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THE POETIC STRUCTURE OF SONG OF SONGS 7:12-14 [11-13]

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In this study we shall consider the poetic structure of a short but complex poem from the Song of Songs. Though Song 7:12-14 is a short poetic unit it has proved surprisingly difficult to achieve any consensus regarding its internal structure.¹ Since poems communicate as much by their form as by their content, an analysis of the poem's structure is a necessary first step in its interpretation. Our approach will follow that suggested by Ernst Wendland in his essay on the discourse analysis of Hebrew poetry² with the focus on those stages which are concerned with what he calls the "organization"³ of the poetic text. Our aim will be to outline the poetic structure of Song 7:12-14[11-13] and show how the various poetic devices contribute to that structure. By way of conclusion we shall offer some suggestions of how this structural analysis contributes to our understanding of the poem's content and function.

A Framework for Analysis of a Poetic Text

Wendland argues that "any adequate study of a poetic text ought to deal with the composition in its entirety, from top to bottom of the linguistic hierarchy (or vice-versa)."⁴ His framework for analysis is correspondingly thorough as well as offering a large degree of adaptability. This process is intended to be "multifaceted..., integrative..., and primarily inductive."⁵ It is not an alternative to other methodologies, but rather a way of incorporating these into a comprehensive approach.

The point is that no single methodology is able to give us an adequate understanding of either an individual poem or a larger collection of them. Rather, one perspective needs to be complemented by another as necessary (and available) in order to cover as many as possible of the many significant aspects, dimensions, implications, and applications of biblical poetry...

¹ See below for a comparison of some outlines of the poem.

² Ernst R. Wendland, "The Discourse Analysis of Hebrew Poetry: A Procedural Outline," in *Discourse Perspectives on Hebrew Poetry in the Scriptures*, vol. 7 (ed. Ernst R. Wendland; UBS Monograph Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 1–27.

³ Wendland, "Discourse Analysis," 2.

⁴ Wendland, "Discourse Analysis," 1.

⁵ Wendland, "Discourse Analysis," 24.

. And even then, our comprehension and reproduction of the whole will only be partial, a pale reflection of the original.⁶

The integrative nature of this approach as well as the focus on poetic structure makes it particularly suited to our task.

Wendland's aim is to analyze and explain "the basic design of the discourse"⁷ with attention to every feature of the text as well as its source, medium and receptor. The goal of this paper is more modest: it will not offer a full analysis of the poem's communicative intention or effect, but merely an exposition of its internal structure. As a consequence, not all of Wendland's ten steps will be addressed. His framework is as follows:

1. Survey of the extralinguistic setting;
2. Delimitation of the text;
3. Textual criticism and translation;
4. Spatialization of the text;
5. Text segmentation;
6. Confirmation of the textual organization;
7. Location of points of prominence;
8. Formation of a thematic/semantic summary;
9. Interactional analysis in terms of speech event/acts;
10. Comparison and contextualization.⁸

This framework begins and ends with an attempt to situate the poem within the context of its authorship and reception. Wendland is rightly cautious about some of the excesses of the comparative approach but he does consider that "a certain amount of useful information may be provided... with regard to [a poem's] historical, political, sociocultural, geographical, and ecological milieu."⁹ Likewise, Wendland recognizes that firm conclusions should not be drawn concerning the reception of a biblical poem, "since we are so far removed from the original event in terms of history, culture, environment, and world view."¹⁰ His final step considers the effect of the literary and theological context of a poem, its influence on and from other texts, and the

⁶ Wendland, "Discourse Analysis," 24.

⁷ Wendland, "Discourse Analysis," 2.

⁸ Wendland, "Discourse Analysis," 6–23.

⁹ Wendland, "Discourse Analysis," 6.

¹⁰ Wendland, "Discourse Analysis," 18.

effects of extratextual factors, especially as it is received in the contemporary setting. These steps are no doubt essential for exegesis and interpretation, but since they do not relate to the internal structure of the poem, they will not be considered in this paper.

This leaves us with seven steps, beginning with the delimitation of the poetic unit and concluding with the formulation of a thematic or semantic summary. Steps 2 and 3 (delimitation, establishment of the text, and translation) may be grouped together as preliminary matters. The first properly structural step then comes with what Wendland calls “spatialization.” He suggests breaking down the text “according to the natural arrangement of syntactic units”¹¹ and forming these into a grid which facilitates the analysis of the clause structure of the poem.

Wendland then divides the text into poetic lines. Here, he asserts that “the primary indicator of structural organization in poetry is lexical repetition as manifested especially in parallelism.”¹² There are other factors to be considered such as typical line lengths and the propensity for bicola in biblical poetry. The Masoretic accentuation is taken to be a reliable guide to line division but not a fixed rule.

Parallelism may be the primary indicator of poetic structure, but Wendland clearly intends this to extend beyond the scope of the parallelistic line:

Insufficient attention has heretofore been given to the phenomenon of *noncontiguous* repetition, other than that involving exact restatement... This oversight concerns not only obvious lineal (i.e. external) parallelism, but it also applies to other less complete types of phonological syntactic, lexical, and semantic recursion. Not many of these separated but related utterances manifest the same degree of parallelism as that found in adjacent cola. Nevertheless the reiteration of form and content is often significant, for it serves a crucial structural function by helping to demarcate the individual segments that make up a larger poetic arrangement, hence also to format the composition as a whole.¹³

These examples of non-adjacent parallel lines can be used in a variety of structuring ways: beginning consecutive poetic units; ending consecutive poetic units; beginning and ending the same unit (*inclusio*); concluding one unit and beginning the next; or in the formation of a

¹¹ Wendland, “Discourse Analysis,” 10.

