

Welcome to

Journey through the Bible



**Book by book
Bible study**

Poets & Poetry of the Old Testament



Types of Hebrew Poetry

1. Dramatic poems-
Job, Song of Solomon
2. Lyrics (songs)- Psalms
3. Didactic (teaching)-
Proverbs, Ecclesiastes

Characteristics of Hebrew Poetry

- Vivid Imagery
- Intense Emotion
- Immediacy: Justice/blessing now, direct cause – effect relationships
- Symbols/figures of speech
- Parallelism

1. Vivid Imagery

the groans of the prisoners ...
condemned to die. (Psalm 79:11)

I have quieted my soul like a weaned child
with its mother (Psalm 131:2)

Daughter Babylon, doomed to destruction,
happy is the one who seizes your infants
and dashes them against the rocks.
(Psalm 137:8–9).

2. Intense Emotion

All night long I flood my bed with weeping
and drench my bed with tears (Psalm 6:6)

My heart leaps for joy (Psalm 28:7)

O God, you are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you,
my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land
where there is no water. (Psalm 63:1).

3. Immediacy (justice now!)

Contend, LORD, with those who contend with
me; fight against those who fight against me.
...

How long, LORD, will you look on?
Rescue me from their ravages,
my precious life from these lions.
...

LORD, you have seen this; do not be silent,
Do not be far from me, LORD. (35:1-22)

Psalm 13 is an example of these three

The cry of David in distress ...

How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Surrounded by enemies, overwhelmed
by life, overcome with anxiety, his soul in
distress, David feels abandoned by God.

Where is God when I need Him?

Look on me and answer, LORD my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,
and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall. (13:3-4)

An eleventh hour appeal; David is standing at death's door; clinging to life, with "one foot in the grave," and with nowhere to look but up to God.

Why doesn't God do something?

The psalm shifts abruptly to a resolute commitment to praise God. God has been good to him in the past so David trusts in God's unfailing love in the present crisis. He is confident that God will do what is best, because He always does!

David's past experience with God gives him confidence to face this crisis

But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
I will sing the LORD's praise,
for he has been good to me. (13:5-6)

**God is here! He loves me.
He has never failed me,
so I will rejoice and sing!**

4. Symbols (figures of speech)

Whoever is pregnant with evil, conceives trouble, and gives birth to disillusionment. (Psalm 7:14)

The righteous is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season ...
Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away (Psalm 1:3-4)

5. Parallelism

This is the most distinctive element of Hebrew poetry. Two or more lines of poetry focus on one common theme resembling twin tracks of a train. The relationship between them may be one of several kinds. Hebrew poetry is best understood and appreciated when this parallelism is understood.

1. Parallelism

- a. Synonymous
Synthetic
Climactic
- b. Antithetic
- c. Emblematic
(Formal)

a. Synonymous- Proverbs 1:20

Wisdom shouts in the street,
She lifts her voice in the square.

Who?


What?


Where?


Show me your ways, O LORD
Teach me your paths (Psalm 25:4)

a. Synonymous- Psalm 95:6 (Synthetic)

Come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel

before the LORD our Maker

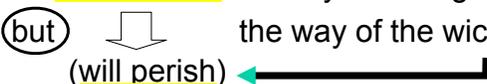
a. Synonymous- Psalm 29:1 (Climactic)

Ascribe to the LORD, O sons of the mighty
Ascribe to the LORD, glory and strength

For surely your enemies, O LORD,
surely your enemies will perish, (92:9)

The seas have lifted up, O LORD, (93:3)
the seas have lifted up their voice,
the seas have lifted up their pounding waves

b. Antithetical- Psalm 1:6

the LORD knows the way of the righteous
(but)  the way of the wicked
(will perish)

Lazy hands make a man poor,
but diligent hands bring wealth. (Prov. 10:4)

A gossip betrays a confidence,
but a trustworthy man keeps a secret. (11:13)

c. Emblematic- Psalm 42:1

As the deer pants for the water brooks
So my soul pants for You O God (Ps. 42:1)

The path of the righteous
is like the first gleam of dawn ...
But the way of the wicked
is like deep darkness ... (Prov. 4:18-19)

Psalm 1 is a good example of Parallelism and symbolism

Psalm 1 is “the psalm of the two ways.”
It is a wisdom (didactic) psalm. The
author of this psalm is not named but it
was likely written as an introduction to
the book of Psalms. It illustrates all the
kinds of parallelism of Hebrew poetry
and its abundant use of symbols.

Psalm 1: the Two Ways

Blessed is the man who:
does not - walk in the counsel of the wicked
nor - stand in the path of sinners
nor - sit in the seat of scoffers

But, his delight is in the Law of the LORD
And, in His Law he meditates day and night

...

(Synonymous)

Psalm 1: the Two Ways

he will be like a tree (Emblematic)
—firmly planted by streams of water
—which yields its fruit in season
—and whose leaf does not wither
Whatever he does prospers. (Climactic)

not so the wicked! (antithetical)
— they are like chaff (emblematic)
— which the wind drives away

Therefore

- the wicked will not stand
- in the judgement (nor sinners)
- in the assembly of the righteous

For the LORD watches over (antithetical)

- the way of the righteous
- but — the way of the wicked will perish.

See you next week!

**Read Job 1-2,
The sovereignty of God
and
The suffering of Job**
