

The Syntax of Poetry in Biblical Hebrew

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1. Introduction

Biblical Hebrew poetry is complicated. Or, more accurately, describing BH poetry is complicated, if one goes by the voluminous scholarship on the topic over the last 250 years. One presumes—or certainly hopes!— that *creating* and *reading* BH poetry was a less tortured process for ancient Hebrews than modern scholars have made it seem. This is not to say that poetry itself is without complication or even mystery, since poetry is often characterized by allusive language and regularly interweaves the abstract with the concrete. Yet the student of BH literature who reads the first verse in Psalm 1 can typically intuit its poetic nature and identify some of the features used by the poet to make the verse “feel” poetic:

(1) אֲשֶׁר־יֵהְיֶה אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר | לֹא הִלְךָ בְּעַצַּת רְשָׁעִים וּבַדְרֹךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמַד וּבִמְוֹשֵׁב לִצְיִים לֹא יֵשֵׁב:

‘Happy is the man who does not walk in the counsel of wicked people, and does not stand in the path of sinners, and in the seat of mockers does not sit’ (Ps 1:1)

Within the fifteen graphemic words, the threefold repetition of the negative **לֹא**, the six occurrences of the palatal fricative **ש**, and the “parallelism” of the three relative clauses modifying **הָאִישׁ** all combine to produce a demonstrably poetic effect. But none of these are defining features of poetic verse. For instance, within the fourteen words of Gen 2:2 (2), there are five occurrences of **ש**, though I do not know one scholar who identifies this as poetic verse.

(2) וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה:

‘and God finished on the seventh day his work that he did, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he did’ (Gen 2:2)

Similarly, the use of successive relative clauses with the negative **לֹא** also occurs in Deut 4:28 (3), though it is also not transparently poetic, but simply list-like.

(3) וְעַבַדְתֶּם־שָׁם אֱלֹהִים מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי אָדָם עֵץ וָאֶבֶן אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִרְאוּן וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּן וְלֹא יֵאָכְלוּן וְלֹא יִרְיִחוּן:

‘and you shall serve there gods, the word of human hands, tree and stone, which do not see and do not hear and do not eat and do not smell’ (Deut 4:28)

What is it, then, about Ps 1:1 that distinguishes it as poetic verse rather than prose? This is, of course, *the* question—it and the attendant task of identifying and describing the operative principle or principles of BH poetry have proven to be both seductive and elusive since the widely recognized genesis of the modern study of BH poetry in Robert Lowth’s mid-18th century Oxford lectures (and then doctoral thesis).¹ Certainly scholarly interest in BH poetry would have unfolded with as much attention and enthusiasm if Lowth’s work had not achieved its enduring influence, since poetry exists in the Bible. But it is to Lowth that the field is indebted for the still-dominant view of BH poetry, that its essential, constitutive feature is parallelism in couplet form.² Moreover, Lowth’s three types of parallelism—synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic—have remained configurational, attested to by the fact that many continue to mention the three types even if they refine or dismiss them, such as with the “synthetic” category, which has long been recognized as a catch-all category for whatever instances that did not clearly fit into synonymous or antithetic parallelism (Gray 1915:49-52).

To fully answer *the* question of identifying any given example of BH as poetic verse or prose is, I think, ultimately impossible. All the discernible features used in poetry exist for prose, whether phonological (e.g., assonance, alliteration), syntactic (e.g., inverted word order), or literary devices (e.g., metaphor, hyperbole). What no doubt distinguished poetic verse from prose was a combination of constraints on multiple language levels leading to a conventional notion of verse.³ Moreover, if BH poetic verse was like that of most cultures, a particular performance style was a critical component of the poetic convention—a oral performance constraint, if you will, that was minimally associated with a particular prosody. And for the audience, especially in an oral dominant culture, it was the performance feature of an expressed poem that initially invoked the convention and established the expectations for the presence of the remaining poetic elements. But we will never have access to the critical performance convention, and therefore we cannot achieve a complete description of BH poetry.

1 [citations]

2 The monographs by Geller (1979) and Berlin (1985) as well as almost all recent introductions (e.g., Greenstein 2012) attest the continued primacy of parallelism in the description of BH poetry. Geller’s 1993 summary regarding Hebrew prosody and poetics is representative:

“Parallelism is commonly included in discussions of biblical pros. because of the constitutive role it clearly plays in the rhythm of biblical verse. ... The basic unit of parallelistic verse is the couplet, with its A and B lines (a triplet adds a C line, a quatrain a D line).” (1993: 509).

3 John Hobbins independently takes a similar position: “It is nonetheless probable that constraints at more than one level determine the way ancient Hebrew verse is constructed. This follows from the fact that language in general and poetry in particular instantiate redundant structures on multiple levels simultaneously.” (n.d.: 12). Note also that this proposal that a convention existed consisting of combined constructions fundamentally differs from Kugel’s argument that there is no dividing line between prose and verse (1981). My emphasis on “convention” follows from long-held views on the distinction between the *grammar* of language and the *use* of language, and also finds recent support in Dobbs-Allsopp’s discussion of the poetic line: “[Perloff] notes that if lineation may be rightly said to distinguish prose and verse, it does not so distinguish prose and poetry. Perloff, mindful of the need to account for nonlineated kinds of poetry (such as the modern “prose poem”), goes on to argue that what counts as poetry is always a configuration of historical, cultural, and ideological factors” (2015:18).

What *can* we describe? We can describe the constraints that remain available to us via the chirographic witness of the manuscripts.⁴ Though detailing the various techniques used throughout BH poetry can be helpful, this activity typically sidesteps the deeper question about discerning poetic verse from prose. In fact, though Watson lists nineteen indicators in his guide to help determine poetry versus prose (1986:44-57),⁵ he admits in conclusion that, “The mere listing of several mechanical and structural poetic elements in [a given set of] lines is not conclusive proof that they are poetry. Such a judgment can only come after several careful readings and long reflections” (57). Clearly, the exhaustive (and exhausting) taxonomic approach taken in Watson’s guide does little for identifying the core principles of poetic verse but, in fact, encourages the reader to lose the proverbial forest for the trees.⁶

The area where the most gains have been made in identifying a discrete set of principles that accurately describe the features of poetic verse is *syntax*. As Dobbs-Allsopp observes in his recent monograph, “A crucial part of any verse prosody turns on the relation of line and syntax—how the syntax of a poem’s sentences moves and plays across its lines, how line and syntax converge to shape thought and shade meanings, what happens to the syntax at the ends of lines.” There are many features in Dobbs-Allsopp’s rich study that deserve attention, but it is his stance on the line constituting the definitive feature of BH poetry that I will highlight (2015:19, 67-94).