¹² Wendland, “Discourse Analysis,” 11.

¹³ Wendland, “Discourse Analysis,” 11–12.

concentric ring structure (*chiasmus*).¹⁴ A poem is not necessarily structured by a single one of these arrangements but “patterns of significant repetition normally criss-cross a typical poetic text in the Hebrew Scriptures, not in random fashion, but in a way which manifests - both to the eye and also to the ear - how the composition is organized formally as well as thematically.”¹⁵ Since this patterning is so significant, Wendland notes, it is usually reinforced by other poetic devices.

These two steps: the syntactic analysis and the parallelistic analysis, are the foundation for determining the poetic structure of the unit. His next step is to look for evidence, in the form of other poetic devices, to confirm this structure or counteract it. The goal is to show how the poem has “a unified composition that nevertheless manifests a diverse range of centrifugal (loosening) and centripetal (tightening) structural forces.”¹⁶ The separate elements must be considered and then the whole brought together in a synthesis of the results from each level of the analysis. This synthesis is the basis for the next step in Wendland’s process, which is to locate the climactic points within the poem by the coincidence of multiple poetic features. At this stage, the structural analysis is complete, though Wendland’s exegetical concerns lead him to summarize the theme or content of the poem, using the previously established structure as a guide.

The Text: Song 7:12-14 [11-13]

The literary unity of the Song of Songs continues to be a matter of dispute among scholars. Some consider the Song to be no more than an anthology of separate poems, loosely linked around the subject of love.¹⁷ Others have argued that the book is a carefully woven literary unity in which each section is closely connected to the whole.¹⁸ Even those who consider the

¹⁴ See Wendland, “Discourse Analysis,” 12.

¹⁵ Wendland, “Discourse Analysis,” 12.

¹⁶ Wendland, “Discourse Analysis,” 13.

¹⁷ Recent commentaries which take this viewpoint include Robert Jenson, *Song of Songs* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 2005), Tremper Longman, *Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), Marcia Falk, *Love Lyrics from the Bible* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1982).

¹⁸ See especially M. Timothea Elliott, *The Literary Unity of the Canticle* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1989) and Michael V. Fox, *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985) for two very different studies that argue the case for unity and R.E. Murphy, *The Song of Songs* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990) for a commentary which presumes the unity of the Song.

book to be a unity recognize that it is comprised of a number of subunits distinguishable by setting, theme, speaker and form, though there is little consensus as to the total number of separate units which can be identified.¹⁹ The section which we propose to study has strong verbal links with the preceding verses (in particular note the catchword יָרִיב which occurs in the response to the *wasf* in 7:10 [9], again in the refrain in 7:11[10], and in the first clause of 7:12[11]). There are also connections with the following section: both poems are spoken by the female lover; and the references to the doors in 7:13[12] perhaps suggest a link to the mention of her mother's house in 8:2.²⁰

Despite these links with the surrounding verses, it remains plausible to treat 7:12-14[11-13] as a distinct unit within the wider context of the Song. At the start of v. 12[11] there is a change of perspective: in v. 11[10] the woman refers to her lover in the third person (וְעֵלִי תְּשׁוּקָתוֹ) whereas in vv. 12-14[11-13] she addresses him directly in the second person (שָׁם אֶתְּךָ אֶתְּךָ לִי). Second, the imperative in v. 12[11] is a formal indicator of the beginning of a particular kind of poem.²¹ Third, this invitation poem is of a wholly different form to the *wasf* which has preceded it. Though both draw heavily on countryside imagery, in the *wasf* this is used in a series of metaphors and similes for the woman's body. In the invitation poem, by contrast, the countryside is the setting for both lovers to enjoy each other. The juxtaposition of the two poems certainly raises some intriguing connections between their imagery, but it is clear that at a literary level they remain separate.

¹⁹ Exum notes various recent proposals which range from 23 to 42 distinct poems. J. Cheryl Exum, *Song of Songs* (The Old Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 33.

²⁰ Keel divides the poem between 7:13[12] and 14[13], linking the last verse with 8: 1-2. He finds a number of connections here based on the imagery and the grammar of the section. This leads him to a very disjointed analysis of the early part of chapter 8, finding individual poems in 7:14[13]-8:2; 8:3-4; 8:5a; 8:5b and so on. It seems preferable to keep the last verse of chapter 7 with our poem, and then read 8:1-4 as a single unit expressing the unfulfilled love of the woman. See Othmar Keel, *The Song of Songs* (Frederick J. Gaiser; A Continental Commentary; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 253.

²¹ Compare 2:8-15, where the context makes it certain that the male lover's poem of invitation begins in v. 8 with a similar imperative: קִים דָּר.

The change of setting in 8:1 is also decisive. Here lovers are no longer alone in the countryside as in 7:12-14[11-13] but at the house of her mother. As Marcia Falk has observed, the setting is an important factor in the relationship described in the Song, and poetic units do not usually shift between contexts in this way.²² The change in setting is accompanied by a shift in the relationship: the love that was to be consummated in 7:12-14[11-13] must again be postponed in 8:1-4. The confidence of 7:12-14[11-13] has been lost by the start of chapter 8.

The text of this section is relatively certain. The editors of BHQ note only the lack of a *maqṣeph* in the Leningrad codex at v. 13[12], which is found in multiple manuscripts and supported by the lack of an accent on אָ.²³

The last stage of this preliminary discussion is a translation of the poetic unit which will be followed by a brief discussion of some of its difficulties. At this stage we will not attempt to break the poem into its line divisions, though where necessary we shall include provisional punctuation.

