

## Lesson 5

### **Psalms**

1. Praise Psalms – (*Psalms 105*)
2. Lament Psalms (*Complaint*) – prayers to God in times of trouble.
  - a. Communal lament – this is a group expressing sadness to God. (*Psalms 74*)
  - b. Individual lament – (*Psalms 22*) Some are called “*Imprecatory*” but it will include a curse on enemies.
3. Thanksgiving Psalms – (*Psalms 23; 107*)
4. Royal Psalms – refer to Israel’s king (*Psalms 45; 2*)
5. Wisdom Psalms – (*Psalms 1; 8*)

### **Principles to interpretation of Psalms**

1. When interpreting, be open to the *Symbolic*, the *Metaphorical*.
  2. When interpreting, realize that there are larger units of material, always interpret in *Context*. Pay close attention to “*Superscriptions*” – the headings.
  3. Pay attention to the *Form* of the Psalm.
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### **Prophecy**

A *Prophet* is a spokes person for God.

How do we interpret Prophecy?

### **Classification of Prophets**

- I. Pre-classical
  - a. *Moses*
  - b. *Deborah*
  - c. *Samuel*
  - d. *Nathan*
  - e. *Elijah*
  - f. *Elishah*
- II. Classical – took place between the 8<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.
  - a. Prophets like Amos and Hosea – focused on *Northern Kingdom*
  - b. Micah, and Isaiah – focused on the *Southern Kingdom*
- III. Apocalyptic – *Mid to late 5<sup>th</sup> Century* (full of symbols and imagery)
  - a. *Zechariah*
  - b. *Sections of Ezekiel*
  - c. *Sections of Daniel*

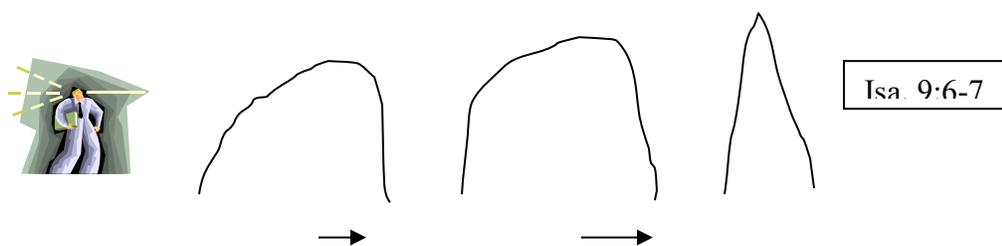
## Message of the Prophets

### Forms of prophetic speech

1. *Indictment* Oracle – describes things that people were doing that offended or angered God.
2. *Judgment* Oracles – What God will do to punish the people. The judgment that will come.
3. *Instruction* Oracle – Telling the people what they need to do that is right.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Oracles – How God will restore the people after the judgment.

## General Principles for Interpretation

1. Understand the nature of prophecy- the essence of prophecy is the *Communication* of God's word through human speakers and writers.
  - a. Prophecy can be *For-telling* or *Predictive*, however, prophecy can also be *Forth-telling* (a message to the people of that day).
  - b. General Characteristics of OT prophecy
    - i. Has a *Telescope* view of the future – *They saw future events as a succession of different mountain peaks*



1. Always had *History* in mind – 2 major periods (present age and age to come.)
2. *Compare* to New Testament – is there a parallel theme?

### *OT Prophecy*

2 periods

1. present age
2. age to come

### *NT Prophecy*

1. OT era
2. Christ and Apostles
3. Church
4. Jesus' Return
5. New Heaven and New Earth.

- ii. A prophecy may have *two* fulfillments – some will have *Multiple* fulfillments. (2 Sam. 7:12-16)
- iii. All OT prophecy finds fulfillment in either Christ's *First Coming* or *Second Coming*.
- iv. Some prophecies are – it may come true or it may not.

#### B. Find the Fulfillment

1. *Literally* fulfilled
2. *Figuratively* fulfilled
3. *Mixture*
4. *Unexpected* fulfillment – Isa. 52-53
5. Some remain unfulfilled – Isa. 2:4

#### Specific Principles for Interpretation

1. The *Clearer* the text the *Greater* the confidence
2. Let the \_\_\_\_\_ interpret the prophecy whenever possible.
3. Try to understand the passages *Main Points* rather than all of its symbolism.
4. Context – always seek to interpret scripture in its *Context*.
5. Let the prophets speak *Today* – they are fearless and courageous preachers and their words still have a bite today.

#### Wisdom Literature

**Goal** – that a person finds *Success* in life – or how to live life well.

#### Types of Wisdom Literature

1. **Proverb** – a short saying imparting a life truth (Proverbs speak of life over the “long haul”).
2. The *Reflection* – (Ecclesiastes) – look for the moral
3. *Disputation* – (Job) which is a series of dialogue or debate.

