4). Such parallel couplets, at times complete verses (bicola) tend to be characterized by some obvious semantic relationship (ordinarily synonymy, but also antithesis or an associative, e.g., cause-effect, correlation), which is often, but not always, accompanied by certain formal similarities.

These separated, at times textually remote, correspondents are manifested by elements of linguistic repetition which, in addition to being important oral-aural signals for an audience with no access to a written text,⁸ normally perform higher discourse functions such as thematic expression or reinforcement,⁹ topical unity, strophic boundary demarcation, and the foregrounding of one or more thematic or emotive “peak points” within a poem. Here we observe the importance not only of *word* placement within the (bi)colon—an important feature of conjunctive parallelism—but also of *colon location* within the complete poetic text as being an essential facet of the overall principle of parallelism. This prominent positional feature of Hebrew poetic composition is discussed more fully below with respect to its different variants.

Four Types of *Disjunctive Parallelism*

There are four main kinds of disjunctive parallelism found in the Psalms and other biblical poetic texts. These parallel sets, consisting of two (or more) semantically, often formally, related lines typically function

⁷ The parallelism of constituents may also be manifested *within* the poetic line, for example Psalm 145:8:

A: The LORD is *gracious* and *merciful*,

B: slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

⁸ This of course was the norm in ancient societies, where written texts (scrolls) were quite rare, expensive, and even if available, were difficult to read due to various space-saving devices incorporated into the manuscript. Besides, all excellent, high-value literature is communicated more effectively, with greater impact and appeal, orally to a listening audience.

⁹ We see this exemplified in so-called “twin psalms,” such as Pss 42–43, 103–104, 105–106, 111–112, 113–114.

to mark the initial and/or final boundaries of poetic units—whether strophes, stanzas, or larger segments.¹⁰ However, they may also be employed by the psalmists to highlight points of special thematic emphasis or importance in a text, such as the climactic closing line of Psalm 132, v. 17, which pointedly recalls verses 1 (beginning) and 10 (midpoint) (see further below). I first briefly define these four types of disjunctive parallelism, and then I will describe them more fully—mainly through selected examples.¹¹ (In the formulas below, *a/a'* represent the parallel poetic lines; **X** refers to a single, or some initial poetic unit, while **Y** represents a subsequent unit, and **Z**, an optional, third distinct poetic unit.)

- a) **Enclosure** [*a–X– a'*]: The significant parallels occur at the *beginning* and *ending* of the *same* poetic unit (strophe < stanza < section).¹²
- b) **Juncture** [*X–a, a'–Y*]: The significant parallels occur at the *ending* of one poetic unit and the very *beginning* of the next, that is, at the border between the two discourse segments.
- c) **Aperture** [*a–X, a'–Y*]: The significant parallels occur at the respective *beginnings* of *different* structural units, whether adjacent or separated in textual space.
- d) **Closure** [*X–a, Y–a'*]: The significant parallels occur at the respective *endings* of *different* poetic units, whether adjacent or separated in textual location.

These four kinds of displaced parallelism serving a demarcative function in literary discourse (prose as well as poetry) are further defined and illustrated in the following sections.

¹⁰ I distinguish between the terms “stanza” and “strophe” in cases where a poetic text clearly indicates two primary levels of structure—a smaller *strophe*, or poetic paragraph, which consists of a group of related poetic lines, or bicola (between two and five, analogous to the normal number of words in a half-line/colon), and a larger *stanza*, comprised of two to three strophes.

¹¹ Space prevents a more thorough discussion and exemplification of these four features; for such detail, see Wendland 2002:108–117; cf. Wendland 2004:125–127.

¹² Enclosure is related to a less commonly recognized type of disjunctive bounding: **Exclusion** [*X–a, Z a'–Y*], where the significant recursions occur at the ending and the beginning of different units, with a distinct circumscribed section [*Z*] in the middle of these two.

Enclosure

Enclosure, more commonly known as “inclusio,” is one of the most common literary devices in the Hebrew Bible (and in many other world literatures as well, including the Greek New Testament). Enclosure is important because it serves to demarcate a complete textual unit, whether small (strophe) or large (a complete psalm). In this type of text bounding device, one element occurs at the beginning and its disjunctive parallel at or near the end of the same compositional segment. The second element is similar with respect to form, content, and/or communicative function—the closer in all three respects, the more obvious and effective the enclosure operates as an oral or written discourse marker. It appears most often in the *hallelujah* psalms, with the unit circumscribing parallels also acting to reinforce the purpose of this hymns to invoke universal praise for the LORD, for example, Psalm 103:¹³

Praise the LORD, O my soul! (1a)

Praise the LORD, O my soul! (22b)

Psalm 8 is another frequently cited instance, due to the exact repetition involved:

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! (1a)

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! (9)

The following is an example that occurs within a text, not exact this time but synonymous; it serves to demarcate the first major portion of Psalm 22:

My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me...? (1ab)

Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help! (11)

An enclosure of smaller textual range occurs in Psalm 132 to delimit the first stanza:

He swore an oath to the LORD, and made a vow to the Mighty One of Jacob. (2)

...till I find a place for the LORD, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob. (5)

The concept of *inclusio* tends to be too commonly posited as a literary device in exegesis, and hence its supposed identification is often misleading—that is, leading to a blurring of the internal boundaries

¹³ All the citations in section 2 are from the NIV except those from Psalm 132, which are my own literal renditions.

within a psalm. For example, commentators often conclude that verses 1 and 10 of Psalm 132 are an instance of “inclusio,” and this is partly true, but the structural function of v. 10 is actually more complex and far-reaching than that, as we will see in part two of this study.

Juncture

In contrast to enclosure, which functions to delineate the outer boundaries of the *same* unit of discourse, “juncture” distinguishes the common border that separates two *different* poetic text segments. In this case, the disjunction involved is not spatial since the parallel passages occur right next to each other; it is rather *conceptual* because distinct, but somehow related, thought complexes are thereby linked as a way of creating greater interconnection (cohesion, progression, etc.) within the poem as a whole. There is a dramatic instance of juncture in Psalm 6 that initiates its all-important final strophe:

...I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears.

My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes. (6b-7)

Away from me all you who do evil, for the LORD has heard my weeping! (8)

The next example of juncture, at the midpoint of Psalm 2, suggests why it is important to recognize this feature—that is, as a boundary marker which in this instance incorporates a crucial, but implicit shift in speaker and pronominal reference:

I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill. (6, YHWH speaking)

I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me... (7, King speaking)

Finally, we have a similar example to the preceding, now from Psalm 132:

For the sake of David your servant, do not reject (אַל-תִּשְׁכַּח) your anointed one. (10)

The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke (לֹא-יִשְׁכַּח). (11)¹⁴

¹⁴ Josh Moody comments: “There is a carefully crafted cadence between the prayer “do not turn away the face” (v. 10) and the promise “he will not turn back” (v. 11), which underlines that God will not fail” (2013:151).