Come, my love [1], let us go to the field. Let us spend the night among the henna bushes [2]. Let us leave early for the vineyards. Let us see whether the vine has budded, the grape has opened, the pomegranates have blossomed. There I will give you my love. The mandrakes send forth scent and against our doors are all choice fruits [3], new as well as old. My love [4], I have stored up for you.

1. I choose to translate אָהבָה as ‘love’ throughout the poem to retain the repetition of the Hebrew term in all three verses, though it is clear that the term has at least two distinct referents: the male object of the woman’s affections, and her feelings towards him.

2. אָהַבְתִּי is ambiguous. There are two possible Hebrew nouns from which it derives, both of which make some sense here. The two lovers may be spending the night in country villages (אָהַבְתִּי) or in a field of henna bushes (אָהַבְתִּי). In the former case, it makes sense to translate אָהַבְתִּי in a

²² Falk, *Love Lyrics*, 88–91.

²³ P. B Dirksen, *General Introduction and Megilloth (Canticles)* (ed. A. et al Schenker; Biblia Hebraica Quinta; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2004), 63.

broad sense, “countryside”; in the latter, the reference seems more specific, “field.” Marvin Pope notes that the plural, כְּפָרִים, is hard to understand if the sense is that of “villages” since only one night is in view, and thus, we presume, only one village.²⁴ Given the use of henna earlier in the Song to indicate intimacy between the lovers (1:14 and 4:13), it seems more appropriate to continue that imagery here.

3. מַגֵּד occurs elsewhere paired with the word פֶּרִי to indicate something like “choice fruits” (see Deut 33:13, 16 and also Song 4:13, 16). Here the term occurs alone and possibly indicates a more general reference, such as “delicacies.” However the context clearly indicates that fruits are in view. Pope also notes the cognate term in Syriac, *magdā*, which means “fruit.”²⁵

4. Translating דוּדִי as “my love” here preserves the momentary ambiguity created by the Hebrew word order. At the start of the clause it is unclear whether דוּדִי refers, as in v. 12[11], to the person of the beloved, or whether it is the equivalent of דָּדִי in v. 13[12]. Only when the clause is ended and no other direct object is found for the transitive verb צָפַן is it clear that the woman is speaking of the love which she has stored up for her beloved.

Spatialization of the Text

Having established the limits of the text which we are considering, the next task is to lay out the data which will form the basis of the rest of our analysis. See the appendix for a chart showing the clause structure and the morphological analysis of the passage. More detailed study of this will follow in the next section.

Text Segmentation

As a starting point into our analysis of the poetic structure of our poem, we will compare the line divisions offered by the editors of the BHS and BHQ editions of the Hebrew text.

BHS:

// לִכְהָ דוּדִי / נִצַּח הַשָּׂדֶה / גְּלִינָה בַכְּפָרִים //

²⁴ M.H. Pope, *Song of Songs* (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 645.

²⁵ Pope, *Song of Songs*, 650.

13 נשכימה לכרמים //
 נראה אם פרוחה הגפן //
 פתח הסמדר //
 הנצו הרמונים //
 שם אתן / את־דודי לך //
 14 הדודאים נתנור־יה / ועל־פתחינו כל־מגדים //
 חדשים גם־ישנים / דודי צפנתי לך //

BHQ:

12 לכה דודי נצא השדה / נלינה בכפרים //
 13 נשכימה לכרמים / נראה אם פרוחה הגפן פתח הסמדר / הנצו הרמונים //
 שם אתן את־דודי לך //
 14 הדודאים נתנור־יה / ועל־פתחינו כל־מגדים / חדשים גם־ישנים //
 דודי צפנתי לך //

There are differences in the number of cola in each line and even in the division of the cola themselves. BHS takes v. 12[11] as a tricolon, each cola containing two accented syllables. In BHQ, the same verse is laid out as a bicolon, with two unbalanced cola of four and two accented syllables respectively. In BHS, v. 13[12] is divided into 5 lines: 4 monocola and a final bicolon. BHQ has only two lines for the verse: one very long tricolon of two, five and two accented syllables respectively; and a final monocolon. Both versions have the same colon divisions in v. 14[13] but where BHS groups them into two bicola, BHQ has one tricolon followed by a monocolon.

The lack of consensus found in these two arrangements of the text indicates something of the problematic nature of finding a structure for the poem that can account for all the patterns and correspondences observed in these three verses. Analyses of clause structure and length in Hebrew poetry have yielded results that are only useful at the most general level. Michael O'Connor lists 95 possible syntactical arrangements of Hebrew poetic lines.²⁶ This may exclude some potential divisions of our text, but still leaves a wealth of possibilities. Similarly, his

²⁶ Michael O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1980), ix-xiii.

conclusions regarding the upper and lower limits of clause and line length²⁷ may have some value but do not offer any great restriction to the possible arrangements of line divisions within our text.

Wendland suggests that the most fruitful way to proceed is by an analysis of the parallelism of the text. We noted earlier that his definition of parallelism is broader than that generally recognized and it seems appropriate at this stage to offer a summary of the most important recent scholarship regarding this poetic device by way of explanation for the method adopted in this paper.

Parallelism: Kugel and Berlin

Since Robert Lowth first coined the term *parallelismus membrorum* in the eighteenth century, his categories of synonymous, antithetical and synthetical parallelism dominated the study of Hebrew poetry until the latter part of the twentieth century. James Kugel has now effectively deconstructed these categories, demonstrating that there are a multitude of ways in which the two halves of a parallel structure can be related. “Biblical parallelism is of one sort, ‘A, and what’s more, B,’ or a hundred sorts, but it is not three.”²⁸ Nonetheless, Kugel maintains that Lowth’s original observation of the parallelistic structure of much (though not all) biblical Hebrew poetry, was correct: “the basic feature of biblical songs... is the recurrent use of a relatively short sentence-form that consists of two brief clauses.”²⁹ The poetry falls into couplets (or occasionally, triplets) in which the second half in some way extends or corresponds to the first part. Kugel describes the rhythm of the parallelistic line thus, “The clauses are regularly separated by a slight pause - slight because the second is (as above) a continuation of the first and not a wholly new beginning. By contrast, the second ends in a full pause.”³⁰

²⁷ O’Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 313.