Dobbs-Allsopp briefly but positively notes O’Connor’s analysis of the syntactic constraints of the BH poetic line, albeit only by alluding to O’Connor’s analysis as having addressed the “not unimportant issue” of “syntax and how syntax interfaces with and is staged by the line” (2015:19).⁷

4 On the written versus the oral aspect of poetic analysis, see Dobbs-Allsopp 2015: 20-57.

5 Line-forms (following Collins 1978), ellipsis, unusual vocabulary, conciseness, unusual word order, archaisms, use of metre, regularity and symmetry, parallelism, word-pairs, chiasmic patterns, envelope figure, break-up of stereotype phrases, repetition of various forms, gender-matched parallelism, tricolon, rhyme, other sound patterns, and absence of prose elements.

6 Kuntz also observes that Watson’s “preoccupation with taxonomy can be obsessive” and that “[h]is discussions, while suggestive, stop short of providing definitive answers” (1993:324). This is, to be honest, the debilitating flaw of purely taxonomic work, a principle that Naudé insightfully notes with regard to linguistic analysis—approaches that analyze only surface-level phenomena are incapable of sorting the relevant features of the data from the irrelevant and so are unable to draw insightful generalizations based on similarities of structures below the surface level that allow one to isolate the (reduced number of) relevant categories or principles (1990:118-120). My invocation of surface versus deep structure in this principled approach to scientific investigation should not be taken as an endorsement of the transformational-generative approach described by Greenstein (1974, 1983; see also O’Connor and Greenstein 2012:998), in which the parallelism of two lines may be described not just in terms of their surface syntactic structure but also by their deep syntactic structure. Even though I adopt the generative linguistic theory in my analysis of BH syntax, I am not convinced that appealing to deep structure is useful in relating between lines in poetry. In generative theory, the deep structure of a given clause is not something consciously perceived by a native speaker, but only subconsciously by his or her mental “faculty of language”; this follows from the modularity of the mind (see, e.g., Fodor 1983; Batterink and Neville 2013; see also Smith 2004:6-45). Thus, for the poet and the audience, the fact that two lines may be related by their deep structure is irrelevant; for the poetic effect, it is only and always surface structure that matters.

7 Though O’Connor’s line constraints are surprisingly accurate across the BH poetic corpus, Grosser notes a few examples that seem to defy his constraints (2013:48-49) and Hobbins offers a revision of O’Connor’s constraints using not syntactic words but prosodic words (n.d.:30), but does not work out the revised constraints over a large

In contrast to O'Connor's linguistic study, Dobbs-Allsopp has a much broader goal, "to reclaim the broader purview of the Lowthian pose, to conceive biblical poetry again beyond the idea of a defining parallelism" (4). In just his first chapter, he expertly probes numerous features of the BH poetic line, including the use of acrostic patterns, parallelism, sound play, syntax, grouping and the prevailing binarism of biblical poetry, the couplet, the triplet, larger groupings, isolated lines, and the logic of counting (68-94).

What should not be missed in Dobbs-Allsopp's argument is a provocative stance that dovetails with O'Connor's earlier work, a stance I consider deeply insightful (if perhaps lacking critical details that I will explore below)—that the poetic line is a "structural modality" of BH verse (2015:17, 67) and that the line is, above all, a syntactic phenomenon (73). Relatedly, within the far-ranging discussion of the first chapter of Dobbs-Allsopp's book, two further points emerge as critically relevant: while the syntactic *line* is definitive, the couplet and parallelism are *not*.⁸ Once again, Dobbs-Allsopp stands in line with O'Connor's thesis, which he restates in his 1997 "Afterword" to his 1980 *Hebrew Verse Structure*: the "Standard Description" stemming from Lowth's work fails due to a misguided focus on "a unit smaller than the poem," the problem of "absolutizing the couplet," and a misleading semantic definition of "parallelism" (1980 [1997]:88-96, 640; see Dobbs-Allsopp 2015:56, 69, 88).

There is much in Dobbs-Allsopp's ideas that we could profitably work though, and O'Connor's essential arguments remain largely misunderstood, in my opinion. However, I want to offer a refinement of an issue that I do not believe to have been sufficiently discussed—a syntactic reorientation for the deficient concept of parallelism. That is, I will bypass the issue of describing the BH poetic line and assert that it is not just the line that is central to defining the BH poetic verse, but constraints upon the relationship of the lines resulting in a binary syntactic choice.

O'Connor identified six "parallelistic" syntactic relations, what he called "tropes," that occur regularly in Hebrew verse (1980 [1997]: 87-132): repetition (on the word level), coloration (word-level), gapping (line-level), matching (line-level), mixing (supralinear-level), and dependency (supralinear-level). What is deeply surprising about these "tropes" in O'Connor's otherwise brilliant work is that of the six, only two, *gapping* and *dependency*, are recognized syntactic phenomena.⁹ *Repetition*, which operates between phrases of all levels, not just words, is a general non-linguistic

corpus of poetry. Moreover, he does not address the obvious conflict between O'Connor's adamantly syntactic approach and Hobbins' own prosodic approach.

