THE QUATRAIN IN ISAIANIC POETRY[*]

Isaiah was a master of Hebrew poetry as well as a grand theologian. He was fond of integrating couplets into various four-lined structures (i.e., quatrains) that fall into three basic categories. This integration was often achieved by sophisticated interplay on the grammatical, semantic, and rhetorical levels. What is of deeper significance, however, is that Isaiah used these poetic forms to enhance his theological meaning. By activating all levels of language, the prophet was able to impress God's word upon his hearers in compact, four-lined structures that would otherwise take many lines of prose to communicate.

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ALTHOUGH the pairing of lines by means of grammatical, semantic and rhetorical parallelism to form couplets is the basic feature of Isaianic poetry, the pairing of couplets to form quatrains is also a distinctive device used by Isaiah.[1] In this article, we will differentiate and categorize these structures, but will also see how Isaiah uses them to communicate his message by artfully blending form with meaning.

Before we start with the analysis of the quatrains, some preliminary considerations are in order. Basic to the goal stated above is the position that a methodology of analyzing parallel lines must be able to account for both grammatical and semantic parallelism, and the rhetorical effect as well. It is our intention to avoid stressing one aspect of parallelism over another.[2] The method employed here, which was adapted from Stephen Geller's *Parallelism in Early Biblical Poetry*

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[1] Out of the 529 lines there were 208 units: 127 independent couplets, 42 quatrains, 29 triplets, 8 single lines and two possible hexastichs.

[2] See S. Geller, ("Theory and Method in the study of Biblical Poetry," *JQR* LXXIII No.1 [1986]) 65-77. With regard to the debate over which aspect has primacy, A. Berlin's metaphor of grammar being the skeleton and semantics being the flesh and blood is helpful, for one is surely meaningless without the other. See A. Berlin, *The dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1985) 23-25, 64.

(Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979) is an attempt to account for parallelism on these levels.[3] Central to the method is a device called a "schema," which will be explained below.

The lines used in the analysis had to meet certain criteria.[4] The first is that the lines analyzed should be regarded as Isaianic by most scholars.[5] Secondly, the lines must be "highly parallelistic" as opposed to prose without any parallelistic features (e.g., 7:1-6, 10-17 and 8:1-4), or prose that contains parallelistic features, referred to here as "parallelistic prose" (e.g., 2:20, 3:6-7, 7:18-25, 8:12A-D and 10:10-12). What exactly constitutes "highly parallelistic" lines is a subject of ongoing debate. For our purposes we have delimited this category to lines that display a basic grammatical and semantic correspondence[6] coupled with the limitation of line length,[7] and the requirement that the parallel lines are relatively equal in length. The vast majority of Isaianic lines fall in this highly parallelistic category. Finally, the lines used had to be textually sound in the opinion of a consensus of scholars.[8]

Although the corpus was not subjected to a metrical analysis,[9] certain patterns of line length emerged. The term "line pattern" denotes the ratio of grammatical units in one line to another. "Grammatical unit" is a term used to denote a word that is significant in the structure of parallel verse (i.e., words that are objects of parallelism). Some words, such as particles (e.g., *kî* and *´im*) are not used as objects of parallelism in the corpus and are therefore not awarded the status of "grammatical unit."[10] For example, a couplet with three grammatical units in each line would be referred to as a "3:3" line pattern. An example would be 17:10A-B:

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[3] My debt to Stephen Geller is evident throughout this article.

[4] It was felt that a minimum of 500 lines would offer an adequate representation of Isaianic parallelism.

[5] Our corpus is based upon what S. R. Driver, O. Eissfeldt, G. Foher, G. B. Gray and J. Skinner, among others, unanimously considered to be Isaianic. This does not reflect the present writer's opinion of Isaianic authorship.

[6] This excludes, for example, 2:20, for although it can be divided into four fairly equal lines, they are all grammatically enjambed and semantically non-parallel.

[7] Or "terse," cf. J. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) 85.

[8] The passages ultimately included were 1:2-27, 29-31, 2:7-8, 10-17, 19, 21, 3:1-5, 12C-26, 4:1, 5:1-28, 6:7B-D, 8B-C, 9-13B, 7:7B-9, 8:9-10, 13-15, 9:7-13, 15-17B, 19-20, 10:1-4,6-9, 13-15, 17:1, 2B-C, 3A-B, 4-6, 10-14, 18:1-2D, 3-6.

[9] It is not denied that Isaianic poetry is "metrical" in some sense. Rather, an in-depth metrical analysis would confront many uncertainties which would require a major study of its own.

[10] See Geller, p. 8.

Text of 17:10A-D   *Translation*

A. כִּי שָׁכַחַתְּ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵךְ   For you have forgotten the God of

  kî šā<u>k</u>aḥt ᵉlōhê yiš`ē<u>k</u>   your salvation,

B. וְצוּר מָעֻזֵּךְ לֹא זָכָרְתְּ   and the rock of your refuge you do

  wᵉṣûr mā`uzzē<u>k</u> lō´ zā<u>k</u>art   not remember.

In this couplet we see that each of the three basic grammatical units in the A line have a grammatical counterpart in the B line (verb: *kî šā<u>k</u>aḥt // lō´ zā<u>k</u>art* and a direct object with a noun in construct: *ᵉlōhê yiš`ē<u>k</u> // wᵉṣûr mā`uzzē<u>k</u>*) which are semantically parallel as well (the verbs are synonymous and the direct objects are epithets in that they give description one to another). Here we should note that aside from a very few instances of grammatical rearrangement, often done for a rhetorical effect (e.g., 1:19-20 and 5:11 analyzed below) there is a basic grammatical and semantic correspondence between units in the parallel line structures in Isaiah.[11]

Isaianic quatrains, like the couplets,[12] come in a variety of line patterns. Some, like 5:27A -D below, consist predominantly of lines with two grammatical units.[13]

Text of 5:27A-D Translation

A.   אֵין־עָיֵף   *´ên-`āyē<u>p</u>*   None is weary,

B. וְאֵין־כּוֹשֵׁל בּוֹ   *wᵉ´ên-kôšēl bô*   none stumbles among them,

C.   לֹא יָנוּם   *lō´ yānûm*   none slumbers,

D.   וְלֹא יִישָׁן   *wᵉlō´ yîšān*   none sleeps.

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[11] However, see the few examples of the "semantic" quatrains below, which display semantic parallelism with little or no grammatical parallelism.