## **The Function of Poetry in Scripture**

Biblical poetry often employs vivid imagery and rhythmic patterns that help to evoke emotional responses and provoke thoughtful reflection. For example, **Psalm 23** uses the metaphor of Jehovah as shepherd, guiding and providing for the faithful, which not only offers comfort but also conveys the protective and providential character of God. Understanding these artistic nuances is essential for grasping the full impact of biblical poetry (**Psalm 23:1-4**).

## **Characteristics of Biblical Poetry**

Biblical poetry is prevalent in books such as Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, and large sections of the prophetic books like Isaiah and Jeremiah. This form is distinguished by features such as parallelism, where two or more lines reflect, contrast, or build upon one another, enhancing the thematic depth. For example, **Psalm 119:105** declares, “*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path,*” using synonymous parallelism to reinforce the guiding power of Jehovah’s teachings.

Metaphorical language is another hallmark of biblical poetry, providing vivid imagery to express complex spiritual realities. In **Psalm 23**, David describes Jehovah as a shepherd, an image that encapsulates care, guidance, and protection, resonating deeply with an agrarian society familiar with shepherding.

## **Example of Poetry: Psalm 23**

**Text:** “*Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.*” (**Psalm 23:1-3**)

## **Analysis:**

- **Literary Devices:** Uses metaphor (Jehovah as shepherd) and imagery (green pastures, still waters) to evoke a sense of peace and guidance.
- **Structure:** Characterized by parallelism and rhythmic balance, enhancing its memorability and lyrical quality.
- **Purpose:** Aimed at eliciting an emotional and spiritual response, reinforcing trust in Jehovah’s guidance and care.

## ***Synonymous Parallelism***

Synonymous parallelism involves the repetition of a thought, statement, or concept in successive lines of poetry, with each line reinforcing and elaborating on the idea presented. For example, in **Psalm 93:3**, the psalmist writes, “*The floods have lifted up, O Jehovah, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves.*” Here, the repetition emphasizes the might and the overwhelming nature of the floods, mirrored by the might of Jehovah, who is greater than any natural force.

### ***Examples in Psalms***

The Psalms utilize synonymous parallelism extensively to emphasize attributes of Jehovah, moral principles, and the plight of the righteous versus the wicked. **Psalm 24:1** states, “*The earth is Jehovah’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.*” This repetition underlines the totality of Jehovah’s sovereignty over all creation. The parallel lines serve not just to repeat but to expand on the concept of God’s dominion, enhancing the reader’s understanding of His omnipotence.

### ***Proverbs and Wise Sayings***

Proverbs is another book where synonymous parallelism is used to impart wisdom effectively. For instance, **Proverbs 1:7** declares, “*The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.*” The parallelism in this proverb reinforces the fundamental biblical truth that true knowledge begins with a reverential awe of Jehovah, contrasting it with the folly of those who reject divine wisdom.

### **Function in Ecclesiastes**

Ecclesiastes uses synonymous parallelism to emphasize the fleeting nature of worldly pursuits. A poignant example can be found in **Ecclesiastes 1:2**, “*Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.*” The repetitive structure highlights the emptiness of human endeavors without divine guidance, urging the reader to seek a higher, more eternal purpose in Jehovah.

### **Purpose**

Synonymous parallelism not only reinforces the poetic beauty of the text but also serves an instructional purpose. It allows the message to be more memorable, aiding in meditation and reflection. This technique ensures that the teachings of the scriptures can be more easily internalized and applied to life, fulfilling the biblical mandate to keep the word “*in your heart*” (**Deuteronomy 6:6**).

### **Antithetical Parallelism**

Antithetical parallelism is a distinctive literary device used extensively within the poetry and wisdom literature of the Bible. This form of parallelism contrasts two ideas, enhancing the understanding of both by association. It is a powerful method for conveying moral and ethical truths, particularly prevalent in the book of Proverbs but also appearing in Psalms and Job.

### **Definition and Function of Antithetical Parallelism**

Antithetical parallelism occurs when two lines of poetry present contrasting ideas, typically to emphasize a moral or spiritual principle. This method serves not merely to decorate the text but to sharpen the focus on divine teachings. For instance, **Proverbs 10:1** states, “*A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the sorrow of his mother.*” This proverb contrasts the effects of wisdom versus folly on parental joy and sorrow, thus underlining the value of righteous living.

### **Examples in Proverbs**

The book of Proverbs uses antithetical parallelism extensively to teach about righteousness, folly, and the fear of Jehovah. **Proverbs 15:1** illustrates this: “*A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*” Here, the contrast between “*a soft answer*” and “*a harsh word*” clearly delineates the consequences of our speech choices, guided by wisdom or folly.