- 8 Dobbs-Allsopp states it succinctly: "[Taking the couplet to be central] is mistaken insofar as it misjudges or obscures the central force of the iteration of the singular that is made manifest, as Lowth knew well, in the fact that parallelism occurs not only in pairs but also in threes, fours, and fives. Indeed, the higher reaches of iteration's additive horizon are mostly left unrealized in biblical forms of poetic parallelism" (2015:69). See also Landy 1984:64.
- 9 Grosser (2013, 18 n. 47) notes that O'Connor claims verb-gapping to be a device entirely constrained to poetic verse (1980: 124) and proceeds to assert that verb gapping actually does occur in prose. She is technically correct, though verb-gapping in prose is so very rare that O'Connor's assertion need only be downgraded minimally from an absolute principle to very strong tendency.

term; syntactically, apposition is the operation that produces repetition. *Coloration* is essentially a variation on repetition, in which two non-identical words are related by virtue of the interlineal relationship and combine to reference an entity or quality that is either equal to or greater than the sum of the parts. Once again, the syntactic phenomenon that captures the relationships O'Connor describes under coloration is apposition, though with a twist that I will elaborate below. My discussion of apposition will also demonstrate how the *matching* of lines may also be syntactically analyzed. As for *mixing*, in which two successive independent clauses/lines are followed by two subordinate clauses that O'Connor claims "depend on both independent clauses," I confess I consider this to be a misguided notion and that there is no reason to link the subordinate clauses with anything but the immediately preceding clause.

And so I have arrived at the refinement I offer for BH poetic syntax. I have developed a working hypothesis that interlineal syntax in BH poetry can be reduced to a binary choice between apposition and non-apposition. Before I can work this out on examples from the Psalms, allow me to introduce briefly how apposition works in BH grammar.

2. Apposition

Apposition is typically defined as the modification of one noun phrase (NP₁) by a second noun phrase (NP₂), without any morphological or syntactic signal such as cliticization (i.e., the so-called construct state), and such that the two NPs could be reformulated into a well-formed equative predication (i.e., NP₁ *is* NP₂). In a recent study by Holmstedt and Jones (f.c.), we investigated the BH data by means of a linguistic framework for apposition that drew upon both cross-linguistic work and generative theory. Below I summarize the relevant parts of that study for this discussion of poetic syntax.

In our apposition study, we noted that BH apposition falls into two broad semantic types, restrictive and non-restrictive. Restrictive apposition, in which the appositive entity contributes towards the identification or definition of the anchor entity, is common but highly constrained. The single most common construction using restrictive apposition is a quantified noun phrase in which the numeral is the anchor and a NP is the appositive, as in (4). Without the NP appositive בְּנִים the counted entity indicated by the numeral שְׁלֹשָׁה cannot be identified.

(4) וַיֹּלֶד נֹחַ שְׁלֹשָׁה בְּנָיִם אֶת־שֵׁם אֶת־חָם וְאֶת־יָפֶת׃

‘and Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth’ (Gen 6:10)

In contrast, nonrestrictive apposition does not specify and identify the particular referent of the anchor. Rather, the data for nonrestrictive apposition suggest a variety of semantic functions. In an

attempt to capture and categorize the variety of ways that nonrestrictive appositions relate to their anchors, we followed the scheme given in (5) which we adopted from Quirk et al's *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (1985: 1308).

(5) Semantic Types of non-restrictive NP appositions

Category	Gloss
1. Equivalence	
1. appellation:	'that is'
2. identification:	'namely'
3. designation:	'that is to say'
4. reformulation:	'in other words'
2. Attribution [specification]	'being' <i>or</i> 'as you know'
3. Inclusion	
1. exemplification:	'for example'
2. particularization:	'especially'

2.1 Semantics Types of Apposition in BH

2.1.1. Equivalence: Appellation

Appellation is a “naming relation” where both constituents are definite and the appositive is usually a proper noun (Quirk et al. 1985: 1308). A typical example, with הַמֶּלֶךְ as the anchor and the PN יהוֹאָשׁ the appositive, is given in (6).

- (6) וַיִּקְרָא הַמֶּלֶךְ יְהוֹאָשׁ לַיהוֹיָדָע הַכֹּהֵן וְלַכֹּהֲנִים
 ‘and the king, (that is,) Jehoash, summoned Jehoiada the priest and the (other) priests’ (2 Kgs 12:8)

2.1.2. Equivalence: Identification

In identification nonrestrictive appositions, the anchor is an NP, usually indefinite, although not necessarily, while the appositive is more specific, illustrated in (7)-(9).

- (7) וְהִפְקַדְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם בְּהִלָּה אֶת־הַשִּׁחָפֹת וְאֶת־הַקְּדֻחַת מַכְלוֹת עֵינַיִם וּמַדִּיבַת נַפֶּשׁ
 ‘and I shall impose upon you a terror, (namely,) the consumption and the fever that bring eyes to an end and make life pine away’ (Lev 26:16)
- (8) וְנִקְמָתִי דָמִי | עֲבָדֵי הַנְּבִיאִים וְדָמִי כָּל־עֲבָדֵי יְהוָה מִיַּד אִיזָבֵל
 ‘and I shall avenge the blood of my servants, (namely,) the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of Yhwh from the hand of Jezebel’ (2 Kgs 9:7)
- (9) שָׁמְעוּ דְבַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל מֶלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר:

‘Hear the word of the great king, (namely,) the king of Assyria’ (2 Kgs 18:28)

A particularly interesting example of identification is the common construction in which a singular subject (which has agreement with a singular verb) is the anchor for a plural appositive that includes a resumptive pronoun. In example (10), אַבְרָם, the anchor, represents *himself, his wife, his possessions, and even his nephew*, and the appositive הוּא וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ וְלוֹט עִמּוֹ identifies more fully what the anchor אַבְרָם really entails in this particular activity or event.

(10) וַיַּעַל אַבְרָם מִמִּצְרַיִם הוּא וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ וְלוֹט עִמּוֹ הַנְּגֵבָה:

‘and Abram went up from Egypt, (namely,) he and his wife and all that was his, and Lot (who was) with him, to the Negev’ (Gen 13:1)

Note that the anchor and appositive are often separated by other constituents, such as the locative PP מִמִּצְרַיִם.

2.1.3. Equivalence: Designation

In the designation type of apposition, the anchor is more specific than the appositive. Examples (11) and (12) are common examples of this type.

