

## Hebrew Parallelism

The Hebrews often wrote with what is called **Hebrew Parallelism**. In the Old Testament this parallelism usually manifested itself as **Hebrew Poetry**. Hebrew poetry **does not** have a pattern in **sound**, like English poetry often does, but rather it focuses on a **pattern of thought**. In the New Testament, often the Hebrew penman of the canonical Scriptures would use Hebrew Parallel structure to **emphasize various points** or **highlight interpretive intent**. There are **five** generally accepted **types** of Hebrew Parallelism:

1. **Synonymous Parallelism** (Comparative) – The second line **repeats** the same **thought** as the first line  
Line 1 = Line 2

Psalm 1:1 – Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

2. **Synthetic Parallelism** (Completive) – The second line **builds upon** the thought that was introduced in the first line  
Line 1 + Line 2

Psalm 1:2 – But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

3. **Antithetical Parallelism** (Contrastive) – The second line **contrasts** with the first line, often introduced with “but”  
Line 1 / Line 2

Psalm 1:6 – For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

4. **Climactic Parallelism** – Numerous lines of poetry build to one conclusion  
Line 1 + Line 2 + Line 3 + Line 4 = Line 5

Psalm 1:3 – And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; [=] and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

5. **Chiastic Parallelism** – Elements are parallel in thought in reverse order (Proverbs 11:19-20 as example)  
Line 1 – As righteousness tendeth to life; (A)  
Line 2 – so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death (B)  
Line 3 – They that are of a forward heart are abomination to the LORD: (B)  
Line 4 – but such as are upright in their way are his delight.(A)

## Chiastic Structure in Jude 5-11

5 – I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. [Reject God's leaders]

6 – And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. [Reject God's authority]

7 – Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. [Reject God's design]

8a – Likewise do these *filthy* dreamers defile the flesh [Reject God's design]

8b – despise dominions, [Reject God's authority]

8c – and speak evil of dignities. [Reject God's leaders] (9) Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. (10) But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. (11a) Woe unto them!

11b – for they have gone the way of Cain [Reject God's design]

11c – and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward [Reject God's authority]

11d – and perished in the gainsaying of Core [Reject God's leaders]