### **Instruction in Righteousness**

Through antithetical parallelism, the Scripture provides clear guidance on the path of righteousness as opposed to the way of the wicked. **Proverbs 28:1** says, “*The wicked flee when no man pursues: but the righteous are bold as a lion.*” This vivid contrast between the cowardice of the wicked and the courage of the righteous teaches about the confidence that comes from living a life aligned with Jehovah’s commandments.

### **Enhancing Understanding Through Contrast**

This literary technique enhances understanding by making the distinctions between virtues and vices. It helps the reader quickly grasp the practical implications of biblical wisdom. For example, **Psalms 1** contrasts the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked, particularly noted in verses like, “*For Jehovah knows the way of the righteous: but the way of the wicked shall perish.*” Such contrasts are not just poetic but serve as direct admonitions for the reader to follow the path of righteousness.

### **Wisdom’s Use of Natural Order**

Antithetical parallelism also draws on observations of the natural and social order, providing insights that are both timeless and universal. For example, **Proverbs 11:24-25** contrasts the outcomes for those who are generous and those who withhold unduly, “*There is that scatters, and yet increases; and there is that withholds more than is meet, but it tends to poverty.*” This passage highlights a principle of divine economy, where generosity leads to abundance, contrasting with the scarcity brought by stinginess.

## **Step or Climactic Parallelism within Poetry and Wisdom Literature**

Step or climactic parallelism is a profound literary structure used within the biblical poetry and wisdom literature to build upon an initial statement, gradually increasing in intensity or complexity. This form of parallelism is key in emphasizing spiritual truths, particularly in Psalms and Proverbs, where it serves to escalate the impact of divine wisdom being conveyed.

### **Characteristics of Step Parallelism**

Step parallelism, also known as climactic or synthetic parallelism, involves the sequential development of thought across multiple lines of poetry. Each subsequent line builds upon the previous one, either by adding more detail, extending the thought,

or intensifying the thematic message. This technique not only enhances the lyrical beauty of the text but also deepens the reader's engagement with the material.

### **Biblical Instances in Psalms**

The Psalms frequently employ step parallelism to create a crescendo effect in praise, prayer, or proclamation. For example, **Psalm 29:1-2** illustrates this beautifully: "*Give unto Jehovah, O ye mighty, give unto Jehovah glory and strength. Give unto Jehovah the glory due unto his name; worship Jehovah in the beauty of holiness.*"

Here, the call to give glory to Jehovah escalates with each line, emphasizing the depth and seriousness of worship. The progression from acknowledging Jehovah's inherent attributes to actively worshipping Him in holiness highlights the growing intensity of the psalmist's exhortation.

### **Proverbs and Instruction**

In Proverbs, step parallelism is used to methodically build a case for wisdom and moral living. An example can be found in **Proverbs 4:1-2**: "*Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.*"

This passage starts with an appeal to listen and progresses to an admonition to adhere to the teachings, enhancing the imperative to maintain the path of wisdom. The fatherly advice begins with a general invitation and climaxes with a specific directive, mimicking the developmental process of learning and internalization.

## **Chiastic Parallelism within Poetry and Wisdom Literature**

Chiastic parallelism is a sophisticated literary device used throughout the Bible, particularly in poetry and wisdom literature. It involves structuring textual elements so that they mirror each other around a central theme or point, enhancing the depth and emphasis of the message. This method is crucial for unlocking the theological and moral significance of biblical texts.

### **Definition and Explanation**

Chiastic parallelism, or chiasmus, arranges ideas in an ABBA pattern. This technique draws the reader's focus to the central part of the passage, which often holds the key thematic or theological emphasis. For example, in the book of Psalms, this pattern helps highlight central affirmations of faith, divine action, or moral principle.

### **Biblical Examples of Chiasmus**

One of the clearest examples of chiastic structure is found in **Psalm 51:1-3**, where David pleads for mercy and cleansing from his sins:

A: Have mercy upon me, O God (v.1a)

B: According to thy lovingkindness (v.1b)

B: According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies (v.1c)

A: Blot out my transgressions (v.2).

This structure emphasizes God's mercy as the reason for the request to blot out transgressions, placing the theological focus squarely on divine grace and forgiveness.

Another example is found in Proverbs, which often uses chiasmus to contrast the ways of the wise and the foolish. **Proverbs 15:1** presents a classic chiastic pattern:

A: A soft answer turns away wrath (v.1a)

B: But (v.1b)

B: A harsh word stirs up anger (v.1c).

Here, the comparison serves to highlight the effectiveness of gentle speech versus the destructive nature of harsh words.

### **Function of Chiasmus in Wisdom Literature**

In wisdom literature, chiastic structures are used to frame arguments, emphasize moral lessons, and to contrast righteous and wicked behaviors. This structuring helps in making the teachings memorable and impactful, aiding in meditation and application. Ecclesiastes frequently uses chiastic structures to present philosophical and ethical conclusions about life's meaning and human behavior under divine providence.