²⁸ James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 58.

²⁹ Kugel, *Idea*, 1.

³⁰ Kugel, *Idea*, 1.

The nature of this parallelism is not necessarily purely semantic. Indeed, “the intensity of the semantic parallelism established between clauses might be said to range from ‘zero perceivable correspondence’ to ‘near-zero perceivable differentiation’.”³¹ That is to say, although in some cases the two halves of the parallelistic line appear to have an almost identical meaning, in other cases there is no semantic link at all. In these cases, the parallelism may be established on other grounds. Kugel suggests syntax and morphology as possible ways of doing this.³² However, his general formula of “A, and what’s more, B” tends to focus attention on the semantic domain.

It should be noted that Kugel is scathing of the notion that parallelism provides a structural regularity for Hebrew poetry:

...parallelism is now widely taken as a kind of substitute meter, a structure-giving regularity whose role in biblical Hebrew is comparable to that of meter in ancient Greek. But certainly the discoverer of parallelism would not agree: he rightly said that it occurs “frequently,” but surely knew that neither parallelism nor even the division of sentences into binary units was any constant.³³

For Kugel, this observation is important in his argument that the notion of biblical poetry is in itself an inaccurate and unhelpful one, “since that term... will imply a structural regularity and design that are simply not there.”³⁴ Perhaps all that is needed here is for Kugel to broaden his understanding of poetic structure. Structural devices are rarely rigidly conformed to in good poetry. Rather the skill of the poet lies in his ability to subvert and utilize structure to heighten the effect of his poem. Poetry is not written “in meter”, “in rhyme” or “in parallelism,”³⁵ but in overlapping structures that may include elements of each of these, reinforcing or contrasting with each other in a complicated dance of meaning. Kugel is quite right that we should not expect to find a rigid system of parallelism in Hebrew poetry, but the absence of such a system in no way diminishes the poetic quality of the text. As Kugel himself notes, parallelism “does [not] appear at

³¹ Kugel, *Idea*, 7.

³² Kugel, *Idea*, 2 (emphasis added).

³³ Kugel, *Idea*, 74.

³⁴ Kugel, *Idea*, 94.

³⁵ Kugel, *Idea*, 75.

a single level of intensity; nor, for that matter is it consistently present or absent. At base an emphatic, rhetorical closure, it was capable of elaboration to increasingly high levels of symmetry and design, and frequently combined with other elevating features.”³⁶ It is this combination of features and the different levels of intensity that provides the poetry with its complex and subtle structures.

Adele Berlin has gone even further than Kugel in deconstructing the idea of parallelism. She offers this broad definition:

Parallelism is a correspondence of one thing with another. Parallelism promotes the perception of a relationship between the elements of which parallelism is composed, and this relationship is one of correspondence. The nature of the correspondence varies, but in general it involves repetition or the substitution of things which are equivalent on one or more linguistic levels.³⁷

Berlin suggests that this notion of correspondence, found in either equivalence or contrast, was the basis for Lowth’s original conception of parallelism when he explains that “equals refer to equals, and opposites to opposites.”³⁸

She expands the possibilities of parallelism by showing how it may operate in morphological, phonological and lexical aspects, as well as extending the traditional views of semantic and syntactical parallelism. Further, she proposes that parallelism may apply to smaller segments of the text than are generally considered and is not necessarily limited to adjacent elements.³⁹ Such repetitive devices as *chiasmus* and *inclusio* can, therefore, be considered within the broader scope of parallelism under this proposal. Berlin’s view of parallelism appears to answer Wendland’s call for greater attention to be paid to noncontiguous repetition and allows a sufficiently broad analysis of the phenomenon on which to form conclusions regarding poetic structure. We shall, therefore, adopt her categories for our analysis of the parallelism in our

³⁶ Kugel, *Idea*, 95.

³⁷ Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (2nd; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

³⁸ Lowth, cited in Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 2–3.

³⁹ Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 3.

poem, taking in turn morphological, syntactical, lexical, semantic, and phonological aspects and not restricting ourselves to parallel lines or contiguous elements of the text.

Morphological Analysis

The principle of correspondence which forms the basis of Berlin's notion of parallelism may be positive (equivalence, in some way) or negative (contrast). Often the parallel elements will exhibit both correspondence and contrast. With respect to morphological parallelism, this usually involves terms which are equivalent with the exception of one or more quality. These words may be from different classes (noun/pronoun, prepositional phrase/adverb) or from the same class (with perhaps a contrast in tense, conjugation, person, number, gender or case). Sometimes morphological parallels are found between words which also exhibit semantic or lexical parallelism but this is not necessarily the case and our investigation will not be limited to such examples at this stage.

The morphological analysis of the passage given in the Appendix yields some interesting results. In particular, the structure of v. 12[11] and the first part of v. 13[12] is strongly marked with a pattern of alternating verbs and nouns. The first four pairs form clause units consisting of one verb and one noun. The pattern is only broken after the fifth verb which is followed, not by a noun as expected, but by a conjunction (𐤎𐤍). This conjunction introduces a further verb-noun pair, and the pattern continues twice more.