[12] Among the couplets alone there were 10 different line patterns: the 2:2, 2:3, 3:2, 3:3, 3:4,4:3, 4:2, 4:4, 5:3 and the 5:2. Of these, the 3:3 and the 3:2 were the most common, but there were a significant number of "short lined" couplets (There were 27 occurrences of the 2:2. For example, see 1:23A-B, 2:l0A-B, 5:3C-D, 7:9C-D, and 8:9C-D).

[13] Some other examples of quatrains with predominantly 2 unit lines are 1:18C-F, 1:19A-20B, 1:29A-D, 5:5C-F, 5:7E-H, 5:9B-E, 5:12D-G, 6:9B-E, 9:9A-D, 17:6C-G.

It may be objected, of course, that what we have here is really a 5:4 couplet rather than a 2:3:2:2 quatrain.[14] Granted that it is not always easy to determine a couplet from a quatrain, two facts tend to discount understanding these lines as a couplet. First, long lines (i.e., lines with four or more units) without a caesura are relatively uncommon in Isaiah (see footnote 12 above). That is, Isaiah tends to use shorter three or two unit lines.[15] Secondly there are clear grammatical caesuras that naturally break this text into four short, distinct phrases. Indeed, in this instance the brief, hurried line structure enhances Isaiah's description of these swift, relentless destroyers. As we shall see, this is not the only place where Isaiah uses form to enhance his meaning.

With this example we begin our study of the Isaianic quatrain. As we mentioned at the outset, the quatrain is essentially two couplets bound together. This "binding" is done in a variety of ways, and with the help of a continuum we can see that three basic quatrain patterns emerge. On one end of the continuum there is what we shall call the "interlocked" quatrains in which the two sets of paired lines are intertwined (hence "interlocked") in such a way that the quatrain must be viewed as one unit. This interlocking is the result of alternating or chiastic patterns in which parallel lines are separated from each other (i.e., ABA´B´, ABB´A´).[16] In the middle of the continuum there are the "integrated" quatrains. Here the parallelism is usually between the A and B lines and between the C and D lines, but it is obvious that all four lines are parallel on the basis of grammatical, semantic and usually rhetorical similarities (i.e., [A//A´]//[A´´//A´´´]). These structures are not considered to be as tightly bound as the "interlocked" types, for they can be analyzed as two couplets without obscuring the overall structure of the quatrain. Finally, at the end of the continuum we have the "semantic" quatrains in which, like the "integrated" quatrains above, the primary parallelism is between the A and B lines, and between the C and D lines, but the parallelism between the paired couplets is basically semantic and/or rhetorical, with no grammatical parallelism.[17] Let us consider the tightest quatrains on the one end of the continuum, and proceed to the looser structures at the other end.

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[14] The negative existential particle ´ên is considered a grammatical unit in the corpus since it functions as the predicate of a noun sentence throughout. The A line therefore consists of two grammatical units and the B line three units, for prepositions with suffixes (e.g., bô above) are often objects of parallelism in the corpus. The problem lies with the negative particle lō´ which usually functions as a proclitic and forms a unit with the following term (hence not an independent grammatical unit, cf. lō´ zā*k*art in 17:10B above). In this instance, however, lō´ parallels ´ên on the semantic level and occupies the same emphatic position in the parallel line structure. It is therefore given a grammatical unit status in lines C and D.

[15] Isaiah's use of the short, 2 unit line in couplets, triplets, and quatrains (often in association with 3 unit lines, e.g., a 3:2:2 triplet) is a characteristic that sets him apart from early Hebrew poetry. See Geller, pp. 282-84.

[16] That is, the A line parallels the C line and the B the D line in the alternating type, and the A line parallels the D line and the B the C line in the chiastic type.

[17] This is a small category, for as noted above, Isaiah tends to employ lines that are parallel on both the grammatical and semantic levels. These quatrains are considered the "loosest" of the quatrains on the

Judging from the abundance of examples, the alternating quatrain must be considered a favorite Isaianic device.[18] In half of the examples analyzed,[19] the grammatical and semantic correspondence is complete between the alternating lines in that each unit, or group of units (i.e., word compounds) is grammatically and semantically parallel to its corresponding unit. To gain a clear and convenient view of the parallelism between these units, we employ what we term a "schema." This is a purely heuristic device intended to display syntagmatic and paradigmatic structures.[20] It merely arranges the syntax (syntagmatic/horizontal level) of the lines so that the parallel units can be placed vertically (paradigmatic level). By means of this device, one may observe at a glance the grammatical and semantic parallelism between the parallel lines. 1:10A-D will allow us to illustrate the use of the schema as well as offer an example of "complete" parallelism.

Text of 1:10A-D Translation

A.	שִׁמְעוּ דְבַר־יְהוָה	*šim`û dᵉḇar-YHWH*	Hear the word of YHWH
B.	קְצִינֵי סְדֹם	*qᵉṣînê sᵉḏôm*	you rulers of Sodom.
C.	הַאֲזִינוּ תּוֹרַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ	*ha᾿ᵃzînû tôraṯ ᾿ᵉlōhênû*	Listen to the teaching of our God,
D.	עַם עֲמֹרָה	*`am `ᵃmōrâ*	you people of Gomorrah.