(11) וַיַּעֲזֹבוּ אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם

‘and they abandoned all of the commandments of Yhwh, their God.’ (2 Kgs 17:16)

(12) וַיָּשֶׁב יוֹרָם הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהִתְרַפֵּא בִּיְזְרְעֵאל מִן-הַמַּכִּים אֲשֶׁר יָבְהוּ אַרְמִים בְּרָמָה

‘and Joram, the king, returned to heal in Jezreel from the wounds that the Arameans gave him at Ramah’ (2 Kgs 8:29)

2.1.4. Equivalence: Reformulation

In an apposition of reformulation, the appositive is a rewording of the anchor, as in (13).

(13) וְסָפַרְתָּ לָּךְ שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת פְּעָמִים וְהָיוּ לָּךְ יָמֵי שִׁבְעַת שַׁבָּתוֹת הַשָּׁנִים תִּשְׁעַת וְאַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה:

‘and you shall count off seven sabbaths of years, seven years seven times, so that the seven sabbaths of years will be for you forty nine years’ (Lev 25:8)

The reformulation in (13) is literal, but reformulation can also be metaphorical, as in (14), where staggering is a metaphorical reformulation of wine; here the important property of wine is that staggering is one of its effects.¹⁰

- (14) הַשְׁקִיתָנוּ יַיִן תַּרְעֵלָה: (14)
'you caused us to drink wine, staggering' (Ps 60:5)

In NP appositions of equivalence, either the anchor or the appositive could be omitted and the resulting sentence would be an entailment of the original (Huddleston & Pullam 2002: 447). Hence, the traditional definition of apposition concerns *only* appositions of equivalence.

2.1.5. Attribution

In contrast, in an apposition of attribution, the appositive is not equivalent to the anchor; instead, it modifies or describes it. In example (15), the anchor is a referential NP and one of the following appositives is indefinite and non-referential (see Quirk et al. 1985: 1313):

- (15) וַיִּקְנֵהוּ פּוֹטִיפָר סֹרִיס פְּרִעָה שָׂר הַטְּבָחִים אִישׁ מִצְרָיִם
'and Potiphar, the official of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, a man, an Egyptian,
bought him' (Gen 39:1)

Example (15) is rare, however, and almost all other attributive appositions we found have both an indefinite anchor and an indefinite appositive, as in (16).

- (16) וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם עַל-הַלֶּחֶם שֶׁבַעַת כֶּבֶשִׂים תְּמִימִם בְּגֵן שָׁנָה
'and you shall offer with the bread seven spotless lambs, year-olds' (Lev 23:18)

In BH an appositive can also be used to indicate the material of which something consists, such as נְחֹשֶׁת in (17), הַזָּהָב in (18), and קָמַח in (19).

- (17) וְהַמְשִׁרָרִים הֵימָן אָסָף וְאַיִתָּן בְּמִצְלִתַּיִם נְחֹשֶׁת לְהַשְׁמִיעַ:
'and the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, on cymbals (of) bronze to make sound' (1
Chr 15:19)

- (18) וַיִּתְּנוּ שְׁתֵּי הָעֵבֶתֶת הַזָּהָב עַל-שְׁתֵּי הַטְּבָעֹת עַל-קְצוֹת הַחֹשֶׁן:
'and they put the two cords (of) the gold on the two rings on the edges of the breast-
piece' (Exod 39:17)

10 Based on the translation, it might seem that *staggering* could be taken as a verbal modifier for the verb *drink*; but in the Hebrew there is no verb *drink*. If there were an English equivalent for *feed* with regard to beverages, this would produce a better translation, corresponding to *You fed us wine, staggering*. For commentary on alternative interpretations of this phrase, see Kautzsch 1910:§131c.

(19) מהֲרֵי שְׁלֹשׁ סָאִים קָמַח סֹלֶת לְוָשִׁי וְעָשִׂי עֲגוֹת:

‘quickly fetch three seahs (of) flour, finely milled flour, knead (it), and make cakes’ (Gen 18:6)

Some appositions of attribution have an intensifying function. The appositive alters the sense of the anchor by strengthening it, qualitatively or quantitatively. The most common examples of this are with NP repetition, as in (20):

(20) וְאֶת־הַמַּחְתּוֹת וְאֶת־הַמְזֻרְקוֹת אֲשֶׁר זָהָב וְזָהָב וְאֲשֶׁר־בָּסָף בָּסָף לָקַח רַב־טַבָּחִים

‘and the censers and the bowls, which were gold gold and silver silver, the captain of the guard took’ (2 Kgs 25:15)

The intensifying apposition of attribution with the metals in (20) suggests “pure gold” and “pure silver”. However, this also occurs with non-material NPs, such as גְּבִים in (21):

(21) וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה הַנַּחַל הַזֶּה גְּבִים | גְּבִים:

‘and he said, “Thus said Yhwh: Make this ravine (into) ditches, ditches’ (2 Kgs 3:16)

In (21), the apposition of the same NP suggests an intensifying of type (i.e., deep ditches) or number (i.e., abundant ditches).

Less common, but clearly a type of intensifying apposition, is the juxtaposition of two VPs. This mostly occurs in poetry, as (22) and (23), though it also occasionally appears in prose, as with the passive participles in (24):

(22) בָּזָה לְךָ לְעַגְגָּה לְךָ בְּתוֹלַת בְּתַצִּיּוֹן

‘Virgin daughter Zion despises you, derides you’ (2 Kgs 19:21)

(23) אֲבָל אֲמַלְלָהּ אֶרֶץ

‘(The) land mourns, languishes’ (Isa 33:9)

(24) כִּי נִתְּנִים נִתְּנִים הֵמָּה לִּי מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

‘because given, given [> totally given] were they to me from the midst of the children of Israel’ (Num 8:16)

The inclusion of VPs, that is, non-nominal constituents, in a discussion of apposition is innovative and anticipates the cornerstone of my appositional analysis of poetic syntax.