The eight verbs in this section exhibit a strong structure indicated by their morphology. Tense, person, number and to some extent gender all contribute to a 1:3, 1:3 scheme:

Tense:	Imperative	Imperfect	Imperfect	Imperfect
	Imperfect	Perfect	Perfect	Perfect
Person:	(Second)	First	First	First
	First	Third	Third	Third
Number:	Singular	Plural	Plural	Plural
	Plural	Singular	Singular	<i>Plural</i>

Gender:	Masculine	Common	Common	Common
	Common	Masculine	<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Common</i>

The number and gender of the final set of three verbs does not perfectly match the scheme. Instead of repetition, there seems to be a kind of cumulation: masculine singular - feminine singular - common plural. The whole plant kingdom is somehow encompassed by this shift of gender and then number.

The pattern of conjugations does not follow the same 1:3, 1:3 scheme but perhaps suggests a different order:

Conjugation:	Qal	Qal	Qal	Hiphil
	Qal	Qal	<i>Pi'el</i>	Hiphil

The final verb in the first set of four is marked by the use of the hiphil, following three verbs in the qal. The second set of four appears to begin with this same pattern but this time the third verb is marked: where we would expect a qal, we find a pi'el. The fourth verb returns to the expected pattern with the use of a hiphil conjugation.

The final clause of v. 13[12] decisively breaks the pattern of alternating verbs and nouns. Here the clause consists of four elements: adverb, verb, noun (with direct object marker), preposition (with pronominal suffix). There is no obvious morphological parallel with what has gone before. There may, however, be a link with the final clause of v. 14[13], which contains an identical preposition with pronominal suffix. Both these clauses also contain verbs in the first person singular (the only two such verbs in the poem) which are matched in conjugation (qal) but differ in tense. The parallelism is strengthened by the use of the same noun (with the same pronominal suffix) in each clause, though in v. 14[13] it appears without the direct object marker.

Verse 14[13] is distinguished from the rest of the poem by its frequent use of the *maqquph*. This allows the longer clauses in this verse to achieve some balance with the shorter ones in vv. 12-13[11-12]. There is an obvious correspondence between the two adjectives separated by a conjunction, but otherwise it is hard to discern any morphological parallels within this verse.

Three other possible morphological parallels in the poem should be noted here. The first involves a match between a verb and its derived noun. In v. 13[12], the grapes are opening (פתח) and in v. 14[13], fruit is stored up against the openings (פתחינו). In the second, the same word is used with a different meaning and different morphology. In v. 12[11], the male lover is addressed as יְיָ whereas in v. 13[12], the word occurs with a different form of the first person suffix, and here indicates not the person of the beloved, but the love which she will bestow upon him. This same word occurs again, towards the end of v. 14[13], here with the form of the suffix found in v. 12[11] but the meaning indicated in v. 13[12]. Finally we note that the verb נתן is used in the final clause of v. 13[12] and again in the opening clause of v. 14[13]. The two verbs are matched in conjugation but contrast in tense, person and number.

Syntactical Analysis

In syntactic parallelism there must be some correspondence between lines or elements at the level of syntax. Again, it should be emphasized that this includes both equivalence and contrast. Berlin notes that a number of transformations can occur to any basic sentence which do not affect its underlying syntax. For example, a statement may be transformed into a question; a positive statement may be transformed into its negative equivalent, or an active sentence may be shifted into the passive voice. Syntactic parallels can be found between sentences where one of the lines has undergone such a transformation.⁴⁰ In Hebrew syntax, this may also involve the transformation from a verbal to a non-verbal clause and vice versa.

Some of the pairs we identified in vv. 12-13[11-12] exhibit strict syntactical parallelism in which there has been no transformation. These match the 1:3, 1:3 pattern we observed earlier:

Imperative - addressee Cohortative - indirect object (repeated three times)

Cohortative Conditional - direct object (repeated three times)

⁴⁰ See Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 54.

In this second group of three, the conditional conjunction linked with the first verb implicitly applies to next two. This use of ellipsis creates a strong link between the three clauses.

The final clauses of vv. 13[12] and 14[13] also exhibit a close syntactical parallelism. In each case a verb is modified by both a direct object and a preposition with pronominal suffix, acting as an indirect object.

Lexical Analysis

For Berlin, the lexical analysis follows the now commonplace strategy of identifying word pairs. She is careful to note that “It is not word pairs that create parallelism. It is parallelism that activates word pairs.”⁴¹ As with all our preliminary analysis, we shall seek to identify all possible word pairs and only later consider which are operating in a truly parallelistic fashion in our poem. A word pair is defined by Berlin as “the realization of two or more words which are normally (or sometimes not so frequently) associated by speakers of the language.”⁴² These associations can take a variety of forms, often based on some kind of opposition, specificity or other idiomatic link.⁴³ Although lexical parallelism is often found to have a semantic basis, Berlin insists that the two can be distinguished, offering a number of examples where the lexical pair is not supported by a semantic link.⁴⁴

The verbs in vv. 12[11] and 13[12] form a series of overlapping word pairs:

הלך is paired with צא: The English translations tend to match these verbs as opposites (come/go), though the Hebrew words are much closer in meaning than that suggests. צא is paired with לון: Go out/stay the night. Here the pair is certainly in opposition and gives a clear sequence to the events. לון is paired with שכמ: Stay the night/get up early. Again there is an opposition extending the sequence of events.

⁴¹ Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 79.

⁴² Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 79.

⁴³ See Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 72–5.

⁴⁴ Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 81–3.