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continuum because of the lack of grammatical parallelism. It should be emphasized again that grammar, although an important aspect of parallelism, is but one aspect, and the more aspects implemented (i.e., grammar, semantics, rhetorical devices), the "tighter" the parallelism. There are no examples of quatrains grammatically parallel with no semantic parallelism.

[18] See 1:10A-D, 1:15A-D, 1:18C-F, 1:19A-20B, 1:29A-D, 2:7A-D (a pentastich?), 5:5C-F, 5:7E-H, 5:9B-E, 5:10A-D, 5:11A-D, 5:12D-G, 6:9B-E, 9:9A-D, 17:6C-G, 17:12A-D.

[19] Cf. 1:10A-D, 1:19A-20B, 1:29A-D, 2:7A-D (a pentastich?), 5:5C-F, 5:12D-G, 6:9B-E, 9:9A-D.

[20] Cf. S. Geller's "reconstructed sentence," pp. 15-21.

Schema of 1:10A-D

A. *šim`û* *d^ebar* *YHWH*

   Hear the word of the Lord

B.   *q^eṣînê* *s^edôm*

                                               rulers of Sodom

C. *ha´^azînû* *tôrat* *´^elōhênû*

   Listen to the teaching of your God

D.   *`am*  *`^amōrâ*

                                               people of Gomorrah

The imperatives and the direct objects of the A and C lines correspond grammatically and semantically (*šim`û* / / *ha´<sup>a</sup>zînû* - synonyms, *d<sup>e</sup>bar* / / *tôrat* - synonyms, *YHWH* / / *´<sup>e</sup>lōhênû* - epithet), as do the subjects in the B and D lines (*q<sup>e</sup>ṣînê* / /*`am* - whole-part,[21] *s^edôm* / / *`^amōrâ* - paradigmatic).[22] The parallelism is therefore complete, and the quatrain, by virtue of the alternation (ABA´B´), must be considered as one unit of four lines, and cannot be analyzed as two couplets or as four single lines.[23] It is therefore a very tight quatrain.

In the other half of the examples of alternating quatrains, one finds that a word that is in one line (usually the A line) is deleted in its parallel line (C line), but is nevertheless understood in that line to complete its meaning. On a deeper level of linguistic analysis, however, this parallelism does not really differ from the complete parallelism in the example above, for the deleted word is

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[21] The *q^eṣînê* may be considered a part of the whole (*`am*), or the relationship between the two words may be described as a merism (i.e., establishing the two extremes "rulers" and "common people," and implying everyone in between).

[22] Words related paradigmatically belong to the same semantic field in that they denote a common concept, or in other words, are related by an understood common denominator. In this example, the stock word pair *s^edôm* and *`^amōrâ* belong to the same paradigm of "wicked cities."

[23] The phenomenon of line parallelism, whether involving 2, 3,4 or more lines, must be considered normative for Isaianic verse structure. This is so because the independent, single line is rare and its very existence is debatable (e.g., 1:15E; see footnote 1).

necessary to the meaning of the line. This phenomenon of word deletion, referred to here as "ellipsis"[24] is illustrated by the quatrain in 5:7E-H.

Text of 5:7E-H Translation

A.   וַיְקַו לְמִשְׁפָּט   *wayqaw lᵉmišpāṭ*   and He looked for justice,

B.   וְהִנֵּה מִשְׂפָּח   *wᵉhinnēh miśpāḥ*   but behold, bloodshed;

C.   לִצְדָקָה   *liṣdāqâ*   for righteousness,

D.   וְהִנֵּה צְעָקָה   *wᵉhinnēh ṣᵉ`āqâ*   but behold, a cry![25]

Shema of 5:7 E-H

A.   *wayqaw*   *lᵉmišpāṭ*

    And He looked   for Justice

B.   *wᵉhinnēh*   *miśpāḥ*

                             But behold   bloodshed

C.   *liṣdāqâ*

    For righteousness

D.   *wᵉhinnēh*   *ṣᵉ`āqâ*

                             But behold   a cry!

It is obvious that *wayqaw* is understood with the prepositional phrase in the C line, for the C line would be incomplete without it. For all practical purposes, therefore, we must conclude that there

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[24] This phenomenon has also been referred to as "gapping." See E. L. Greenstein ("Two variations of Grammatical Parallelism in Canaanite Poetry and their Psycholinguistic Background," *JANES of Columbia University*, 6[1974]) 94.

[25] This quatrain is primarily an alternating quatrain in that the A and C lines, and the B and D lines are grammatically identical and semantically parallel (even semantically identical in the repetition of hne.hiv; in the Band D lines). It is however, "integrated" as well in that the A and B lines, and the C and D lines, are semantically and rhetorically parallel by means of the paronomasia between *miśpāḥ* and *mišpāṭ* , and *ṣᵉdāqâ* and *ṣᵉ`āqâ* (similar sound but opposite meaning).

is very little difference between the alternating quatrains with ellipsis and alternating quatrains that are "completely" parallel, for the grammatical and semantic parallelism is complete in both, even though one line may have an additional grammatical unit that its parallel line does not have.[26]

Rarely, Isaiah may vary the grammar of one line to achieve a certain poetic effect. The quatrain in 5:11 illustrates this.

Text of 5:11A-D	*Translation*
A. הוֹי מַשְׁכִּימֵי בַבֹּקֶר	Woe![27] those who rise early in the morning,
hôy maškîmê ḇabbōqer	
B. שֵׁכָר יִרְדֹּפוּ	that they may run after beer,[28]
šēḵār yirdōp̄û	
C. מְאַחֲרֵי בַנֶּשֶׁף	who tarry late in the evening,
mᵉˈaḥᵃrê banneše̱p	
D. יַיִן יַדְלִיקֵם	till wine inflames them.
yayin yaḏlîqēm	

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[26] Ellipsis can occur in any line structure whether they are couplets, triplets, or quatrains with other types of parallel line patterns.