2.1.6. Inclusion

The final semantic relationship for apposition is *inclusion*. In inclusion, the appositive is an example of the anchor—one specific instance of it. The example can be representative of the anchor, a

prominent case, in which case Quirk et al (1985) refer to the relationship as particularization (*especially, in particular, mainly, and chiefly*); or it can be an example that is not necessarily prominent or notable, but is still typical, which they refer to as exemplification (*for example or say*). For reasons unclear to me, there are no unambiguous examples of inclusive NP apposition in BH; all the potential examples we identified more likely reflect unmarked relative clauses than appositives.

2.2. Non-Nominal BH Apposition

Although canonical apposition is considered to be a noun modification strategy, the evidence adduced in the reference grammars, as well as the VP apposition I provided above in (22)-(24) and below in (25), suggest that non-nominal constituents may also be juxtaposed and so parallel NP apposition.¹¹

- (25) ומבצר משגב חומתֶיךָ השַׁח הַשְּׁפִיל הַגִּיעַ לָאָרֶץ עַד־עָפָר: ס
 'and the fortress of the stronghold of your walls he has thrown down, he has brought low, he has thrown to the ground, to the dirt' (Isa 25:12)

In fact, if nonrestrictive apposition is a specifying type of coordination rather than more narrowly a type of noun modifier (a proposal we briefly discuss), then there is no inherent reason to limit nonrestrictive apposition to nominal categories. PPs in particular are frequently used in ways that are difficult to distinguish from nominal nonrestrictive apposition. We found the following prepositions governing both the anchor and appositive: אֶל (26), אֵת (27), בְּ (28), מִן (29), עַל (30), and the DOM אֵת (31).

- (26) מִשַׁחֲתֶיךָ לְמֶלֶךְ אֶל־עַם יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל:
 'I anoint you as king over the people of Yhwh, over Israel' (2 Kgs 9:6)
- (27) וְעַתָּה הִתְעַרְבֵנּוּ נָא אֶת־אֲדֹנָי אֶת־מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר
 'and now make a wager with my lord, with the king of Assyria' (2 Kgs 18:23)
- (28) וַיִּקְבֹּר בִּירוּשָׁלַם עִם־אֲבֹתָיו בְּעִיר דָּוִד:
 'and he was buried in Jerusalem with his fathers, in the city of David' (2 Kgs 14:20)
- (29) וְהָרִים מִמֶּנּוּ בְּקִמְצוֹ מִסְלֹת הַמִּנְחָה וּמִשְׁמֵנָה וְאֵת כָּל־הַלְּבָנָה אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַמִּנְחָה

11 Andersen (1974:36-60) also recognizes non-nominal apposition, particularly clausal apposition. His definition and application of apposition is very broad, resulting in so many disagreements in our analyses that I cannot interact with it here.

‘and he shall raise some of it in his hand, some of the flour of the grain offering and some of its oil and all the frankincense that is on the grain offering’ (Lev 6:8)¹²

(30) ומִיתֵר הַשֶּׁמֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל-כַּפוֹ יָתֵן הַכֹּהֵן עַל-תְּנוּדָה אֶזְן הַמִּטְהָר הַיְמָנִית וְעַל-בִּהֶן יָדוֹ הַיְמָנִית וְעַל-בִּהֶן רִגְלוֹ הַיְמָנִית עַל דָּם הָאֲשָׁם:

‘and some the remainder of the oil that is on his hand, the priest shall put on the lobe of the right ear of the one being cleansed and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot on top of the blood of the guilt offering’ (Lev 14:17)

(31) וַיֹּאמֶר קַח-נָא אֶת-בְּנֶךְ אֶת-יְחִידֶךָ

‘and he said, “take your son, your only” (Gen 22:2)

When examples like these are mentioned in the reference grammars, they are analyzed as nominal appositions of the complements of the prepositions (Waltke and O’Connor 1990: 232, §12.3.f). That is, they are discussed in terms of whether the preposition or DOM on the anchor is repeated or omitted on the appositive. However, this analysis does not address the syntactic position of the second preposition—how can the second PP be taken as a nominal appositive? Rather than attempting to maintain an unmotivated theoretical restriction that anchors and appositives must be NPs, it is more logical and grounded in the data to accept the constituents as they appear—when an anchor is an NP, it is nominal apposition, when the anchor is a PP, a VP, or even a full clause, it is non-nominal apposition.

2.3. Extraposed Apposition

In his linguistic study of relativization, Mark de Vries (2002: 235) suggests that any construction that can be divided into two parts can be extraposed under certain conditions. Some examples of extraposed appositives in BH follow in (32)-(36).

(32) הַנְּנִי מְבִיא רָעָה אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְעַל-יֹשְׁבָיו אֵת כָּל-דִּבְרֵי הַסֵּפֶר אֲשֶׁר קָרָא מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה:

‘look, I am bringing an evil to this place and on its inhabitants, all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read’ (2 Kgs 22:16)

(33) וְהָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר הִתְהַלְכוּ אֲבֹתַי לְפָנָיו אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק ... הִיבְרָךְ אֶת-הַנְּעָרִים

‘the God that my fathers walked before him, Abraham and Isaac . . . shall bless the boys’ (Gen 48:15-16)

(34) וְאַתָּן אַתֶּם רְאשִׁים עֲלֵיכֶם שְׂרֵי אֱלֹפִים וְשְׂרֵי מְאוֹת וְשְׂרֵי חֲמִשִּׁים וְשְׂרֵי עֶשְׂרֵת וְשְׂטָרִים לְשִׁבְטֵיכֶם:

12 Example (29) could also be understood in terms of right dislocation, since the complement of the first preposition is a pronoun. However, it seems more likely that this pronoun refers to the *מִנְחָה*, the food offering, mentioned in the preceding clause, than to the appositive.

‘and I will make them heads over you, leaders of thousands and leaders of hundreds and leaders of fifties and leaders of tens and officials for your tribes’ (Deut 1:15)

(35) וישלח ספרים אל-כל-היהודים אל-שבוע ועשרים ומאה מדינה מלכות אשורוש דברי שלום ואמת: לקים את-ימי הפרים האלה

‘and he sent letters to all the Jews, to (the) 127 provinces, the kingdom of Xerxes — words of peace and truth—to establish these days of Purim’ (Esth 9:30-31)

(36) האמים לפנים ישבו בה עם גדול ורב ורם כענקים:

‘the Emim formerly dwelled in it [the land], a people great and numerous and tall like Anakim’ (Deut 2:10)

Following Thorion-Vardi (1987), with slight modification, we recognize two rules governing the extraposition of appositives in BH: (1) the subject and predicate must remain adjacent; and (2) the appositive cannot be inserted until the rest of the clause in which the anchor is found has been completed.¹³

The only exceptions to Thorion-Vardi's second rule, that the rest of the clause must be completed before the appositive is inserted, involve clauses with multiple extraposed appositives.