The close, but nevertheless distinct, connection between these two verses is one indication that the “inclusio,” which is typically posited for v. 10 (going back to v. 1), should not be viewed too rigidly.

Aperture

“Aperture” is a type of disjunctive parallelism that is exhibited when the parallel verses serve to delineate the respective *beginnings* of *different* poetic units, whether consecutive or separated within the larger text.

An example of the former, initiating adjacent strophes, occurs in Psalm 22:

I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you. (22)

From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;

before those who fear you I will fulfill my vows. (25)

In this passage we also find an illustration of the semantic-pragmatic “heightening” that is so typical of lineal A—B parallelism, i.e., “ ‘A’, and what’s more, ‘B’ ” (Kugel). Then, in Psalm 35 we have a clear example of aperture which is more remote, that is, the parallel segments initiate strophes which occur at some textual distance from one another:

Let not those gloat over me who are my enemies without cause... (19a)

May all those who gloat over my distress be put to shame and confusion... (26a)

An instance of more textually removed displaced apertures is found in Psalm 132:

He swore an oath to the LORD and made a vow to the Mighty One of Jacob. (2)

The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke. (11)

In its structural context, it becomes evident that this is not a case of *inclusio*; instead, the beginnings of two distinct units are thereby defined at the midpoint of the psalm. This example also demonstrates the fact that these compositional signals may overlap or coincide. In other words, the same parallel line may do “double duty” to mark different poetic units. As already indicated, v. 2 in Psalm 132 forges a strophic “enclosure” with v. 5, and it simultaneously functions with v. 11 to delineate corresponding unit “apertures,” while v. 11 in turn forms a “juncture” with v. 10.

The realization of aperture usually involves some type of *synonymous* repetition. But other types of parallelism may also be used to bring out the correspondence of strophe (or stanza) beginnings. In Psalm 73, for example, the pray-er makes use of a dramatic *contrast* in content, intent, and tone to highlight the onset of two distinct macro-units within the text:

Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart! (1)

Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence! (13)

A series of apertures may occur within a given psalm to distinguish successive or separated stanzas, as for example in Psalm 78, where the foundational idea expressed in vv. 10-11 is reiterated in vv. 17, 32, 40, and 56. These unit-initial passages all contribute to the development of the critical theme that is stated at the end of the psalm's introduction in v. 8, and they all contrast markedly with the basic covenantal norm expressed in v. 7. A surprising (even shocking!), contrastive shift in this repeated pattern of ideas appears then at the onset (aperture) of the psalm's final stanza in v. 56.¹⁵

Closure

A disjunctive parallel set of lines may also signal the respective *endings* of larger poetic units, instead of their beginnings. As was noted for aperture, so also in "closure" the strophic/stanzaic segments themselves may be adjacent to each other, or separated within the text. For example, complementing the instance of aperture noted above in Psalm 35 is a corresponding pattern of closure:

I will give you thanks in the great assembly; among throngs of people I will praise you. (18)

My tongue will speak of your righteousness and of your praises all day long. (28)

¹⁵ This sort of *dramatic shift* is a common literary technique in Hebrew poetic composition. A clear pattern of form, topic, attitude, emotion, etc. is first established, then somewhere within the text there is a significant change. At this point, some new—often contrasting—idea is introduced, one that is thereby foregrounded because of its divergence from the preceding sequence of thought. Typically, some prominent structural markers also appear at this crucial juncture, e.g., direct speech, a vocative with the divine name, a graphic figure of speech, and so forth. Recognizing such a consequential disjunction within a progression based on some form(s) of similarity is an important strategy in the analysis of biblical poetry.

This compound feature serves to support the stanzaic boundary posited between vv. 18 and 19, while it also establishes the psalm's final stanza as covering vv. 26-28. We see a similar, but somewhat different pattern of correspondences involving disjunctive parallelism in Psalm 71 (thus illustrating the potential creativity inherent in this manifold poetic technique). The psalm's thematic and structural midpoint leads off with two verses that later function to demarcate the text's final stanza—in this case, exemplifying aperture and closure respectively:

But as for me, I always have hope; I will praise you more and more. (14)

My mouth will tell of your righteousness, of your salvation all day long. (15)

I will praise you with the harp...I will sing praise to you with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel. (22)

My tongue will tell of your righteous acts all day long... (24a)

As is illustrated by Psalm 71, the virtual center of larger poetic units is often prominent—especially salient with respect to semantic content/theme and pragmatic intent/purpose in relation to the larger rhetorical structure of the entire composition. In other words, central points may serve as formal and functional “peaks” of the discourse segments that are frequently distinguished by aperture and/or closure. Such medial verses are also normally marked stylistically by other poetic devices.

A notable instance of closure in Psalm 132 may be observed in the corresponding verses at the end of the two symmetrically arranged halves of the text (see below):

May your [i.e., Zion's] priests be clothed with righteousness; may your saints sing for joy. (9)

I will cloth her [i.e., Zion's] priests with salvation, and her saints will ever sing for joy. (16)

Perhaps the most significant textual evidence that supports the technique of closure is the set of panegyric hymn verses that marks the conclusion of each “book” of the Psalter with an exuberant word of praise to the LORD: 41:13, 72:18-19, 89:52, 107:48, and Psalm 150 as a whole.

Two relatively frequent examples of where enclosure, juncture, aperture, and closure may be combined within a single complex poetic construction are termed “recursion” and “inversion.” *Recursion* is exemplified in the terraced (or “staircase”) structure of Psalm 132 to be considered in more detail below. *Inversion* then refers to an extended concentric (or “chiastic”) formation in which the disjunctively

paralleled constituents exhibit a binary pattern of step-by-step reversal, as seen below, for example, in Psalm 30:

- A. I will exalt you, O LORD, (1a)
- B. for you lifted me out of the depths, and did not let my enemies gloat over me. (1bc)
- C. O LORD my God, I called to you for help and you healed me. (2)
- D. O LORD, you brought me up from the grave; you spared me from going down into the pit. (3)
- E. Sing to the LORD you saints of his; praise his holy name. (4)
- F. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime.
Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. (5)
- G. **When I felt secure, I said, “I will never be shaken!”** (6)
- G’ **O LORD, when you favored me, you made my mountain stand firm!** (7a)
- F’ But when you hid your face, I was dismayed. (7b)
- E’ To you, O LORD, I called; to the Lord I cried for mercy. (8)
- D’ “What gain is there in my destruction, in my going down into the pit?
Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness? (9)
- C’ Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me; O LORD, be my help!” (10)
- B’ You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, (11)
- A’ that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give you thanks forever. (12)

To be sure, some of the proposed parallels above, taken individually as independent couplets involving similarity, contrast, or consequence, might not seem to correspond very closely. On the other hand, quite a few paired panels are more obvious, hence credible, and these serve to establish the overall conceptual framework, especially the outer units: A-B-C-D-E...//...E’-D’-C’-B’-A’. Therefore, considered together within the context of the entire composition, where again the “*pressure of symmetry within an established pattern*” may be assumed to operate, this hypothetical structure is plausible.¹⁶ The turning point in the psalmist’s prayer occurs just after the midpoint (G-G’), when he felt completely secure in his expressed self-assurance. Then suddenly his personal faith-crisis struck (F’) and he was brought back into a dependent relationship with the LORD (E’).