[27] The *hôy* (as opposed to *ˈôy*, which almost always occurs with prepositions *lᵉ*, `al, or ´el,*) is understood by this writer to be a pure interjection, most probably a cry of funerary lamentation (the nuance being "woe!" or "alas!" rather than "woe unto. . ."). Cf. H. W. Wolff. *A Commentary on the Prophets Joel and Amos* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977) 242-45.

[28] It is not evident how *šēḵār* differs from *yayin*. *šēḵār* almost always occurs paired with *yayin* and all but once precedes it. It probably is not liquor (usually translated "strong drink"), for there is no evidence of distillation in ancient times. Here it is understood to be a beer—perhaps a grain beer as opposed to wine. Cf. R. L. Harris, Ed., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980).

Schema of 5:11A-D

A. *hôy   maškîmê   babbōqer*

    Woe,   those who rise early   in the morning

B.   *šēkār   yirdōp̄û*

                                                      beer   they run after

C. *mᵉʾaḥᵃrê*   *bannešep̄*

    those who terry late   in the evening

D.   *yayin   yaḏlîqēm*

                                                      wine   inflames them

Apart from the interjection *hôy*, the A and C lines are grammatically identical (both having participles and prepositional phrases) and semantically parallel (merism). The *hôy* may be regarded as extrametrical and applying to the quatrain as a whole, or as a grammatical unit in the A line that is understood elliptically (i.e., "gapped ") in the C line.

But what is of immediate interest is that the grammar of the D line is not what one would expect after having read the B line. The reader, having encountered a direct object and a transitive verb in the B line, is now surprised to find the noun as a subject in the D line. This probably was not done just for variation, but rather to set up a pun on the verb *dlq*. This root has a double meaning: that of "burn" or "inflame" (cf. Ezek 24:10) and "hotly pursue" (cf. Gen 31:36). In this context, the primary meaning is no doubt "inflame," but it must not be overlooked that *dlq* (in the Qal) is a synonym of *rdp* in the B line, having the latter nuance of "pursuing."[29] The pun is that the drinkers, making a fresh start in the morning and in full control (they are the subjects of *yirdōp̄û* in the B line), are pursuing beer in the first couplet. However, by evening the situation is reversed. Wine is now in control (it is the subject of the D line) and is the pursuer in the second couplet. We see that the poet is actually combining grammar and line structure with the meaning (semantic nuances *dlq* and the morning-evening merism) to impress an image upon his hearers of these ambitious fellows; they set out at the first light of dawn to make bold conquests of beer, but by evening they are stumbling their way back home with wine, the real victor in the contest, hard

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[29] On a deep level an underlying grammatical parallelism is evident if one rewrites the *Hiph* singular imperfect *yaḏlîqēm* to the Qal plural imperfect *yaḏlᵉqû* (dropping the 3 m pl suffix), with the second meaning of the verb's root "pursue" understood. Both the B and D lines would then have nouns functioning as subjects of plural imperfect verbs. For such grammatical "transformations," see Geller, pp. 21-29.

at their heels. By such synthesis, Isaiah is able to communicate a profoundly effective caricature in four short lines that would take many more lines of prose to describe.

The chiastic quatrain is not so well represented as the alternating quatrain and must therefore be considered less characteristic of Isaianic quatrain devices. Out of the four possible examples (1:11C-F, 5:6A-D, 5:7 A-D and 6:11B-C), there are no line structures as clear as the alternating line structures mentioned above. Be this as it may, the prophet will use chiasm as a device to tighten other types of quatrains.

Perhaps the tightest quatrain in Isaiah is the famous one in 1:18:

Text of 1:18C-F	*Translation*
A. אִם־יִהְיוּ חֲטָאֵיכֶם כַּשָּׁנִים	If your sins are like scarlet,
´im yihyû ḥ^aṭā´êkem kaššānîm	
B. כַּשֶּׁלֶג יַלְבִּינוּ	shall they be white as snow?
kaššeleg yalbînû	
C. אִם־יַאְדִּימוּ כַתּוֹלָע	If they are red like crimson,
´im-ya´dîmû kattōlā`	
D. כַּצֶּמֶר יִהְיוּ	shall they become like wool?
kaṣṣemer yihyû	

Schema of 1:18C-F

A.   *´im yihyû*   *ḥªṭā´êkem*   *kaššānîm*

     If they are   your sins   like scarlet

B.   *kaššeleg*   *yalbînû*

                                               like snow   shall they be white?

C.   *´im-ya´dîmû*   *kattōlā`*

     If they are red   like crimsom

D.   *kaṣṣemer*   *yihyû*

                                               like wool   shall they be?

