

JOEL LESSON FOUR

EXAMPLES OF HEBREW POETRY

Simile: Asserting a correspondence between two things using the explicit formula “like” or “as.”

Proverbs 19:12 (A king’s wrath is like the growling of a lion.)

Metaphor: An implied comparison in which A is said to be B.

Proverbs 18:10 (The name of the LORD is a strong tower.)

Parallelism: Balancing one thought or phrase with a corresponding thought or phrase containing approximately the same number of words or a correspondence of ideas.

Psalm 83:1 (O God, do not keep silence; do not hold your peace or be still, O God!)

Synonymous Parallelism: When the second line expresses the same thought as the first line using different but similar words.

Psalm 49:1 (Hear this, all peoples! Give ear, all inhabitants of the world.)

Antithetical Parallelism: When the second line expresses a thought that is in contrast to the first line.

Proverbs 15:1 (A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.)

Synthetic Parallelism: When the second line completes the thought of the first line in some way.

Psalm 46:1 (God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.)

Ascending Parallelism: When succeeding lines repeat some words from the first line and complete the thought.

Psalm 22:4–5 (In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.)

Metonymy: The substitution of an attribute of a thing for the thing itself.

Psalm 23:5 (You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.)

Synecdoche: When a part is made to represent the whole or vice versa.

Psalm 44:6 (For not in my bow do I trust, nor can my sword save me.)

Personification: Portraying something other than a person as though it were a person.

Proverbs 18:6 (A fool’s lips walk into a fight.)

Hyperbole: Saying more than is literally meant.

Psalm 107:25–26 (For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They mounted up to heaven...)

Acrosticism: When certain letters in each line combine to form a word or an alphabet.

Psalm 119

Chiasmic Terrace: When the outer elements are parallel and the inner elements are identical.

Isaiah 29:17 (Is it not yet a very little while until Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be regarded as a forest?)

Extended Terrace: When each line repeats the final element of the previous line.

Joel 1:4 (What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten, and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten.)

Variation: Repeating the same word but changing its tense or mood in the final occurrence.

Psalm 93:3 (The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring.)

Synonym: Using a synonym instead of repeating the same word.

Song 6:1 (Where has your beloved gone ...? Where has your beloved turned...?)

Alliteration: Using Hebrew words that begin with the same letter or the same sound.

Assonance: Using Hebrew words that sound alike.

Rhyme: Using Hebrew words that rhyme.