SUPPORTING MARKERS OF POETIC ARCHITECTURE

¹⁶ A lengthy *concentric* structural pattern of this nature will normally coincide or overlap with a *linear* plan of discourse organization. For example, with reference to the semi-narrative development of Ps 30, a thanksgiving psalm, the text features five distinct strophes: A (vv. 1-3) – summary of the event of deliverance; B (4-5) – call to the assembly to praise YHWH; C (6-7) – a flashback, revealing the psalmist’s downfall; D (8-10) – the psalmist reviews his prayer to YHWH for help; E (11-12) – God’s act of deliverance is documented and lauded again.

The four boundary-marking types of disjunctive parallelism overviewed above do not operate alone or in isolation within a poetic text. Rather, these basic elements are generally supported by a “convergence” of other literary devices that help “mark the spot” as it were, for example: a preceding or subsequent discontinuity, or “break,” within the text (e.g., a shift of major topic, setting, genre, etc.), a rhetorical question, vocative (+/- imperative or exclamation), embedded segment of direct speech, prominent intertextual allusion, conjunction of figurative language (Wendland 2004:127), or a “poetically defamiliarised constituent [word] order” (Lunn 2006:110).¹⁷ A selection of these features is seen, for example, at the structural midpoint of Psalm 22, where the aperture at verse 19 (Heb. 20) is foregrounded by disjunctive parallelism (“be not far off”—cf. v. 1), by the reinforced vocatives in cola A and B, by the emphatic word order, and by alliteration.

Furthermore, it should be noted that one structural feature or pattern tends to support another to produce a certain degree of connectivity that relates the various formal, semantic, and functional elements within the complete poetic discourse. Apparent anomalies or exceptions usually turn out, upon closer examination, to fit somewhere within the total architectonic plan of artistic-rhetorical arrangement. The well-formed literary composition is comprised of a hierarchy of integrated, mutually-supporting, larger and smaller units—that is, both *including* as well as *enclosed* segments. These constituents are normally distinguished, as suggested above, by a diverse assortment of linguistic markers and interrelationships on several different levels of textual organization. The investigator must therefore shift periodically between a bottom-up (phoneme/morpheme to colon) and a top-down (text to colon) analysis in order to discern how

¹⁷ For me, One of the highlights of Lunn’s informative study of word-order variation is the explicit set of rules for differentiating between pragmatically and poetically “marked” cola in the strictly “parallel” lines of Hebrew verse. “[W]e can conclude as a general rule in Biblical Hebrew poetry that the ordering of clause constituents in B-lines of parallel cola is not something governed by linguistic rules relating to pragmatic functions [i.e., ‘topic’ and ‘focus’].... This variability of word order in parallel lines is to be classed as one particular manifestation of the... ‘defamiliarisation of language’ characteristic of Biblical Hebrew poetry” (2006:105, 110). Possible reasons for such linguistic “variability” can occasionally be posited on the basis of the literary (artistic-rhetorical) characteristics of the text being investigated, e.g., chiasmus (cf. Lunn 2006:ch. 5).

all these features have been artfully welded together, working harmoniously to communicate what is presumed to be the text's intended message.¹⁸

Markers of Unit Aperture

A psalm's structure as a whole will determine how the analyst demarcates the text into larger and smaller poetic units. But where does one begin? Perhaps the first thing to look for in a given psalm is its obvious internal beginnings. By "obvious" is meant those points of aperture that are clearly marked in the text. The most noticeable signal would be any prominent change, or modification, of form or content. Such an alteration, or better a combination of such markers, then serves to indicate the start of a new segment of the prayer or praise discourse involving the psalmist and his God. The following is a list of features that commonly "shift," thus often signaling a new unit. They are the onset markers of an aperture on the compositional border between two poetic units, whether these happen to be on the same or different levels of the poetic structure as a whole:

- *Topic*: a change in the subject being spoken about
- *Speaker*: a shift in the speaker of the words of the text
- *Addressee(s)*: a shift in the person or group being spoken to
- *Discourse genre*: a modification in primary communicative function, e.g., petition, praise, thank, teach
- *Situation*: an alteration in the psalmist's circumstances, beneficial or adverse
- *Speech mode*: a change from direct to indirect speech, or vice-versa, accompanied by pronominal shifts
- *Word order*: to indicate a new topic or constituent focus, perhaps a topically-relevant chiasmus
- *Tone*: a change in speaker attitude and/or emotion

¹⁸ As a rule, I would posit an implied "author" of the text, whether known or unknown, but that is rather difficult in the case of the Psalms. Poetic analysis today then necessitates a gradual process involving progressive hypothesis formation, testing, and revision as ever more of the textual data is explored and interpreted. Variants of a "literary-structural" method for carrying out such literary text analysis are suggested in Wendland 2004:229-245 and 2011:126-149.

- *Mood*: a change from assertion to question or command/request, or vice-versa
- *Setting time*: a change in temporal orientation—past, present, or future¹⁹

The first five markers that may accompany an assumed instance of disjunctive parallelism tend to be more important in the exercise of structural analysis. Moreover, the greater the number of shifts that “converge,” or appear together, at or on either side of a particular verse, the more certain one can be that a compositional break in the text actually occurs there. This combination of markers and the degree of overall thematic consistency that is revealed by postulating a new poetic unit are criteria that should be used in conjunction with one another.

Five other literary features commonly appear at a point of aperture in the psalms, though they may occur elsewhere as well, and therefore may be used only as supporting evidence. The first three items typically occur together, as illustrated by Psalm 33:1, and so do the last two, as exemplified in Psalm 63:3.

- *Imperative*, e.g., “Sing joyfully to the LORD” (33:1)
- *Vocative*, e.g., “you righteous” (33:1)
- *Divine name*, e.g., YHWH (33:1)
- *Rhetorical question*, e.g., “How long will you assault a person?” (62:3)²⁰
- *Asyndeton*, the absence of an initial conjunction, like *waw* (62:3)

These five devices tend to coincide with the ten other markers noted above, in particular instances of recursive parallelism and the major shifts in form, content, and/or intent, to underscore an occurrence of aperture in poetic discourse.

¹⁹ This feature requires a certain amount of contextually-based interpretation because it depends on one’s understanding of the Hebrew *verb* in its various permutations. In poetry such temporal reckoning is not always easy to discern because it depends on the situational setting, the semantic context, the psalm’s genre, and the related colon. For this reason translations sometimes differ in the tense or mood that they apply to a given verb (cf. the textual notes in the *New English Translation*, NET). The marker of time-shift is therefore only secondary criterion.

²⁰ A subtype of the rhetorical question, which is used to highlight the topic of a new poetic section, or even a complete psalm, e.g. “Why do you boast of evil...?” (52:1).