This quatrain has a primarily alternating structure (note the ellipsis of *ḥªṭā´êkem* in the C line). However, chiasm can be observed on two levels. First, there is the chiastic verb, prepositional phrase, prepositional phrase, verb structure within both the AB couplet and the CD couplet. The result is that the prepositional phrases take the central, or inside, position in the overall structure of the quatrain, while the verbs are at the extremities. Secondly, a further chiasm can be observed between the verb *yihyû* in the A and D lines, and the *Hiph* imperfects of the B and C lines. The inclusio of *yihyû* further tightens the quatrain. What must be determined at this point is whether or not this structure is in fact a vehicle to further the meaning of this quatrain. To begin with, we understand that the poet's intention is to offer a well-reasoned, or "tight" argument to the people (verse 18A: "Come, let us reason together"). Certainly the skill in which he blends alternation with chiasm to produce such a tight structure enhances the meaning he wished to convey; that YHWH's terms are so tightly logical and reasonable that there is no room for objection. But can we go further and suggest that the form may even be valuable in the actual interpretation of this quatrain? It is well-known that the B and D lines can be understood either as statements (i.e., "they shall be white as snow/wool") or as questions, as in the above translation. The difficulty with the former interpretation is that it is not evident how or why red sins (sins of bloodshed, cf. verse 5) should become "white sins." Such an ambiguity in what one would expect to be a well-reasoned argument is out of place. Rather, it is more fitting in this context of tight logic to understand the B and D lines as rhetorical questions, expecting negative answers (cf. Jer 13:23).[30] Therefore, in presenting His argument, YHWH is backing the people into a corner by reminding them of their bloody guilt in crimes that cannot be left unpunished by law. Tightness of form mirrors inexorability of logical argument.

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[30] It is admissible that these lines be regarded as questions without interrogative pronouns or adverbs (see G-K 150 a).

By itself therefore, this quatrain would leave the people with little comfort. However, this quatrain was never meant to be read by itself as is evident by its close similarities of structure with the next lines, which also form an alternating quatrain.

Text of 1:19A-B-20A-B	*Translation*
A. אִם־תֹּאבוּ וּשְׁמַעְתֶּם	If you are willing and obey,
´im-tō´<u>b</u>û ûšma`tem	
B. טוּב הָאָרֶץ תֹּאכֵלוּ	you will eat of the good of the land.
ṭû<u>b</u> hā´āreṣ tō´<u>k</u>ēlû	
C. וְאִם־תְּמָאֲנוּ וּמְרִיתֶם	But if you refuse and rebel,
wᵉ´im-tᵉmā´ᵃnû ûmrî<u>t</u>em	
D. חֶרֶב תְּאֻכְּלוּ	you will be devoured by the sword.
ḥere<u>b</u> tᵉ´ukkᵉlû	

Schema of 1:19A-B--20A-B

A.   *´im-tō´b̲û*

      If you are willing

      ûšma`tem[31]

      and obey

B.   *ṭûb̲ hā´āreṣ*   *tō´k̲ēlû*

                       the good of the land   you will eat

C.   *w^e´im-t^emā´^anû*

      if you refuse

      ûmrît̲em

      and rebell

D.   *ḥereb̲*   *t^e´ukk^elû*

                       the sword   you will be devoured

The continuation of the particle *´im* and the similar "outside" position of the imperfect verbs with the alliterative *t* / *´* combination (rhetorical considerations) forces the reader to connect the two quatrains on the semantic level (i.e., meaning) as well. Indeed, this quatrain brings us into the second phase of YHWH's argument. In spite of their guilt, if they are willing and obey, then they shall eat the good of the land. The alliteration and assonance between *tō´b̲û* and *ṭûb̲* further strengthens the reasonableness and attractiveness of a willing heart toward God. However, if they refuse and rebel, then they shall be "the eaten" rather than "the eaters." With this pun between *tō´k̲ēlû* and *t^e´ukk^elû*,[32] which occupies the final position in this two quatrain

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[31] Note that two grammatical units are parallel within the same line (i.e., "internal parallelism") and are placed in the same column of the schema.

[32] The *t^e´ukk^elû* of the D line is most probably a Qal passive (see G-K 52 e). Usually *ḥereb̲* is understood prepositionally either by reading *baḥereb̲* (cf. lQIsa) or by considering it as an accusative functioning prepositionally in a passive construction (for details see G-K 121 c). Some prefer to emend the verb to *tō´k̲ēlû* (you shall eat the sword), but this has no versional support and is not idiomatic to Hebrew which would prefer the *ḥereb̲* as the subject (cf. 2 Kgdms 2:26, 18:8 and Jer 2:30). Others emend *ḥereb̲* to *harûb̲* which means "carob" (a poor man's food) in late Hebrew and Aramaic, but this word is not used

unit, we reach the peak of YHWH's argument. As in the case of 5:11 analyzed above, Isaiah altered the grammar of the D line to achieve this pun. One would expect *tō´kēlû* rather than the passive *t^e´ukk^{e}lû* to parallel the *tō´kēlû* of the B line, with *ḥereb* a direct object, paralleling *ṭûb hā´āreṣ*. By reversing the expected grammar (i.e., active to passive) the alternative of eating rather than being eaten is underscored. The tightness of the two quatrain unit is further enhanced by the inclusio of the *yō´mar YHWH* and the *YHWH dibbēr* of the 20C line.

The "interlocked" quatrain is an important Isaianic poetic device. Most characteristic of it is the alternating quatrain (ABA´B´; 16 clear examples in the corpus), although there is evidence of chiastic structures (4 possible examples), and at times a mixture of both. Also there is a basic grammatical and semantic correspondence between word units of the parallel lines in spite of ellipsis and an occasional grammatical rearrangement. Often, Isaiah will use this "interlocked" structure, along with grammatical and rhetorical forms, to enhance the meaning of his oracle.

II. THE "INTEGRATED" QUATRAIN

The combination of couplets whose parallel lines are not actually intertwined but are associated by virtue of grammatical, semantic and often rhetorical parallelism is common in Isaiah.[33] Usually, all four lines are grammatically and semantically parallel, although in a few instances one line, either the A line or the D line, is non-parallel (A line: 1:18A-D, 1:14A-D, 10:8A-9C; D line: 17:5A-D). These quatrains occupy the center of the continuum, for they are somewhat less bound than the "interlocked" type in that the primary parallelism is often between the A and B lines, and between the C and D lines. (They therefore could be analyzed as two couplets without blurring the overall structure, unlike the alternating quatrains.) The oft analyzed quatrain in 1:3 illustrates this type.[34]

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elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible and such a reading involves the emendation of the passive verb as well as, *ḥereb*. However, it is possible that Isaiah was making a pun on *ḥereb* and *harûb*.