(37) ויבנו בני-ראובן ובני-גד וחצי שבט המנשה שם מזבח על-הירדן מזבח גדול למראה:

‘and the sons of Reuben, the sons of Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh built there₁ an altar₂, by the Jordan₁, an altar great in (its) appearance₂’ (Josh 22:10)

(38) וקח מאתם מטה מטה לבית אב מאת כל-נשיאיהם לבית אבתם שנים עשר מטות

‘and take from them₁ a staff₂ for each ancestral house₃ from each of their leaders₁, for their fathers’ house₃, twelve staffs₂’ (Num 17:17)

(39) = (10) ויעל אברם ממצרים הוא ואשתו וכל-אשר-לו ולוט עמו הנגבה:

‘and Abram₁ went up from Egypt₂, (namely,) he and his wife and all that was his, and Lot (who was) with him₁, to the Negev₂’ (Gen 13:1)

(40) = (34) ואתן אתם ראשים עליכם שרי אלפים ושרי מאות ושרי חמשים ושרי עשרות ושרים לשבטיכם:

‘and I will make them heads₁ over you₂, leaders of thousands and leaders of hundreds and leaders of fifties and leaders of tens and officials₁ for your tribes₂’ (Deut 1:15)

13 However, an appositive cannot be extraposed outside of a subordinate clause within which it appears; for example, in (33) the appositive is only extraposed to the end of the relative clause within which it is contained.

The order of the anchors is not necessarily the same as that of the appositives.¹⁴ Though they do appear in the same relative sequence in (37) and (39)-(40), that is not the case in (38). In example (38), appositives #2 (לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם) and #3 (שָׁנִים עָשָׂר מְטוֹת) appear in reverse order from that of their respective anchors, מְטָה מְטָה and לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם.¹⁵

3. “Parallelism” = Apposition // Non-Apposition

I will now finally address BH poetic syntax with an eye to appositional relationships. To be clear about my method, I will spell out my assumptions. First, I assume O’Connor’s description of the line is either fully accurate or sufficiently accurate to allow us to identify poetic lines with reasonable confidence. Second, at the end of each line, I look ahead for the next line to determine whether the subsequent line pauses to elaborate, refine, or reformulate the image introduced in the first line, or move on by adding new information to the current image or transitioning to a subsequent image. Syntactically, this is the binarity of the apposition/non-apposition choice; literarily, this is what Dobbs-Allsopp describes as

the characteristically closed and recursive shape of biblical Hebrew poetic rhythm ... A clausal or sentential whole (frame) is articulated and then reiterated once or twice over, producing (optimally) a halting or pulsing series of progressions—one step forward, iteration, and then another step forward, reiteration, and sometimes twice over (in the case of triplets), and so on.” (2015:45)¹⁶

Apposition is a syntactic means in poetic verse to allow the brain to pause and process the poetic image (see Dobbs-Allsopp 2015:44). Once the poet has determined that the image is sufficiently elaborate, he or she moves to the next image by non-appositional syntactic means. Once again, to borrow insight from Dobbs-Allsopp, he notes that,

The primacy of recurrence is rooted deeply in oral culture and the cognitive needs of oral discourse, which without benefit of mind-external backlooping technology (e.g., writing) tends to “move ahead more slowly, keeping close to the focus of attention

14 The appearance of multiple extraposed appositives in the same clause is further evidence against taking such extraposed appositions as free-adjunct or right-dislocation structures (and for the latter, we add also the observation that dislocation overwhelmingly employs a coindexed, “resumptive” pronoun in the core clause, not a full NP).

15 Thorion-Vardi’s observation that extraposed appositions must be moved to the right-most edges of their clauses as a grammatical principle in BH guides our analysis of examples like (39) and (40). While the locative phrase הַנְּגִבָּה in (39) and the PP לְשִׁבְטֵיכֶם in (40) might in different contexts be taken as verbal adjuncts for וַיַּעַל and וַיֵּאָתֶן, here they must be extraposed appositives. Both הַנְּגִבָּה and לְשִׁבְטֵיכֶם follow an extraposed apposition, which by Thorion-Vardi’s principle must be position at the end of its clause. This position for הַנְּגִבָּה and לְשִׁבְטֵיכֶם indicates that they, too, must be extraposed appositives, modifying the anchors מִמְצִרִים and עֲלֵיכֶם, respectively.

16 Similarly, Greenstein 2012: “It is typical of biblical poetry, however, to advance the message in steps, adding a point or a nuance here, burnishing or refining an image there” (603).

much of what it has already dealt with. Redundancy, repetition of the just-said, keeps both speaker and hearer surely on the track.” (2015:69, quoting Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* [London: Routledge, 1982], 40)

I would note that there is actually little exact repetitive apposition, which serves to halt the image and emphasize whatever has been repeated. Rather, apposition does advance the image, albeit slowly, by clarification or reformulation. Finally, before we consider a poem, it is important to recognize that the binary syntactic choice facing the poet for relating successive poetic lines does not match the literary development or progression in a one-to-one manner. The most obvious example of this is enjambment, which is clearly non-appositional, and yet it does not move to the next poetic image in the development of the poem, but adds non-appositional information about the existing image.

In my analysis, I am tentatively using “image” to represent the major stages of the poem’s progression, however it develops.¹⁷ This is not a literary study, nor do I claim that my literary comments below contain any particular insight. I add them only to give a sense of how one might understand the syntactic choice between apposition/non-apposition to work out in the composition of a poem. Once again, please keep in mind that my argument in this essay is about interlineal syntax, not literary-poetic structure.