Markers of Unit Closure

Just as an aperture is signaled by specific stylistic devices, so also the “closure,” or ending, of a particular unit of poetic discourse may be marked by such features. Recognizing them is more difficult, however, because the formal and semantic cues are not as stable or consistent. In fact, they are ambiguous because the same devices may appear in both an aperture as well as a closure. They may also occur at a point of particular thematic or emotive emphasis in the text, i.e., “peak” or “climax”—quite often also at or near the center of a strophe or stanza. For this reason it is even more important not to rely on a single feature on its own as the indicator of a unit ending. These markers must always be considered in connection with one another as well as with the overall pattern of discourse arrangement, based on key instances of conjunctive and disjunctive repetition. Once again, the greater the “convergence” of indicators and the more cohesion that the posited units demonstrate in relation to one another and the text as a whole, the more credible and supportable one’s analysis becomes.

The points of aperture and closure are used together to reinforce one’s postulation of a discourse boundary. It is reasonable to assume then that if there is a new beginning marked as an *aperture* somewhere within a text, it must be preceded by an ending—one that will be distinguished by some markers of *closure*. Upon investigation, we will frequently observe that concluding cola tend to be emphatically stated utterances in one way or another. This is because, in addition to concluding a unit, they often serve to reinforce its main idea. To create such emphasis, one or routinely more of the following linguistic and literary features may be employed:

- a) **Direct speech**, e.g., “Do not let them think, ‘Aha, just what we wanted!’” (Ps 35:25)
- b) **Vivid imagery**, e.g., “They will vanish—vanish like smoke.” (Ps 37:20)
- c) **Condensation**, i.e., a short, strongly worded utterance—sometimes a monocolon, e.g., “Nothing can shake me at all!” [lit., not=I-will-be-shaken greatly]. (Ps 62:2)
- d) **Asyndeton**, i.e., the absence of an initial and/or medial conjunction, e.g., “Therefore, everything shouts and sings for joy!” [lit., they-shout indeed=they-sing]. (Ps 65:13)

- e) **Intensification**, which may involve an imperative verb or an exclamation, irony or hyperbole as well, e.g., “Indeed, each man is but a breath – Selah!” (Ps 39:11)
- f) **Word order variation**, for topic or constituent focus, e.g., “Your deed bring shouts of joy from one end of the earth to the other” [lit., outgoings-of-the=morning and evening you-cause-songs-of-joy – the front-shifted nominal adjuncts foreground the universal extent of YHWH’s rule]. (Ps 65:8)
- g) **Repetition**, e.g., “Everyone has turned away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one!” (Ps 53:3)
- h) **Verbless clause**, e.g., “You, O God, are my fortress; you are the God who loves me” [lit., for=God my-fortress God-of my-steadfast-love]. (Ps 59:17)
- i) **Strong contrast**, e.g., “For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land.” (Ps 37:9)
- j) **Vocative**, e.g., “Strike them with terror, O LORD!” (Ps 9:20)

We frequently find in poetry a convergence of features (d), (e), and (j) above. Similarly, in Psalm 62:8 several markers of closure appear, i.e., (c), (d), and (h): “Surely God is our refuge!” [lit., God a-refuge=for-us – Selah!]. In this psalm, there is also conceptual recurrence that connects v. 8 with v. 2. Since both “aperture” and “closure” might coincide with an instance of “enclosure,” it is necessary to investigate the entire *structural design* of a poetic text—with respect to all of its included units and their relationships—before coming to a final conclusion concerning its internal boundaries and the precise manner in which disjunctive parallelism is contributing to this delimitation and coherence.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONNECTIVITY

It is also important to mention that the outer boundaries of a poetic text, or portions of one, as indicated by markers of aperture and closure can also be defined by various types of *connection* that link together the *inner* parts of a segment, whether a strophe or some larger unit. Such linguistic connectivity may be both semantic (*coherence*) and/or structural (*cohesion*) in nature; that is, there will usually be ties of content and ties of form throughout the same unit. The *formal*, cohesive features include similarities of sound (rhythm,

rhyme, alliteration); analogous, closely associated, or antithetical lexical items; corresponding syntactic constructions; elements of interconnected parallelism (intertwined bicola); and perhaps even larger patterns of internal poetic organization, either linear (e.g., a terraced progression) or concentric (e.g., an extended chiasmus).

Content then refers to the semantic quality of a text whereby it coheres, or “hangs together,” conceptually and makes good sense as it is read or listened to. The reader/listener progressively develops a unified cognitive representation (mental scenario) of the topical content of a particular psalm as he or she interprets it on the basis of the different linguistic and literary forms which the psalmist has used to compose that text. Whether people today can access the Scripture in the original language or only via some translation, these contemporary text-based conceptualizations must always be coupled with a sufficient amount of situational, background information pertaining to the historical, environmental, and sociocultural setting of the passage or portion under consideration. This is normally accomplished by means of various paratextual features, such as descriptive-expository notes, sectional introductions, cross-references, a glossary or topical index, illustrations, and so forth.

In conclusion, we might compare one’s exploration of the literary-structural organization of a given psalm to the task of assembling a giant jigsaw puzzle. In this case, instead of variously shaped pieces of pictured cardboard, one must endeavor to fit together larger and smaller verbal segments of text to form the complete whole. S/he carefully studies all of the possible borders, both large and small (but to begin with, especially the larger ones), in order to see how they relate to one another. The most obvious connections are naturally dealt with first. As more and more of the pieces are joined together and a larger pattern begins to emerge, the easier it becomes to fit the rest into the total verbal picture. Finally, the structural analysis of a text will reach a point where one will be able to make a reasonable guess as to how to incorporate the most problematic or ambiguous passages into the developing organization. For a more detailed (yet only partial) example of this process, we will consider Psalm 132 in the following sections.

DISJUNCTIVE PARALLELISM EXEMPLIFIED

Psalm 132 incorporates an interesting combination of genres as constituents of its complex structure.²¹ The essential macro-framework, which encompasses the text's two major portions, is that of a "prayer" (vv. 1 and 10). The first half of the psalm is then comprised of a "historical reflection" (vv. 2-5) concerning God's "dwelling[s]" (מִשְׁכָּנֹת—v. 5), coupled with a liturgical "call to worship" (vv. 6-9) at that same "dwelling" (מִשְׁכָּן—v. 7). The psalm's second half features a set of divine "promises" regarding (a) King David's descendants (vv. 11b-12), (b) the LORD's "dwelling place" (מְנוּחָה/מוֹשָׁב) of Zion (vv. 13-16), and (c) a future Davidic "anointed one" (מְשִׁיחַ) (vv. 16-17).²² Linking the two halves is a related pair of "oath" introducers—first from David to YHWH (v. 2), and then from YHWH to David (v. 11a).