[33] There are at least 15 clear examples of this in my corpus: 1:3A-D, 1:4A-D, 1:7A-D, l:8A-D, 1:14A-D, 3:3A-D (list), 3:16C-F, 3:24A-D, 5:27A-D, 7:8, 7:9, 8:9:A-D, 8:13A-D, 10:3A-D, 10:8A-9C, 10:14A-D, 10:15A-D?, 17:5A-D, 17:10A-D?

[34] Cf. J. Kugel's treatment of this quatrain in *Idea*, 9.

Text of 1:3A-D   *Translation*

A.   יָדַע שׁוֹר קֹנֵהוּ   The ox knows its owner,

            yāda` šôr qōnēhû

B.   וַחֲמוֹר אֵבוּס בְּעָלָיו   and the ass its master's crib,

            waḥᵃmôr ´bûs bᵉ`ālāw

C.   יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָדַע   (but) Israel does not know,

            yiśrā´ēl lō´ yada`

D.   עַמִּי לֹא הִתְבּוֹנָן   my people do not understand.

            `ammî lō´ hitbônān

Schema of 1:3A-D

A.   *yāda`*   *šôr*   *qōnēhû*

      knows   the ox   its owner

B.   *waḥᵃmôr*   *´bûs bᵉ`ālāw*

                                   and the ass   its master's crib

C.   *lō´ yāda`*   *yiśrā´ēl*

      does not know Israel

D.   *lō´ hitbônān*   *`ammî*

      does not understand   my people

On the surface, the primary grammatical and semantic parallelism is between the A and B lines, and between the C and D lines. In the AB couplet, both lines have direct objects (*šôr* and *ḥᵃmôr*) that are semantically parallel (both are farm animals). In the CD couplet, both lines have negatives with verbs (*lō´ yāda`* and *lō´ hitbônān*) that are semantically parallel (both express Israel's lack of knowledge). All four lines are grammatically parallel in spite of the fact that not all elements (i.e., verb, subject, direct object) are in each of the four lines except the A line. However, below the surface, we see that grammar, semantics and rhetorical devices all contribute to give a deeper perception of Israel's condition. What Isaiah has done was to make

use of the simple form of a quatrain to create a rather complex message that unfolds when one examines the similarities and contrasts between the grammatical units of the parallel lines. To begin with, it will be noticed that all four lines have a subject which associates senseless beasts (the subjects of the AB couplet) with Israel (the subject of the CD couplet) on the semantic level. The similarity between the beasts and Israel is further strengthened on the phonetic level by the alliteration of the sibilants *š* / *ś* and the *r* in *šôr* and *yiśrāʾēl*, and the gutturals *ḥ* / *ʿ* with the *m* in *ḥᵃmôr* and *ʿammî*. However, one is encouraged not to stop at this unflattering association, for one is invited to contemplate the contrasts as well as the similarities. But what is the basic contrast between these beasts and Israel? Is it that the beasts are instinctively faithful to their benefactors as opposed to Israel's infidelity?[35] Although *yāḏaʿ* has a broad semantic range that includes knowledge on the emotional and volitional levels (and therefore associated with obedience and piety) as well as on the intellectual level, its parallel is with *hiṯbônān*, which clearly implies actual knowledge or perception derived from examination. Moreover, the contrast between Israel and these domesticated beasts demands that intelligence, rather than faithfulness, is the issue, for oxen, as far as we can tell, were known for their fidelity, loyalty and obedience.[36] Since oxen are relatively uncommon to the experience of many western urbanites, perhaps Lassie would offer us a more vivid image. One would not say: "even Lassie is faithful to his master, he knows his doggie dish." The comparison with Lassie implies that the real issue is not Lassie's fidelity, but intelligence. The point in our passage is that even dumb (although faithful) beasts are intelligent enough to know something that Israel doesn't know. But what could this be? Surely it cannot be ignorance of God's raising them and that Israel has rewarded Him by rebelling (verse 2), for the prophets assumed that Israel was aware of their special status with YHWH and their responsibility to Him. Rather, a moral ignorance is implied, not of their crimes, but of the consequences of their crimes, that is, punishment. This is not explicit in the text, but is implicit in the dynamics of the parallelism.[37] The beasts possess a certain cunning with regard to their welfare that Israel lacks. They are fed not because they are loyal, but they are loyal because they are fed. What they know is the price of disobedience. The negatives of the D and C lines add a new dimension to Israel's ignorance of their fate. They do not know what the animals know because they will not know it. Their ignorance is a willful ignorance. The stupidity of such an ignorance is grammatically and structurally enhanced by the conspicuously missing direct objects in the CD couplet. The animals are fed for their simple logic, for their knowledge has an object (their master and his food trough). Israel, by its willful ignorance, has no object of knowledge and will soon starve (i.e., suffer punishment). That Israel is foolish in regard to the consequences of her crime is a standard prophetic argument (cf. Deut 32:6 *ʿam nāḇāl wᵉlōʾ ḥāḵām*: a foolish people, and not wise).

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[35] J. Skinner, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, Chapters I-XXXIX* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1925) 4.

[36] In contrast to the *rēm* (wild ox) that is not dependable like the domesticated ox (see Job 39:9-12).

[37] The fact that the overall context of Isaiah 1 is that of a רִיב (transliterated *rîḇ*; it is the term given for a legal law suit) intensifies the expectation of judgment in this quatrain.

Another example of this type of quatrain is found in 3:16, where Isaiah is scathing in his description of the daughters of Zion.