The most striking word pair in the poem is found in v. 14[13] where *שִׁדְדִי* is matched with its opposite *יִשָּׁן*. The more common Hebrew word for 'old', *זָקֵן*, is not usually paired with *שִׁדְדִי* but with *נֶעַר* or some other term indicating youth, rather than newness.⁴⁵ The pair of opposites used in Song 7:14[13] is not common, found only here and in Lev 26:10, but it is nonetheless striking.

Semantic Analysis

Berlin chooses to divide semantic parallelism into two categories which she takes from structural linguistics: paradigmatic and syntagmatic parallelism. In paradigmatic parallelism one thought can, in some way, be substituted for the other. There may be a reversal or some other transformation involved but there must be an equivalence. In syntagmatic parallelism, the second line continues the first, progressing the thought.⁴⁶ She also notes two ways in which semantic parallelism often functions: disambiguation and metaphor. The second line of a parallel pair can be used to clarify any ambiguity in the first line, or to add specificity to a more general reference. Two parallel lines which appear to have no semantic relationship on the surface level may, by their very juxtaposition in the parallelism, create a metaphor. A deeper level of meaning may be intended which joins the two apparently distinct ideas.

In our short passage we find examples of all these types of semantic parallelism. Each of the groups of three pairs in vv. 12[11] and 13[12] exhibit paradigmatic parallelism.

נצא השדה	פרחה הגפן
נלינה בכרפים	פתח הסמדר
נשכימה לכרמים	הנצו הרמונים

It is not that each pair is identical to the others in its group, but that they share a kind of semantic equivalence. In the first group, each pair functions as the complement of the introductory imperative (syntagmatic parallelism). The ambiguity of the initial invitation is resolved as the

⁴⁵ See for example, Gen 19:4, Exod 10:9, Joshua 6:21

⁴⁶ Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 90.

following clauses specify where the beloved is to come and the sequence of the journey involved. The couple go out to the field and linger there, lying down for the night among the plants. In the second group, each pair functions as the complement of the introductory condition, ‘let us see if...,’ giving another example of syntagmatic parallelism.

The conclusion of v. 13 suggests that there may be a metaphorical parallel here. The ripening of the fruit has no surface level connection with the offer of love. But in the Song of Songs, the fertility of the natural world is frequently linked with the love between the man and the woman.⁴⁷ Here, the opening of the buds and the blossoming of the pomegranates seem to be symbolic of the woman offering her love to her beloved. There is a more straightforward semantic parallel between this final last clause of v. 13 and the last clause of v. 14:

*There I will give you my love
I have stored up my love for you.*

The shift in tense noted earlier is matched by a shift in meaning of the verb. The love that will be given is the love that has been stored up.

Verse 14[13] presents a number of difficulties in interpretation, some of which may be overcome by an analysis of the parallelisms of the passage. The repetition of the verb נתן suggests a possible semantic parallel between the final clause of v. 13[12] and the first of v. 14[13]. Since there is no obvious semantic connection at a surface level, this leads us to ask whether there may be a metaphorical parallel intended here. As the woman gives her love to the man, so the mandrakes give out their scent.

In a similar way, the fruit described in the second clause of the verse may have a metaphorical parallel with the final clause. The fruit is said to be על־פֶּתַח־יָנוּ: against our doors.

It is hard to know exactly what image this describes, though the reference to new and old fruit suggests some kind of storage. The ripe fruits have been harvested and piled up against the

⁴⁷ See, for example, Song 1:13-14; 2: 3-4; 2:8-17; 4:12-15; 6:2-3.

winter. This store of fruits would be an appropriate parallel for the love which the woman has treasured (נִצַּץ) or kept for her lover.

A number of commentators have interpreted the imagery in this verse directly as a sexual reference to female genitalia. Iain Provan offers a more thoughtful interpretation by way of allusion to the opening of the door in Song 5:6 and the opening blossoms in 7:12. He considers that this is a figurative expression of the woman's rising desire and "an invitation to sexual bliss, involving both things familiar to the man and things he has not yet experienced."⁴⁸ We should be careful of interpreting the metaphor as if it is a mere code where one thing can be replaced by another. The parallels that we have observed between love and the fragrance of mandrakes or piles of fruit evoke a variety connotations and ought not to be restricted to a single interpretation.

Phonological Analysis

Berlin defines a sound pairing as "the repetition in parallel words or lines of the same or similar consonants in any order within close proximity."⁴⁹ Since at this stage we are withholding judgment as to which lines or words are parallel, we shall look for all examples of this kind of consonance in our passage. Although Berlin is certainly correct to focus on consonantal repetition, we will also note those instances in which vowel repetition (or assonance) reinforces the consonantal repetition.

The clearest example links three phrases:

לְכֹה דוֹדִי

דוֹדִי לְךָ

דוֹדִי צִפְנֹתַי לְךָ

Of the five consonants in the first clause (ignoring the vowel letter) four are repeated in the second phrase. The same four also appear in the final clause, though separated by another word that contains none of the same sounds. The vowels in the first clause are almost exactly

⁴⁸ Iain Provan, *Ecclesiastes/Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 356.

⁴⁹ Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 104

reproduced in the second phrase: simple shewa, qames,holem/holem-waw. The hireq-yod is substituted with a patah-yod. In the final clause the hireq-yod reappears, and the last word is pointed exactly as it was in the second phrase. Despite these slight shifts, there is a strong phonological correspondence between the three units.

This strong pattern may also be alluded to in the first word of v. 14, **הַדּוֹדָאִים**. The repeated dalet sounds are both separated by a long o-class vowel and followed (though here not immediately followed) by the hireq-yod. Given its proximity to the second of our three sound units, this resonance is strengthened: **הַדּוֹדָאִים: לְדִי לֵךְ**.