Below you will find a display of the paired instances of *disjunctive parallelism* in Psalm 132, which is based on a prior analysis of the Hebrew text, as represented in translation by the form-oriented *English Standard Version*. As indicated, the parallel segments have been composed in this case to form a reversed "recursion" of corresponding balanced panels. This dual macro-structural pattern is indicated by similar degrees of indentation in the diagram, while key matching elements within the corresponding lettered panels are highlighted by different fonts or grayscale. Suggested abstract "descriptors" in the form of generic *speech acts*, which interrelate the parallel compositional units, are indicated in CAPS along the right side of the diagram.

²¹ Psalm 132 is the longest of the "Song of the Ascents" (שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלֹת).

²² Due to its twofold focus upon King *David* and the LORD's dwelling place in *Zion*, Psalm 132 is often sub-classified as a "royal psalm," a "song of Zion," or both. "Zion and the anointed king are topics of central importance in the psalmic theology of the reign of God" (Mays 1994:410).

- A. **Remember**, O LORD, in **David's** favor, (1)
all the hardships he endured, **PETITION**
- B. how he swore to the LORD (2)
and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob, **OATH** (quote margin)
- C. "I will not enter my house (3-5)
or get into my bed,
I will not give sleep to my eyes
or slumber to my eyelids,
until I find a place for the LORD,
a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob." **OATH** (David)
- D. Behold, we heard of it in **Ephrathah**; (6-7)
we found it in the fields of **Jaar**. **LOCATIVE**
*"Let us go to his dwelling place;
let us worship at his footstool!"*
- E. Arise, O LORD, and go to your resting place, (8)
you and the ark of your might. **INVITATION** to God
- F. *Let your priests be clothed with righteousness, (9)
and let your saints shout for joy.* **PRAYER** for the priests
-
- A' For the sake of your servant **David**, (10)
do not turn away the face of **your anointed one**. **PETITION**
- B' The LORD swore to David a sure oath (11ab)
from which he will **not turn back**: **OATH** (quote margin)
- C' "One of the sons of your body (11cd-12)
I will set on your throne.
If your sons keep my covenant
and my testimonies that I shall teach them,
their sons also forever shall sit on your throne." **OATH** (YHWH)
- D' For the LORD has chosen **Zion**; (13)
he has desired it for his dwelling place: **LOCATIVE**
- E' "This is my resting place forever; (14)
here I will dwell, for I have desired it. **RESPONSE** by God
- F' I will abundantly bless her provisions; (15-16)
I will satisfy her poor with bread.
*Her priests I will clothe with salvation,
and her saints will shout for joy.* **RESPONSE** to priests
- A'' There I will make a horn to sprout for **David**; (17-18)
I have prepared a lamp for **my anointed**. **PROMISE**
His enemies I will clothe with shame,
but on him his crown will shine." (divine RESPONSE to both PETITIONS)

The preceding structural diagram reveals that segment A' (v. 10) is not merely an *inclusio* that ends the first half of Psalm 132. From a broader thematic and structural perspective, as indicated by the progression of disjunctive parallel elements, A' functions also as a thematic *hinge* that subtly joins the psalm's two halves together and points ahead to its climax in A'' (vv. 17-18). Thus, the psalm appropriately concludes with the messianic prophecy that YHWH's "anointed one" from David's descent (v. 10) will possess a divine "horn" of power, which will enable him to defeat all his enemies and put them to "shame", hence causing his kingly rule to "shine" [*universally and forever—implied*].

In this instance, the device of disjunctive parallelism functions to organize the poet's thematic argument in such a way that the second half of the psalm not only mirrors the first half, but also manifests the basic principle of Hebrew A—B parallelism. Therefore, we have thematic "heightening," whereby the second section further develops, intensifies, specifies, completes, etc. the first, on the *macrostructural* level of the discourse. The interlocking petitions regarding David (A, A') are dramatically answered in the psalm's second half, as the LORD himself swears in a solemn oath to establish his royal line forever, ultimately in the person of a future Messianic ruler (A'').

LINEAR TEXT DISPLAY AND NOTES ON PSALM 132

Before exploring further the disjunctive parallels noted above, it may be instructive to overview the linear organization of Psalm 132, which coincides at key points with the sequentially unfolding, and then recycled arrangement of paired panels. Again, we can detect a rather intricately constructed symmetrical pattern that falls into two thematic halves, based on a *prayer-and-response* cycle. As Mays notes (1994:409) "A coordination between Zion as the LORD's habitation and David as the LORD's anointed is the basis of the structure and purpose of the song". This linkage is displayed in the chart below, which presents the Hebrew text²³ along with the *English Standard Version* for reference:²⁴

²³ *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: with Westminster Hebrew Morphology*. (2001). (Logos electronic edition). Stuttgart; Glenside PA: German Bible Society; Westminster Seminary.

²⁴ "The thirteenth of the Songs of Ascents (Psalms 120-134) stands out in the collection, because it is noticeably longer than the others. ... Psalm 132 impressively articulates the theological rationale for making a pilgrimage—

V	Designation	Description
1	PRAYER	Thematic Keynote for Psalm 132: <i>“Remember David!”</i>
	Remember, O LORD, in David's favor (‘for David’s sake’—NET), all the hardships he endured, ²⁵	זְכוֹר־יְהוָה לְדָוִד אֵת כָּל־עֲנֹתָיו:
2	Quote Margin	<i>David’s Oath to the LORD—Finding Him a [Holy] Place</i>
	how he swore to the LORD and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob,	אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לַיהוָה נְדָר לְאַבְרָם יַעֲקֹב:
3-5	Oath Formula	The quote margin, which in the MT continues from v. 1 [<i>Base—Content</i>], consists of one “line” (a bicolon). The oath itself comprises three lines that build to a climax of intention in the third bicolon (v. 5). Each of the three pledge lines exhibits close synonymous parallelism internally (<i>Base—Restatement</i>), but as a whole develop a cumulative <i>Condition (3-4)—Consequence (5)</i> relationship. ²⁶
	Quote “I will not enter my house or get into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids; until I find a place for the LORD, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.”	אִם־אֲבֵא בְּאֵהָל בֵּיתִי אִם־אֶעֱלֶה עַל־עַרְשׂ יְצוּעֵי: ²⁷ אִם־אֲתֵן שְׁנַת לַעֲיִנִי לַעֲפַפְּי תְּנוּמָה: עַד־אֲמָצֵא מְקוֹם לַיהוָה מְשֻׁכָּנֹת לְאַבְרָם יַעֲקֹב:
6	Quote Margin	<i>“Songs of Ascents”—Travelling to God’s Dwelling Place</i>
	Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah; we found it in the fields of Jaar. ²⁸	הִנֵּה־שָׁמַעְנוּהָ בְּאֶפְרַתָּה מְצֵאנוּהָ בְּשַׁדֵּי־יַעַר:
	A Pilgrim’s Poetic Pastiche	There appears to be a rising progression in the three lines that make up this set of song samples, which builds from exhortations by the pilgrims on their way to the Temple in Jerusalem (v. 7— <i>cohortatives</i>), to an appeal for the LORD’s presence when they arrive (v. 8— <i>imperative</i>), and ending with the priests and the people engaged in communal worship in the Temple’s precincts (v. 9— <i>jussives</i>). The bicola all illustrate a relationship of <i>Base—Addition</i> .

namely, Zion is God’s chosen place (vv. 13-14...), as well as the site of the Davidic throne... As Allen [1983] suggests, the placement of Psalm 132 encourages the reader (sic) to hear it as an articulation of the hope called for in Pss 130:7; 131:3. Thus the references to David are to be heard messianically; they are a way of symbolizing concretely the hope for the future of God’s people” (McCaan 1996:1210-1211).

