

**Hebrew parallelism** is a key feature of biblical Hebrew poetry, where ideas are expressed in pairs or series of lines that relate to each other in specific ways. It is used to reinforce or expand meaning, highlight contrasts, or create a rhythmic flow. Below are definitions of different types of Hebrew parallelism:

### 1. Synonymous Parallelism

- **Definition:** The second line restates or reinforces the idea of the first line using similar words or phrases.
  - **Example:**  
*"The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands." (Psalm 19:1)*
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### 2. Antithetical Parallelism

- **Definition:** The second line contrasts with the first line, presenting an opposing idea to highlight a difference or conflict.
  - **Example:**  
*"The wicked borrow and do not repay,  
but the righteous give generously." (Psalm 37:21)*
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### 3. Synthetic Parallelism

- **Definition:** The second line builds upon or completes the thought of the first line, adding new information or elaboration.
  - **Example:**  
*"The law of the Lord is perfect,  
refreshing the soul." (Psalm 19:7)*
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### 4. Emblematic Parallelism

- **Definition:** One line conveys an idea through imagery or metaphor, and the second line explains or applies the image.
  - **Example:**  
*"As a deer pants for streams of water,  
so my soul pants for you, my God." (Psalm 42:1)*
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### 5. Climactic Parallelism

- **Definition:** The second line repeats part of the first line and adds to it, building toward a climax.
  - **Example:**  
*"Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the nations,  
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength." (Psalm 96:7)*
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## 6. Chiastic Parallelism (or Inverted Parallelism)

- **Definition:** The structure of the lines is reversed, often creating an "ABBA" pattern.
  - **Example:**  
*"The Lord watches over the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked will perish." (Psalm 1:6)*
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Parallelism is a foundational poetic device in the Bible, reflecting its oral tradition and aiding in memorization, reflection, and understanding.

The **chiastic structure** is a literary device where elements are presented in a symmetrical pattern, often forming an "X" shape (from the Greek letter "chi"). In a **chiastic arrangement**, the first element corresponds to the last, the second to the second-to-last, and so on. This structure highlights central themes by placing the most important element at the center.

**The parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:3–7, ESV) also demonstrates a chiastic structure that emphasizes God's concern for the lost and the joy in heaven over their return. Here's an analysis of the chiastic arrangement.**

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### The Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:3–7, ESV)

*"So he told them this parable: 'What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.'"*

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### Chiastic Structure in the Parable

- A. The man has a hundred sheep (v. 4).
- B. One sheep is lost (v. 4).
- C. The man leaves the ninety-nine in the open country and searches for the lost one (v. 4).

**D. He finds the lost sheep (v. 5).**

**C'. He lays the sheep on his shoulders and rejoices (v. 5).**

**B'. He calls friends and neighbors to celebrate the recovery of the lost sheep (v. 6).**

**A'. There is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons (v. 7).**

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### **Explanation of the Structure**

- 1. Outer Layers (A, A'):** The parable begins with the possession of the flock (A) and concludes with a heavenly perspective on repentance and righteousness (A'), framing the story within its theological purpose.
  - 2. Second Layers (B, B'):** The loss of one sheep (B) parallels the celebration over its recovery (B'), highlighting the emotional and communal response to finding what was lost.
  - 3. Middle Layers (C, C'):** The man's effort to search for the sheep (C) corresponds to his act of carrying the sheep home with joy (C'), showing the journey from seeking to rejoicing.
  - 4. Central Focus (D):** The turning point of the parable is the moment the man finds the lost sheep (D), emphasizing the restoration of what was lost as the key event.
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### **Key Theological Insight**

The chiasmic structure of the parable underscores the central message of God's initiative in seeking the lost and the immense joy in heaven when a sinner repents. It portrays God's love as active, persistent, and celebratory, highlighting the contrast between the lost and the found.

### **The Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8–10, ESV)**

*"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*

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### **Chiasmic Structure in the Parable**

**A. The woman has ten silver coins (v. 8).**

**B. She loses one coin (v. 8).**

- C.** She lights a lamp, sweeps the house, and searches diligently (v. 8).
  - D.** She finds the lost coin (v. 9).
  - C'.** She calls her friends and neighbors to rejoice (v. 9).
  - B'.** She celebrates the recovery of the lost coin (v. 9).
  - A'.** There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (v. 10).
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### Explanation of the Structure

1. **Outer Layers (A, A'):** The opening (A) introduces the setting, emphasizing the woman's possession of the coins, while the conclusion (A') expands the theme to a heavenly perspective, linking the earthly action to spiritual joy.
2. **Second Layers (B, B'):** The loss of the coin (B) parallels its recovery and celebration (B').
3. **Middle Layers (C, C'):** The woman's diligent search (C) corresponds to her rejoicing with her community (C'), showing the movement from effort to joy.
4. **Central Focus (D):** The discovery of the lost coin (D) serves as the turning point and thematic heart of the parable, symbolizing the restoration of something precious.

This chiastic structure underscores the main theological point: the diligent search for the lost and the great rejoicing when it is found, illustrating God's joy over a sinner's repentance.