One might think that the precise correspondence of the vowels in **בְּכַפְרִים** and **לְכַרְמִים** indicated a sound pair, but both are merely following the pattern established for plural segholate nouns and so this alone is insufficient evidence for a parallel. If one includes the verb associated with each of these nouns, the sound pattern does seem to continue:

נָלִינָה בְּכַפְרִים

נִשְׁכַּמָּה לְכַרְמִים

The two verbs both begin with an a-class vowel and conclude with a hireq-yod, qames-heh pattern. In addition to the high degree of assonance, there is also some correspondence between the consonants. Both verbs begin with a nun; both nouns include a kaph, resh, mem combination, although in the first this is interrupted with a pe.

Other sound pairs may perhaps be found, though in these cases the correspondence is imperfect and probably insufficient to establish a parallel. For example, **פָּרְזָה** and **פָּתָה** contain two repeated consonants in the same order, but the vowel correspondence is only slight and there are two consonants in the second verb that have no match in the first. The combination **אָתָּן אֶת־** is striking, particularly since the direct object marker is omitted everywhere else in the poem, though it is hard to see what significance this parallel could have.

The Textual Organization of Song 7:12-14

Based on our analysis of the various levels of parallelism in the Song, we now offer a

proposal for its poetic structure.

12 לְכֹה דוֹדִי
 נִצָּא הַשְּׂדֵה
 נְלִינָה בַּכְּפָרִים
 13 נִשְׁכִּימָה לְכַרְמִים
 נִרְאָה
 אִם־פָּרְחָה הַגֶּפֶן
 פְּתַח הַסְּמֹדֵר
 הַנִּצּוֹ הַרְמוֹנִים
 שָׁם אָתָּן אֶת־דוֹדִי לָךְ
 14 חִיר־וּנְתָן מִיֵּאֲדוּדָה
 וְעַל־פְּתַח־חֵינוּ כָּל־מְגָדִים
 חֲדָשִׁים גַּם־יִשְׁנִים
 דוֹדִי צְפַנְתִּי לָךְ

Though I have assigned each colon a separate line to make the structure clearer, this arrangement should be interpreted as alternating monocola and tricola. This gives the following pattern of accented syllables: 2 // 2/2/2 // 1 // 2/2/2 // 4 // 2/2/2 // 3. The monocola vary in length containing anything from one to four accented syllables. The tricola are, however, remarkably symmetrical, each colon having precisely two accented syllables. The scheme that I have proposed follows the Masoretic accentuation insofar as the divisions into individual cola are concerned. However, the line division given here does contravene the verse divisions of the MT. The first colon of v. 13[12] is taken as part of the tricolon begun in v. 12[11], rather than as the beginning of a new line.

The first tricolon demonstrates a sequential development as it traces the journey of the lovers. Each cola is strongly linked to the others by virtue of their morphological, syntactical, lexical and semantic parallels. The second perhaps has a similar sequential element as it considers

the various stages of the seasons as different fruits begin to bud, blossom and ripen. Here again the cola are linked on morphological, syntactical, lexical and semantic grounds. The gapping caused by the ellipsis of the conditional conjunction gives these three a particularly strong connection. Across both tricola there is also a developing generality of reference: as more kinds of fields are described and more fruits mentioned, the less our attention is focussed on any one of these. Field, vineyard or orchard - it hardly matters to these two; henna, grapes or pomegranates - all will serve as a suitable backdrop for these lovers.

The third tricolon is somewhat different from the first two, lacking the strong syntactical parallelism of these lines. Instead, these cola are linked by their imagery. The first clause, as we have seen, matches the preceding monocolon in such a way as to suggest that the fragrance of the mandrakes is a metaphor for the woman's love. The second and third create the image of stored fruit which matches the succeeding monocolon to provide a further metaphor for the woman's love. She gives her love to the man as the mandrake gives its scent, and she has stored up her love for him as choice fruits are stored, new and old having their own pleasures.

Confirmation of the Textual Organization

Having suggested a proposed structure for the poem based on parallelistic grounds the next step in Wendland's framework is to confirm this by observing other stylistic devices and thematic issues. Here he notes particularly the importance of discerning disjunctive and conjunctive elements in the text.⁵⁰

Disjunctive elements in Song 7:12-14[11-13] include:

1. The exclamatory expression which begins v. 12[11]. Wendland notes that a vocative such as this has a tendency to mark the beginning of a poetic unit.⁵¹
2. The shift in tone at the start of v. 14[13] when the discourse moves from invitation to information (though there may also be an implicit invitation in this verse).

⁵⁰ See Wendland, "Discourse Analysis," 13-14 for a list of possible devices.

⁵¹ Wendland, "Discourse Analysis," 13.

3. The implied timing of the poem seems to shift at the beginning of v. 14[13]. The fruit trees mentioned in v. 13[12] are at the beginning of the season, budding and blossoming, whereas v. 14[13] refers to the time of harvest when ripened fruit is stored.

4. Asyndeton throughout the poem, with the exception of the verbless clause in v. 14[13].

5. The fronted elements זֶשׁ in the final clause of v. 13[12], and יִרְיֶה in the final clause of v. 14[13].

6. The monocola at the close of vv. 13[12] and 14[13]. These short emphatic lines, Wendland suggests are often found at the end of a unit.⁵²

Conjunctive elements in the poem include:

1. The various repetitive features already noted.

2. The logical coherence of the development in vv. 12-13[11-12]. The final cohortative verb, גִּרְאֵה , expresses the purpose for the invitation at the beginning of the section. The conclusion to this journey is found in the emphatic זֶשׁ . They are seeking not only the right season, but the right place to consummate their relationship.