Rather than beginning with poetic excerpts used in previous studies, especially from O’Connor, Greenstein, Geller, or Dobbs-Allsopp (those who have had the greatest influence on my own analysis of BH poetry), it will be more useful to see my argument applied to an entire poem. And since I began with Psalm 1:1, it is perhaps most fitting that I analyze the whole.

(41) Interlineal Syntax in Psalm 1

אֲשֶׁר־יֵהְיֶה	1a	Non-App (initial image)— <i>image #1</i>
אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִלְךְ בְּעֵצַת רְשָׁעִים	1b	Non-App (enjambment, relative clause)— <i>adding to #1</i>
וּבְדֶרֶךְ חֲטָאִים לֹא עָמַד	1c	App (clausal, to preceding)— <i>reformulating</i>
וּבְמוֹשָׁב לְעֵינִים לֹא יָשָׁב:	1d	App (clausal, to preceding)— <i>reformulating</i>
כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה חָפְצוֹ	2a	App (clausal, to preceding)— <i>reformulating</i>
וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ יִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה:	2b	App (clausal, to preceding)— <i>reformulating</i>
וְהָיָה כְּעֵץ שֶׁתּוֹלַע עַל-פְּלִי מָיִם	3a	Non-App (non-contrastive event/activity)— <i>image #1"</i>
אֲשֶׁר פָּרְיוֹ יִתֵּן בְּעֵתוֹ	3b	Non-App (enjambment, relative clause)— <i>adding to #1"</i>
וְעֵלְהוּ לֹא-יִבּוֹל	3c	App (clausal, to preceding)— <i>reformulating</i>

17 Although the following is entirely beyond the current grammatical concern, I find Landy’s observations provocative and keep them in mind as I contemplate the nature of BH poetry: “prose presupposes sequential time ...; poetry concerns timelessness,” “prose preserves an often ironic objective distance between the writer, his audience, and his subject-matter... In poetry, there is a communion between the singer and the audience,” “Prose accordingly represents everyday life, activities, and speech ... poetry is the language of liminal situations,” and “Prose perceives the world through relations of contiguity, temporal and spatial, i.e., metonymy; poetry expresses it metaphorically, through relations of likeness and difference” (1984:71-72).

וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה יַעֲלֶיחַ: 3d	App (clausal, to preceding)— <i>reformulating</i>
לֹא-כֵן הִרְשָׁעִים 4a	Non-App (contrastive event/activity)— <i>new image #2</i>
כִּי אִם-כִּמּוֹן אֲשֶׁר-תִּדְבְּנֵנוּ רוּחַ: 4b	Non-App (contrastive event/activity)— <i>image #2'</i>
עַל-כֵּן לֹא-יִקְמוּ רַשָּׁעִים בְּמִשְׁפָּט 5a	Non-App (non-contrastive event/activity)— <i>concluding image, #3</i>
וְחִטָּאִים בְּעֵדַת צְדִיקִים: 5b	App (clausal, to preceding, with verbal ellipsis)— <i>reformulating</i>
כִּי-יִוְדַע יְהוָה דְּרֹךְ צְדִיקִים 6a	Non-App (enjambment, motive clause)— <i>image #3'</i>
וְדֹרֶךְ רַשָּׁעִים תֵּאבֵד: 6b	Non-App (contrastive event/activity)— <i>image #3''</i>

As you can see from my running linguistic notes, of the sixteen poetic lines in this poem, seven represent clausal apposition, while nine are non-appositional in their relationship to the preceding line. The non-appositional lines vary in their syntactic relationship, from the enjambment of subordination (the אשר relatives in 1b, 3b, the כי motive clause 6a) to conjunctive clauses use both contrastively (4a-b, 6b) and non-contrastively (3a, 5a). The appositional clauses clarify the anchor clause by reformulating it. Thus, the appositive clauses in 1c and 1d flesh out the nature of the happy by providing further qualities or behaviors. Line 2a may not look like an appositive, with the initial אם כי, but once it is situated syntactically within the scope of the אשר in v. 1, it becomes clear that 2a continues the development of the happy man description by providing taking the negative statements (what he *does not* do) in lines 1b-d and reformulating them positively (what he *does do*). The appositive clause in 2b specifies what it means that this man's delight is in Yhwh's law (and as such, this may be an example of inclusive-exemplification apposition). In 3c, the appositive clause reformulates the description of the productive tree by moving the image from its fruit to its enduring foliage. And the appositive clause in 3d reformulates the preceding clause by once again replacing a negative (what his foliage *does not* do) with a positive (what he *does* do).

Identifying apposition in the context of poetic line relationships is certainly not an idea I can claim as my own. Indeed, apposition is mentioned by Collins (1973), O'Connor (1980 [1997]), Landy (1984), Hobbins ("Isaiah," n.d.), Grosser 2013, and Dobbs-Allsopp 2015. For example, Landy correctly describes the relationship between the two lines of Ps 23:1, יְהוָה רֹעִי לֹא אֶחָקֵר, as appositional: 'I shall not want' defines the condition of the Lord being my shepherd" (1984: 76).¹⁸ Indeed, some of these authors use apposition throughout their descriptions of BH poetic verse. What I am simply doing is connecting the grammatical dots and attempting to reduce the taxonomic chaos to the binary syntactic facing the poet in relating poetic lines.

18 Note that this description is linguistically inaccurate, since the apposition cannot be restrictive (definitional); it is rather, non-restrictive *inclusional* apposition, since not wanting is used by the poet as a typical, or perhaps most prominent example of what having Yhwh as one's shepherd means in concrete terms.

Before I close I will offer X more examples of how apposition can move us towards a better poetic analysis. First, I will take up the issue that O'Connor uses in his 1997 afterword to his *Hebrew Verse Structure*. One of the sub-types of the trope O'Connor calls "coloration" is the splitting up of formulaic or stereotypical phrases across a line pair; he calls this sub-type "combination" (1980 [1997]: 647-9). The example he uses is Ps 54:5, given in (42).