Text of 3:16C-F   *Translation*

A.   וַתֵּלַכְנָה נְטוּוֹת גָּרוֹן   and they walk with outstretched necks,

     wattēlaknâ nᵉṭûwōṯ gārôn

B.   וּמְשַׂקְּרוֹת עֵינָיִם   and ogle with their eyes,

     ûmśaqqᵉrôṯ `ênāyim

C.   הָלוֹךְ וְטָפֹף תֵּלַכְנָה   mincing along as they go,

     hālôk wᵉṭāpōp tēlaknâ

D.   וּבְרַגְלֵיהֶם תְּעַכַּסְנָה[38]   tinkling with their feet.
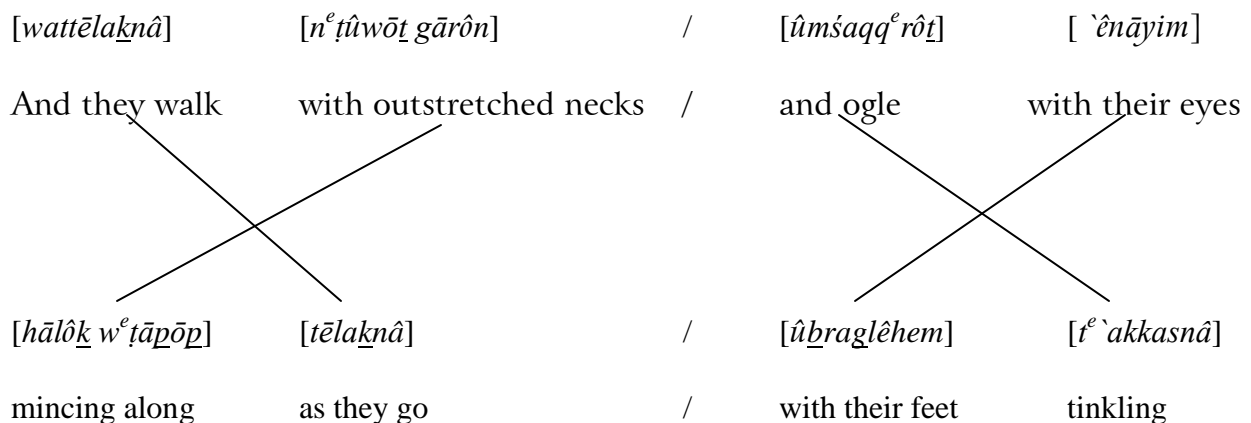
     ûḇraglêhem tᵉ`akkasnâ

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[38] In spite of the fact that there are three instances of *hapax legomena* in this quatrain, the precise definitions of which may not be known, our analysis is not adversely affected, for the context of these attention getting actions helps to provide close enough definitions. The *Pi* of the root *śqr* refers to some bawdy, wanton look, unless with Jastrow we understand it to mean "paint" (cf. *śqr* II, *Pi*). The infinitive of *ṭpp* may be onomatopoeic, related to the little steps taken by children (i.e., "tap," cf. Gray). The Pi of `ks denotes something done with the feet which must be related to some sort of article which makes noise or draws attention (cf. v. 18 for the noun form).

Schema of 3:16C-F

A.   *wattēla<u>k</u>nâ*   *n^eṭûwōṯ gārôn*

       And they walk   with outstretched necks

B.   *ûmśaqq^erôṯ `ênāyim*

                         and ogle with their eyes

C.   *hālô<u>k</u>*   *w^eṭāp̄ōp̄ tēla<u>k</u>nâ*

       as they go   mincing along

D.   *û<u>b</u>raglêhem t^e`akkasnâ*

                         tinkling with their feet

All four lines are grammatically and semantically parallel. The imperfects of *hlk* although actually occurring in the A and C lines, are "gapped" in the B and D lines as well. Each line contains a "compound," or a unit consisting of two inseparable words, that modify the *hlk* imperfects: the A and B lines have participles in construct, the C line has a compound of two infinitive absolutes, and the D line contains a preposition with a verb. These compound modifiers, which describe actions while walking, are basically interchangeable grammatically and semantically. What is unique about this quatrain of four parallel lines, however, is the way in which Isaiah blends alternation and chiasm into his overall structure.

Text of 3:16C-F with Couplets Placed on Same line

[*wattēla<u>k</u>nâ*]   [*n^eṭûwōṯ gārôn*]   /   [*ûmśaqq^erôṯ*]   [*`ênāyim*]

And they walk   with outstretched necks /   and ogle   with their eyes

[*hālô<u>k</u> w^eṭāp̄ōp̄*]   [*tēla<u>k</u>nâ*]   /   [*û<u>b</u>raglêhem*]   [*t^e`akkasnâ*]

mincing along   as they go   /   with their feet   tinkling

We see that there is a special relationship between the A and C lines and between the B and D lines (alternation), and this relationship is chiastic in nature. The imperfects of *hlk* are obviously

parallel, as are the indivisible compounds *n^eṭûwōṯ gārôn* (extended necks) and *hālôk w^eṭāpōp* (mincing along), which are parallel adverbially on a higher level. (Note the assonance of the long o vowels that further associates these compounds.) Likewise, the participle *umśaqq^erôṯ* and the verb *t^e`akkasnâ* ("ogling" and "tinkling") describe similar actions, and the attention getting *`ênāyim* (eyes) and *uḇraglêhem* (feet) are also parallel. This complex structure which consists of parallel body parts and simultaneous actions helps to enhance our mental picture of these women skilled in the art of seduction. It should be noted that the use of alternation and chiasm within a quatrain of four parallel lines places this "integrated" quatrain very close to the "interlocked" quatrains on the continuum.

An example of an "integrated" quatrain that is positioned toward the other end of the continuum (i.e., the "loose" end where there is no grammatical parallelism) is the structure found in 10:15.