²⁵ A probable reference to David’s words about his efforts on behalf of “the house of the LORD” (1 Chr 22:14).

²⁶ The binary designators of the semantic structure representing a bicolon are summarized in Wendland 2002:98-99.

²⁷ Selected lexical items of importance or corresponding sound patterns are highlighted in greyscale.

²⁸ The antecedent of the feminine pronoun “it” is probably the “ark,” mentioned later in v. 8, and only here in the Psalter (cf. Allen 1983:202-203; Bratcher & Reyburn 1090-1091; Alter 2007:460). For a succinct discussion of the place names of this verse, see Wilcock 2001:241.

7-9	<p>“Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool!”</p> <p>Arise, O LORD, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might.</p> <p>Let your priests be clothed with righteousness, and let your saints shout for joy.”</p>	<p>גְּבוּאָה לְמִשְׁכְּנֹתַי וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְהֵדִם רַגְלָיו׃</p> <p>קוּמָה יְהוָה לְמִנוּחֹתֶיךָ אֲתָה וְאַרְזֹן עִזֶיךָ׃</p> <p>כְּהִנֵּיךָ יִלְבְּשׁוּ צֶדֶק וְחֹסֵי־דִיךָ יִרְנְנוּ׃</p>
10	PRAYER	The prayer initiated in v. 1 is seemingly continued here in v. 10 at the beginning of the psalm’s second half. This parallels the first half with regard to basic structure, except for the fact that it is heightened in terms of content (the LORD speaks) and form, with the addition of a special prophetic coda that acts as the psalm’s climax in vv. 17-18 (a Messianic promise, foreshadowed in “Anointed One” at the end of v. 10).
	For the sake of your servant David, do not turn away the face of your anointed one.	בְּעֵבֹר דָּוִד עֲבַדְּךָ אֶל־תֵּשֶׁב פָּנַי מִשִּׁיחֶךָ׃
11a	Quote Margin	<i>Yahweh’s Oath to David—Royal Dynasty by Covenant</i>
	The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back:	נִשְׁבַּע־יְהוָה לְדָוִד אֱמֹתָ לֹא־יִשׁוּב
11b-12	Oath—Divine Promise	Paralleling the structure of the initial oath of vv. 2-5, a quote margin (11a) is followed by a divine quotation of three poetic lines (bicola, vv. 11b-12), each of which refers to David’s descendants and their divinely given rule (11b, 12b)—IF they “keep” Yahweh’s “covenant” (12a). In this stanza, a central <i>Condition</i> (12a) is flanked by a minor (11b) and as well as a major <i>Consequence</i> (12b)
	“One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne. If your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies that I shall teach them, their sons also forever shall sit on your throne.”	<p>לְמִמְנָה מִפְּרֵי בִטְנֶיךָ אֲשִׁית לְכִסֵּא־לְךָ׃</p> <p>אִם־יִשְׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־ךָ בְּרִיתִי וְעֵדוֹתַי זֹ אֶלְמַדְם</p> <p>גַּם־בְּנֵיהֶם עַד־יַעַד יֵשְׁבוּ לְכִסֵּא־לְךָ׃</p>
13	Quote Margin	<i>Yahweh’s Oath (cont.)—Blessings for Israel from Zion</i>
	For [<i>Indeed!</i>] the LORD has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his dwelling place:	כִּי־בָחַר יְהוָה בְּצִיּוֹן אֹזֶה לְמוֹשָׁב לּוֹ׃
14-16	Oath—Divine Promise	This stanza continues the psalm’s basic structural pattern consisting of an initial quote margin (13, <i>General—Specific</i> assertion) followed by a quotation of three poetic lines. The LORD continues his promise to David, now focusing on the physical and spiritual blessings that he will provide from his “resting place” for the priesthood and people alike. Thus, the essential <i>Reason</i> (14), stemming from Yahweh’s essence, is followed by four distinct <i>Results</i> for his faithful people (15-16).
	“This is my resting place forever; <i>here</i> I will dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provisions; I will satisfy her poor with bread.	<p>זֹאת־מִנוּחֹתַי עַד־יַעַד פֹּה־אֵשֶׁב כִּי אוֹתִיָּה׃</p> <p>צִדָּה בָרֶךְ אֲבִירָךְ אֲבִיוֹנִיהָ אֲשַׁבֵּעַ לֶחֶם׃</p> <p>וְכֹהֲנֶיהָ אֲלַבִּישׁ יֶשַׁע וְחֹסֵי־דֶיהָ רֶגֶן יִרְנְנוּ׃</p>

	Her priests I will clothe with salvation, and her saints will shout for joy.”	
17-18	Oath—Divine Promise	<i>Yahweh’s Oath (cont.)—Blessings for the Anointed One</i>
	Coda—Climax	This short stanza manifests continuity and discontinuity. It continues Yahweh’s fundamental promise, begun in v. 14. It offers the ultimate divine <i>Response</i> to the two prior <i>Prayers</i> of God’s people (vv. 1, 10). However, the unit is structurally distinct, consisting of only two lines (instead of the usual four), and it highlights by way of an unexpected, interposed colon of <i>Contrast</i> (18a), some future “Anointed” (Messianic) king from among “David’s” descendants, someone who will defeat all “enemies” “there” (17a)—that is, ruling from his “dwelling place” in “Zion” (13a).
	“ <i>There</i> ²⁹ I will make a horn to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame, but on him his crown will shine.”	שֵׁם אֲצַמִּיחַ קֶרֶן לְדָוִד עֲרֹכְתִי נֵר לְמְשִׁיחִי: אֲזִיבֵו אֶלְבִּישׁ בְּשֵׁת וְעַלְיוּ יֵצִיץ נֹזֶרֹו:

After the preceding linear perspective,³⁰ it may be helpful to supplement the earlier description of the *disjunctive parallel* arrangement of Psalm 132 with a summary of the various stylistic-poetic features that provide further evidence supporting the linkage of each of the proposed paired panels:

A/A’/A”	The thematic-precatory backbone of the psalm, consisting of the two interconnected prayers (1, 10), mention “David” and “anointed one” (מְשִׁיחַ), thereby pointing ahead to the climax of the LORD’s response in verses 17. A plea for Yahweh to “Remember” (זְכוֹר־יְהוָה) in v. 1 is paralleled by its negative restatement in v. 10: “Do not turn from” (אַל־תִּשָּׁב).
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²⁹ Note the potential thematic distinction between “here” (פֶּה) in v. 14 (present “Zion”) and “there” (שָׁם) in v. 17 (future “Zion”), both in structurally significant stanza/strophe-initial position.