(42) כִּי זָרִים | קָמוּ עָלַי וְעָרִיצִים בִּקְשׁוּ נַפְשִׁי לֹא שָׂמוּ אֱלֹהִים לְנִגְדָם סֵלָה:

'Strangers stand against me. The arrogant seek my life. They do not set God before them.' (Ps 54:5, translation from O'Connor 1980 [1997]:646)

The problem O'Connor isolates is the use of זָרִים "foreigners" in the first line and עָרִיצִים "arrogant" in the second line. In a similar verse in Ps 86:14, the עָרִיצִים of the second line follows זָרִים "insolent" in first line, which strikes many commentators as a better match, leading some to propose emendation for זָרִים in Ps 54:5. O'Connor adduces evidence that זָרִים עָרִיצִים "arrogant foreigners" is a biblical phrase that has been split apart in Ps 54:5 but is re-"combined" by virtue of the interlinear trope he calls *coloration : combination*. I suggest that rather than this wholly non-syntactic (and, in my opinion, ad hoc) explanation, the key lies in understanding the semantics of apposition. In 54:5, the first line introduces the כִּי motive clause (subordinate to v. 4). The first reason the poet gives for God to hear his prayer (v. 4) is that strangers have risen against him. This is followed by an appositional clause that clarifies by reformulation the form of this oppression—arrogant people have sought to kill him. The last clause is non-appositional and presents new information about the oppressors that offers explanation for their actions—they do not share the poet's devotion. It is a feature of the semantics of apposition that the elements of the appositive are related to the elements of the anchor, allowing the interlaced image to more be more fully representational. This is how זָרִים and עָרִיצִים work together as the subjects of the anchor and the appositive to refer to "arrogant strangers."

Finally, I will conclude with an example used in Greenstein 1983, given in (43).

(43) גַּם-צִפְרוֹשִׁים שְׂמְחוּ לְךָ אֲרָזֵי לְבָנוֹן

'Yea, the cypresses rejoice over you, the cedars of Lebanon' (Isa 14:8a, translation from Greenstein 1983:52)

Greenstein's argument leading up to this example centers on two claims: first, "that with very few exceptions ... the first colon of a poetic unit in the Bible comprises a complete clause, and the caesura between cola corresponds to a clause break" (1983:50), and second, "that deep structure must be considered in analyzing Biblical verse finds undeniable support in instances where the verb of the A colon is shared by the B colon and is deleted," in other words, verb-gapping (1983:46). In

response, regarding the first claim, I will simply point out that enjambment, that is, the continuation of a clause from one poetic line into a second, is more common than often supposed.¹⁹ Even in Psalm 1, the first verse represents a single complex clause broken over four poetic lines: the first line is a null copula clause and the second, third, and fourth lines are a compound relative clause modifying a noun in the first line.

Verb-gapping certainly exists (see Miller 2007 for a recent study) and is much more common in poetry than in prose. Critically, it is the appositional relationship of lines that provides the context by which the deleted verb is associated with its overt antecedent. But this does not require a deep structure transformation for the audience to process the gapping and reconstruct the desired verb (see n. 6 above). Prototypical cases of verb-gapping are those in which the second line contains two syntactic constituents, such as a subject and object, as in (44).

(44) יָדַע שׁוֹר קָנָהוּ וַחֲמֹר אֲבוֹס בְּעֵלָיו
 ‘the ox knows its owner, the donkey [knows] its master’s crib’ (Isa 1:4a)

However, in cases such as Greenstein marshals (43), there is but one syntactic constituent in the second line, which is what he finds troubling, arguing that “the second colon means nothing unless it is understood as a small surface representation of only part of a much larger deep structure” (52). Though I share adherence to the linguistic theory behind Greenstein’s analysis, I find this complexity unnecessary. A much simpler analysis is that the NP in the second line, אֲרִי לְבָנוֹן, is appositive to the subject NP of the first line, בְּרוּשִׁים. The fact that material intervenes between the anchor and its appositive is not problematic, since apposition allows extraposition, particularly to focus the extraposed appositive (and so the clarifying information it provides). In a previous study, I concluded that extraposition may be used to mark the extraposed constituent for right-branching Focus or to effect linear reordering, especially with complex or “heavy” constituents, to ease the mental processing (see Holmstedt 2014:138-40). Which explanation fits a given example will depend on the context.

4. Conclusion

In this study, I set out to see if the recurrence of non-nominal apposition in poetry, which I discovered in a previous study (Holmstedt and Jones, f.c.), might have a more central role in poetic

19 O’Connor 1980 [1997]: 409; Hobbins 2007:573-76; Dobbs-Allsopp 2001a,b; 2015:137-48.

M. O’Connor, Hebrew Verse Structure, 1997 (1980), 409; F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, The Enjambling Line in Lamentations: A Taxonomy (Part 1), ZAW 113 (2001), 219-39; The Effects of Enjambment in Lamentations (Part 2), ZAW 113 (2001), 370-95.

syntax than it has been given.²⁰ The semantic functions of apposition fit well into terms that Dobbs-Allsopp repeats often in his description of BH verse: “iteration,” “reiteration,” “redundancy,” “recursion,” “recurrence,” and so on. Similarly, the use of all types of apposition, from nominal to verbal to clausal, makes sense in light of the discourse nature of poetry, that it “advance[s] the message in steps, adding a point or a nuance here, burnishing or refining an image there” (Greenstein 2012: 603).

By connecting the dots from previous insights made by scholars such as O’Connor, Greenstein, and Dobbs-Allsopp, I am making the case that the failed notion of parallelism for interlineal syntax should be replaced by the binary opposition of apposition/non-apposition, which the poet applies to at the end of each line. Working through BH poetry with this framework shows that both may be applied recursively, nearly without limit, though for reasons of memory and processing, the application of apposition does not often surpass three before a non-appositive choice is made and a new image is submitted. This is, I believe, a fresh and constructive beginning to a new syntactic lens for reading BH poetry.

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²⁰ Though I will not address the thorny issue of sorting poetic verse from prose any further (see above, pp. 2-3), the use of VP or CP apposition may be one of the few concrete, *grammatical* phenomena that distinguished prose from verse, since its presence in prose is extremely rare, while its presence in verse is nearly definitional.

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