

Understanding Poetry

Figures of Speech

Simile (resemblance)

A comparison between two things that have something in common using “like” or “as,” but are still seen as distinct from each other.

“He will be like a tree planted by streams of water” (Ps. 1:3)

Figures of Speech

Metaphor (representation)

A term or phrase used to represent something else for the sake of comparison.

The key is the verb “to be” (is, and are).

“Yahweh is my Shepherd.” (Ps. 23:1)

Figures of Speech

Symbolism

When a person, place, or thing is used to represent a moral or spiritual truth.

“And Yahweh said, ‘Remove the filthy garments from him. Behold, I have taken away your iniquity.’” (Zech. 3:2-5)

Figures of Speech

Hyperbole (rhetorical exaggeration)

An exaggeration to say more than what is literally meant.

“Everyone of them could sling stones at a hair and not miss.” (Judg. 20:16)

Figures of Speech

Personification

Gives human characteristics or actions to inanimate objects.

“The land mourns and the olive-oil laments.”
(Joel 1:10)

Figures of Speech

Zoomorphism

It pictures God or man in the form of animals, in terms of appearance or actions of the animal.

“Hide me, Yahweh, under the shadow of your wings.” (Ps. 17:8)

Types of Colons

• **Colon:** a complete idea or thought.

• **Bicolon:** a complete idea that is expressed on two parallel lines.

• **Tricolon:** a complete idea that is expressed on three parallel lines.

Types of Colons

Bicolon

- Blessed is the one
who does not follow the advice of the wicked,
- or stand in the pathway with sinners,
or sit in the assembly of scoffers!
- But his delight is in the LORD,
and on His law he meditates day and night.

Tricolon

- Not so with the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.

Types of Parallelisms

Synonymous Parallelism: The idea from the first colon is repeated with different words in the second colon.

“Wisdom / shouts / in the street,
she / lifts her voice / in the square.” (Prov. 1:20)

“An evildoer / listens to / wicked lips,
a liar / pays attention to / a destructive tongue.”
(Prov. 17:4)

Types of Parallelisms

Antithetical Parallelism: An idea is stated in the first colon and then an opposite of that idea is stated in the second.

“The wicked / borrow and do not repay,
But the righteous / give generously.” (Ps. 31:27)

“In the morning / it glistens / and sprouts up;
At evening time / it withers / and dries up.”
(Ps. 90:6)

Types of Parallelisms

Chiasmic Parallelism: This kind of parallelism switches the terms between the two parallel lines. It can be synonymous or antithetical.

“On lion and snake you will tread,
you will crush lion-cub and serpent.” (Ps. 91:13)

“He shall open and no one will shut,
he will shut and no one will open.” (Isa. 22:22)

Types of Parallelisms

Synthetic Parallelism: An idea is stated in the first colon and the second colon explains it or adds more detail.

“The eyes of the Lord are in every place, watching the evil and the good.” (Prov. 15:3)

“Not so with the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away!” (Ps. 1:4)

Types of Psalms

Lament: The psalmist cries out to Yahweh for deliverance and calls others to do likewise. Present complaint for future deliverance.

- Cry to God for help
 - Formal complaint
 - Confession of trust
 - Formal Request
 - Concluding praise
- Examples: 55, 57

Types of Psalms

Thanksgiving: The psalmist praises Yahweh for delivering him or the community from a trial. Past problem and deliverance.

- Praise God
 - Report of deliverance
 - Formal thanks
 - Call to others to Praise
- Examples: 18, 32

Types of Psalms

Hymn (Praise): The psalmist glorifies Yahweh by proclaiming who He is and what He has done.

- Call to praise
 - Reason for praise
 - Renewed cause for praise
- Examples: 95, 96

Types of Psalms

Royal: The Psalm focuses on Yahweh’s promises in the Davidic covenant to bless and protect the Davidic dynasty. Focuses on three things:

- The Davidic Covenant
 - The Davidic Dynasty
 - The Ultimate Davidic King, the Messiah
- Example: 110