³⁰ With respect to its internal structure, I would analyze Psalm 132 as comprised of three “stanzas”—two conjunctive ones, each consisting of two “strophes” A: 2-5 + 6-9; B: 11-12 + 13-16, and a disjunctive (non-contiguous) stanza, comprised of the three interconnected prayer segments: 1, 10, and 17-18. This structure is extraordinary, which complements its unusual length (for a “song of the ascent”) and content (its unique reference to the “powerful Ark [of the Covenant]” (v.8).

B/B'	David “swears an oath to YHWH” in v. 2 (וְשָׁבַע לַיהוָה), while “YHWH swears an oath to David” (וְשָׁבַע יְהוָה לְדָוִד) in v. 11a.
C/C'	David promises (direct speech) to find “a dwelling place ³¹ for YHWH” (מְשֻׁכָּנֹת לַיהוָה) in vv. 3-5; Yahweh promises in direct speech to establish an eternal dynasty for David, “on your throne” (לְכִסֵּאֲלֶךָ) in vv. 11b-12.
D/D'	Two quote margins in which reference is made to “Zion”—first figuratively by locative metonymy (v. 6), and then explicitly by name (v. 13). The quote includes two synonymous references to Yahweh’s “dwelling place”: לְמִנוּחָתְךָ in v. 7, and לְמוֹשָׁב לִי in v. 13.
E/E'	An appeal to Yahweh to come reside in “your resting place” (לְמִנוּחָתְךָ) in v. 8 is paralleled by Yahweh’s assertion that he will stay enthroned at “my resting place” (מִנוּחָתִי) forever in v. 14.
F/F'	The people’s prayer, “Let your priests be clothed with righteousness, and let your saints shout for joy” in v. 9 (כְּהֹנֵיף יִלְבְּשׁוּ צֶדֶק וְחַסִּידֶיךָ יִרְגְּנוּ), is matched almost exactly by the LORD’s promise of blessing in v. 16: “Her priests I will clothe with salvation, and her saints will shout for joy” (וְכַהֲנֵיהָ אֶלְבִּישׁ יְשׁע וְחַסִּידֶיהָ רַגְזוּ יִרְגְּנוּ).

DISJUNCTIVE PARALLELISM AND DEMARCATING BIBLES

A literary-structural analysis as carried out above offers, over and above its exegetical insights, a practical benefit that concerns all Bible readers, i.e. to clearly demarcate a psalm’s distinct units of thought, its constituent stanzas/strophes (whether these involve prayer, praise, or some other type of speech act), and to aid translators in their effort to reveal the text’s structure more clearly on the printed page. This could be done through the use of a single column of print³² that is differentiated by means of corresponding parallel unit indentations and interlineal spaces to indicate major sequential divisions within the text (as illustrated

³¹ Use of the plural “dwellings” (מְשֻׁכָּנֹת) probably indicates a special degree (importance) and/or quality (excellence).

³² Rather than by the typical two columns of right-justified print, which results in poetic line breaks at awkward places within words.

earlier). Not all Bibles are created equal in this respect, that is, with regard to their degree of accuracy or clarity. The following is a chart that indicates some of the diversity that exists in a number of popular English versions, re: division breaks in Psalm 132. X indicates a proposed division break in the text, i.e., the beginning of a new poetic unit.

vs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
A						X							X						
B						X		X		X					X			X	
C						X		X					X						
D						X							X						
E						X			X	X			X					X	
F						X					X				X				
G						X													
H						X		X			X		X						
I						X		X			X		X						
J			X			X		X			X		X		X			X	
K											X								
W						X				X			X					X	

A = New Literary Translation

B = Good News Bible

C = Contemporary English Version

D = God's Word

E = Living Bible

F = Revised English Bible

G = TANAKH Translation (JPS)

H = English Standard Version

I = New Revised Standard Version

J = New Jerusalem Bible

K = New American Bible

W = Wendland

So what does this comparative chart reveal? The rather unsettling discovery is the sheer diversity displayed among the different standard versions with regard to where they place their internal stanza/strophe divisions. Yet where the paragraph or strophic spaces are placed in a text of Scripture will surely affect one's pronunciation, whether read silently or publically, in terms of pauses, stress, and intonational patterns, which obviously affect the audience's perception and understanding of the poetic psalm.

However, the chart does at least reveal that the majority of versions agree at two principal divisions within Psalm 132—at verses 6 and 13, where new poetic units are shown to begin. No other place in the psalm is so clearly shown to be a break point, that is, with 50% or more (6/12) of the translations agreeing. Of particular concern, however, is where the psalm's midpoint is believed and hence shown to occur. Many

commentators point out the fact that Psalm 132 is comprised of two principal divisions—one that features the oath of King David to Yahweh, and the second regarding Yahweh’s oath with respect to David’s royal line. “The psalm balances what David had done for the LORD with what the LORD will do for David” (Mays 1994:409). The latter promise of Yahweh is naturally more prominent and sets the tone for the psalm’s second, climactic half. But the crucial question is this: Does verse 10 conclude the first half of the psalm (5 versions) or does it begin the second half (3 versions)?

Most commentaries agree with the majority of English versions with respect to the midpoint of Psalm 132.³³ The following are several representative opinions:

There are two major sections, verses 1-10 and 11-18, each introduced by the recall of an oath and its citation (vv. 2-5 and 11-12). ... The first section opens and closes with petitions to the LORD on behalf of David (vv. 1, 10). (Mays 1994:410)

Thus a caesura occurs in the psalm after v 10, and the composition can be categorized as two strophes, each of ten lines. ... Thus v 10 is linked closely with v 1 as a framework of prayer which surrounds the supporting material of vv 2-9... (Allen 1983:204-205)

In verse 10, the frame of the first part of the psalm returns to a petition that YHWH will remember David’s acts of fidelity. ... The beginning of the second part of the psalm [vv. 11-12], again in narrative form, introduces a quotation. (Brueggeman & Bellinger 2014:557)

³³ Commentators differ, however, with regard to the larger structure of Psalm 132. Moody, for example, posits three thematic units: A. “What David Said to God” (vv. 1-9), B. “What God Said to David” (10-12), and C. “What Will Happen as a result” (13-18) (2013:147, 150, 153); Samuel Terrien (2003:847-849) rather strangely leaves the LORD’s oath out of his outline: “Strophe I: David’s Oath to the Lord (vv. 1b-5)...Strophe II: Zion and the Davidic Dynasty (vv. 6-10)...Strophe III: Will David’s Son’s Observe the Covenant” (vv. 11-13)...*Envoi* [a short stanza concluding a ballade]: A Lamp and a Horn for the Anointed (vv. 14-17 [sic])”.