3. The use of the conjunction וְ and especially its elision from two of the clauses to which it refers.

4. The metaphorical parallels in v. 14[13] that we have already discussed serve to bind the first section of the poem with this final verse.

These various elements all suggest that we have drawn the structural outline of the poem in the right places. The three monocola we highlighted as structurally significant on the basis of their parallelism are confirmed as such. The strong parallelistic cohesion of vv.12-13[11-12] is confirmed by their logical coherence. The disjunction of tone and timing at v. 14[13] is indicated in our structure, though the refrain at the end of the verse tightens the links back to the rest of the poem.

⁵² Wendland, "Discourse Analysis," 13.

Location of Points of Prominence

Wendland explains that “any point in a poem which manifests a special concentration, or *convergence*, of such features is bound to be significant with regard to the structure, content, and/or function of the composition in its totality.”⁵³ The first, third and fourth monocola of our poem are strongly linked on both semantic and phonological grounds and it seems that these should be taken as the strongest structuring elements. This creates a false conclusion two-thirds of the way through giving the poem a somewhat asymmetrical feel. The final clause of v. 13[12] functions as a pivot in the poem. At first it appears to form an *inclusio* with the first clause of the poem. However, the final verse is carefully linked to it by a catchword (the verb *נָתַן* and by the alliteration of *יָדָיו* and *יָדָיו נָתַן*),⁵⁴ creating a forward movement in the verse which is finally resolved in the true conclusion to the poem. This is found in the final clause of v. 14[13], in a clause which strongly parallels both the opening colon of the poem and the pivot colon at the end of v. 13[12].

Thematic Summary

Our analysis of this poem has so far focused only on its internal structure and refrained from comment concerning its meaning or purpose. If we have identified the structure of the poem correctly, however, we would expect it to highlight and clarify the meaning of the poem and to enable the poem to have its intended effect. A brief consideration of this may add further confirmation to our analysis of the structure.

The poem is generally identified as an invitation song, in which the woman invites her lover to join her for a romantic tryst in the countryside. Different scholars assign greater or lesser sexual connotations to the various fruits and flowers mentioned, but most recognize some degree of sexual promise in the invitation. Longman is typically prosaic in his description of the woman’s

⁵³ Wendland, “Discourse Analysis,” 14.

⁵⁴ This could be imitated in an English translation: “There I will give you my love; Love apples give their scent.” See Keel, *The Song of Songs*, 256 for the term “love apples”.

offer: “Her purpose is to spend some time in the countryside with her lover for the purpose of physical intimacy; indeed the most propitious time for romance is the nighttime.”⁵⁵ Provan sees more explicit imagery in the poem, noting that the “‘locale’ is, of course, as much the woman herself as a ‘place’ to which both lovers go, as it was in 6:11. This is particularly clear in the reminder of 7:13, which speaks of a ‘door’ (*petah*) giving access to ‘every delicacy’ that has been stored up for the man.”⁵⁶ The sexual invitation is implicit in the location chosen for the assignation, since the countryside in general and the vineyard in particular, are used elsewhere in the Song as metaphors for the woman’s body. She invites her lover to explore the landscape of her body, and to enjoy its ripening fruits and blossoming flowers. Exum concurs with this view, noting the link to “the pleasure garden of 4:13, which is both the woman’s body and the place for lovemaking.”⁵⁷

The final verse of the poem is viewed as an extension of the invitation. Provan interprets the new and old fruit as “an invitation to sexual bliss, involving both things familiar to the man and things he has not yet experienced.”⁵⁸ Exum thinks that “new and old” should be interpreted as a *merismus* referring to “the whole spectrum of delights, known to lovers who appreciate how new the familiar can be.”⁵⁹

The structure that we have identified within the poem supports the notion that it is primarily a poem of invitation. The three significant monocola focus our attention on the woman’s invitation to her lover and her offer, or perhaps better, her promise of love. The development of the parallelisms across the first two tricola are suggestive of a general reference to the countryside which is more appropriate for a metaphorical interpretation than for a strictly literal view. There is no one place in the countryside that is the object of their excursion, and yet

⁵⁵ Longman, *Song of Songs*, 200.

⁵⁶ Provan, *Ecclesiastes/Song of Songs*, 356.

⁵⁷ Exum, *Song of Songs*, 241.

⁵⁸ Provan, *Ecclesiastes/Song of Songs*, 356.

⁵⁹ Exum, *Song of Songs*, 242.

that emphatic “*There* I will give you my love” demands that a particular place be in view. There is only one place that is both henna field and vineyard, producing both grapes and pomegranates, and that is the garden which is the woman. We have already seen the metaphorical links in v. 14[13] which identify the woman’s love with the scent of the mandrakes and the fruit stored up. If the first section of the poem was an invitation to sexual pleasures, this last part is a promise of sexual fulfillment. As such it forms an appropriate conclusion to the poem.

Conclusion

Poetic structure is complex and multilayered, not easily confined within a rigid framework, even in the case of a poem as short as that which we have analyzed in this paper. One of the advantages of the framework for analysis which we have followed has been its multifaceted, integrative approach which has allowed us to explore the complexities of the poetic structure rather than simplifying it to fit some predetermined mold. We have not been restricted to discussion of a single structuring device nor committed to finding a single outline for the structure of the poem. This has allowed us to show, for example, how a single colon may be linked backwards and forwards in multiple ways, as the different strands within the poem coincide.

The structure which this method has yielded draws together the form and meaning of the poem. The metrical analysis of the proposed outline indicates the careful balance of lines and cola, while the parallelistic analysis produces an asymmetrical structure with a strong forward movement through to the conclusion. The invitation with which the poem begins finds its counterpart not in the offer of v. 13[12] but in the promise of v. 14[13].

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