We may divide Psalm 132 into two major stanzas: vv. 1-10 and vv. 11-18. (deClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, Tanner 2014:933)

It is a prayer psalm that incorporates a response from Yhwh: a prayer to Yhwh relating to David (vv. 1-10) and a promise by Yhwh relating to David (vv. 11-18). (Goldingay 2008:542)

Does it really make any difference then how this psalm is divided? Most biblists would not dispute the fact that verses 1 and 10 closely relate to each other as the beginning and ending of a divided prayer text, uttered perhaps communally by the congregation in worship.³⁴ However, based on the structural (formal) and rhetorical (pragmatic) contours of Psalm 132, it would seem that verse ten is more accurately viewed as the central hinge point that reflects backwards to the beginning, as well as forwards to the ending of the text. In this way, v. 10 functions as a double *inclusio* that parallels v. 1 as a further development of the prayer begun there (a relationship of *Base-Amplification*), and it is also disjunctively paralleled by v. 17 and the explicit reference to both “David” and “Anointed One” in a concluding *Request-Response* relationship. The three verses, 1, 10, and 17, are therefore closely connected thematic points that anchor the start, middle, and close of Psalm 132, while the material in between, on both sides of v. 10, provide this prayer-response’s theological background and prophetic purpose.

After completing this preliminary study, I discovered one popular English translation and commentary that essentially agrees with the preceding analysis. The *NIV Study Bible* distinguishes, by means of its format, verses 1, 10, and 17-18 as separate structural units, and indicates internal stanza breaks

³⁴ The congregation would also appropriately proclaim vv. 6-9, the explicit “we” portion of the psalm, whereas the priest and/or Levitical worship leader(s) would recite the psalm’s oaths and oracles, whether individually or in groups, with various liturgical permutations possible. For some insightful thoughts on this subject of the persons possibly involved in the performance of Psalm 132, see Allen 1983:209-211; Goldingay 2008:559-562. Wilcock suggests the possible liturgical use of Psalm 132 during “Nehemiah’s dedication of the rebuilt walls of Jerusalem” as an answer to “two major questions”: “First, where was the ark of the Lord? And secondly, where was the Lord’s anointed king?” (2001:242).

at verses 6 and 13. In its expository notes, the observation is made (2008:936): “Two verses of petition (vv. 1, 10) are each followed (in Hebrew) by two four-line stanzas, all having an identical form: an introductory line followed by a three line quotation. ... A final couplet brings the prayer to its emphatic conclusion.”³⁵ I found it interesting that one of the commentators cited above seemed to have second thoughts about the structure of Psalm 132. Thus, Allen later comments (1983:206):³⁶

At first sight vv 17-18 are a continuation of vv 14-16, but closer examination indicates that there is a break after v 16 as after v 9. ... The two separated lines of prayer, vv 1, 10, are paralleled by two final, consecutive lines, vv 17-18; the other units each consist of four lines. ... [Verses] 17-18 represent the specific answer to the prayers of vv 1, 10.

Admittedly, the preceding are but different perspectives on a psalm whose macro-structure most commentators largely agree on. But such details do make a difference, not only in terms of discerning and describing the internal strophic organization of the psalmist’s overall “argument” and theological message (the pragmatic tandem of Prayer and Response),³⁷ but also, as suggested above, with regard to sharpening

³⁵ “The ultimate merger of David’s rule with Yahweh’s rule receives climactic expression. Yahweh’s house, his dwelling place, his resting place, is the locale of David’s perpetual kingship. ‘Here’ is the very place where the Lord will establish a ‘horn’ for David, a ‘lamp’ for his anointed one, and a ‘crown’ for his head—the very ‘crown’ that had previously been ‘defiled...in the dust’ (Ps. 132:17-18; cf. Ps. 89:39). Any effort to say that the Davidic covenant had failed because of the exile could hardly have considered this testimony in the last half of the final book of the Psalter in this majestic collection of Songs of Ascents” (Robinson 2015:214).

³⁶ The main features of this structure seem to have been suggested already in an earlier article by Fretheim (1967), which Allen rather dismisses (1983:204, also Goldingay 2008:542). Allen’s uncertainty on the issue of this psalm’s structure was noted also by Wilcock, who proposes “a division of the psalm into verses 1-9, 10-16, and 17-18 (2001:241).

³⁷ Corresponding to the different break points exemplified in the various English translations are disparate interpretations of Psalm 132’s internal structure. Gerstenberger, for example, posits the following form-critical divisions (NRSV): 1-5 [1-2, 3-5], 6-7, 8-10, 11-12 [11ab, 11c-12], 13-18 [13, 14-18] (2001, 363).

the public performance of Psalm 132, this impressive “liturgy of memory and hope”³⁸—whether individually or as a group, whether by means of reciting, chanting, singing, or some other manner of oral expression. As in the case of the ancient audiences and performers of this psalm, so also today “we continue to live...between the promise of Yahweh’s kingdom and its realization” (Bellinger 1990:120).

CONCLUSION

The specific purpose of the present study has been to describe the poetic technique of disjunctive parallelism and to illustrate its strategic importance for biblical interpretation by means of a partial literary-structural analysis of Psalm 132. *Disjunctive parallelism* is manifested in Hebrew poetry, the Psalter in particular, in the form of four principal variants, *Enclosure*, *Juncture*, *Aperture*, and *Closure*. These variants may be multiplied within the same text, or just a portion of one, to form the larger linear and concentric patterns of *Recursion* and *Inversion* respectively. The boundaries of poetic units (strophe/stanza) suggested by the manifold occurrence of disjunctive parallelism tend to be reinforced and confirmed by other poetic devices that serve to mark opening and/or closing segments, e.g., vocatives, occurrence of the divine name, imperatives, rhetorical questions, and so forth. The recognition of disjunctive parallelism in poetry will assist Bible exegetes, expositors, preachers, teachers, and translators alike to carry out their particular analytical and communicative tasks more effectively, with greater understanding, insight, accuracy, and confidence.

³⁸ Brueggemann & Bellinger 2014:556. This “memory” factor significantly includes a number of pertinent passages from the Hebrew Bible that are alluded to in the oaths and oracles that constitute the text of Psalm 132—thereby exhibiting the vital quality of intertextuality that underlies so much of the Psalter. Due to limitations of space, my study has not been able to explore this important feature adequately, especially with respect to the interesting text variations that may be observed—also in terms of the different wordings that occur in the corresponding accounts found in Samuel and Chronicles. The primary texts are as follows: 1 Chr 22:14, Gen 49:24, 1 Sam 6, 2 Sam 7:1-2 (vv. **1-5**); 1 Sam 17:12, 2 Sam 5-7, 1 Chr. 13, 2 Chr 6:41-42 (vv. **6-10**); 2 Sam 6-7, 1 Chr 13-17, Ps 89:3-4 (vv. **11-12**); 2 Sam 6-7, Isa 61:9-11 (vv. **13-16**); 2 Kgs 8:19, 2 Chr 21:7, Isa 11:1 (vv. **17-18**). There are many other possible instances of such resonant intertextuality, but these may be traced more fully in the commentaries listed above, especially Allen (1983) and Goldingay (2008); see also Harman 2011:932-938.

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Revised version – October 2018