Text and Transliteration of 10:15A-D

A.   הֲיִתְפָּאֵר הַגַּרְזֶן עַל הַחֹצֵב בּוֹ

   h^ayiṯpā´ēr haggarzen `al haḥōṣēḇ bô

B.   אִם־יִתְגַּדֵּל הַמַּשּׂוֹר[39] עַל־מְנִיפוֹ

   ´im-yitgaddēl hammaśśôr `al-m^enîpô

C.   כְּהָנִיף שֵׁבֶט <וְאֶת־מְרִימוֹ>[40]

   k^ehānîp šēḇeṭ w^e´eṯ-m^erîmô

D.   כְּהָרִים מַטֶּה לֹא־עֵץ

   k^ehārîm maṭṭeh lō´-`ēṣ

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[39] הַמַּשּׂוֹר (*hammaśśôr*) is a *hapax*, the root of which is *nśr* which has the meaning "saw" in various Semitic languages.

[40] If the *waw* on the direct object marker (*w^e´eṯ*) is original, it may be explained as a *waw explicativum* (see G-K 154 a N 1b). It is believed by many that the plural *m^erîmāyw* was subsequently added to make the reference to YHWH clearer (i.e., the "plural of majesty," cf. Gray, p. 202; G-K 124 k; note also the singular in the versions).

Translation and Semantic Diagram of 10:15A-D

A	B	C
A. *hᵃyiṯpā´ēr*	*haggarzen*	*`al haḥōṣēḇ bô*
Shall boast itself	the ax	over him who hews with it?

A´	B´	C´
B. *´im-yitgaddēl*	*hammaśśôr*	*`al-mᵉnîp̄ô*
Shall exalt itself	saw	over him who wields it?

A´´	B´´	C´´
C. *kᵉhānîp̄*	*šēḇeṭ*	*wᵉ´eṯ-mᵉrîmô*
As if should wield	a rod	him who lifts it

A´´´	B´´´	C´´´
D. *kᵉhārîm*	*maṭṭeh*	*lō´-`ēṣ*
as if should lift	a staff	(him) who is not wood.

The grammatical parallelism is very exact within the AB couplet in that both lines have an interrogative particle, a *Hitpa'el* intransitive verb, a subject and a prepositional phrase. The grammatical parallelism within the CD couplet is also exact in that both lines are prepositional phrases containing an infinitive construct, a subject and a direct object. Although there is a certain compatibility between these two couplets (i.e., the verbal element in the infinite constructs of the CD couplet with the intransitive verbs of the AB couplet: the parallel subjects), it is evident that the grammatical parallelism is weak. Rather, the emphasis of this quatrain is on the semantic parallelism, for every word on each line is semantically parallel, as the semantic diagram shows (using the standard A B C // A´ B´ C´ method).

The "integrated" quatrains are better thought of as two couplets that are connected grammatically, semantically and usually rhetorically. Some, like the 3:16 quatrain analyzed above, are structurally and grammatically "tighter" than others of its class (e.g., 10:15 above) and

are therefore closer to the "interlocked" end of the continuum. We now consider the "semantic" quatrains at the "loose" end of the continuum.

III. THE "SEMANTIC" QUATRAIN

There are fewer instances in which the connection between the two couplets is completely semantic and/or rhetorical, resulting in correspondingly looser relationships.[41] 18:6A-D provides an example.

Text of 18:6A -D

A.   יֵעָזְבוּ יַחְדָּו לְעֵיט הָרִים   *yē`āzᵉbû yaḥdaw le`êṭ hārîm*

B.   וּלְבֶהֱמַת הָאָתֶץ   *ûlbehᵉmaṯ hā´āreṣ*

C.   וְקָץ עָלָיו הָעַיִט   *wᵉqāṣ `ālāyw hā`ayiṭ*

D. [42] וְכָל־בֶּהֱמַת הָאָרֶץ עָלָיו תֶּחֱרָף   *wᵉkol-behᵉmaṯ hā´āreṣ `ālāyw teḥᵉrāp*

Translation

A. They shall all be left to the birds of prey of the mountains,

B. and to the beasts of the earth;

C. and the birds of prey will spend the winter on them,

D. and the beasts of the earth will spend the harvest on them

There is no grammatical parallelism between the AB couplet and the CD couplet. The result is that the attention of the reader is automatically drawn away from the comparison of lines and repetitive grammatical units between couplets, which set this quatrain apart from the interlocked and integrated types. Rather, the reader is drawn to a more general comparison of the two couplets on the semantic level, and upon examination, it is evident that the CD couplet explains

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[41] There are four examples in the corpus: 1:6C-F, 1:13A-D, 1:31A-D, and 18:6A-D.

[42] The verbal denominatives *qāṣ* and *teḥᵉrāp* occur only here. To remain consistent with the vine metaphor in the preceding verses 4 and 5, it is understood here that the ruined vines (i.e., the Ethiopians) will become a barren haunt of wild birds and beasts year around, rather than become carrion for these creatures.

in more detail the meaning of the AB couplet (general-specific relationship). The repetition of "birds of the mountains" and "beasts of the earth" is purely semantic (i.e., they are prepositions in the AB couplet, but subjects in the CD couplet). The quatrain is therefore categorized as "semantic." It should be noted that rhetorical features such as alternation (A and C lines-birds; B and D lines-beasts; note also the chiasm in the CD couplet--summer, birds, beasts, winter), and alliteration (the profusion of gutturals throughout all four lines) serve to strengthen the connection between these two couplets.

Finally, at the end of the continuum is an interesting example in which two couplets form a somewhat loose quatrain primarily on the rhetorical level.

Text of 1:6 C- F   Translation

A.   פֶּצַע וְחַבּוּרָה   (but) bruises and blows,

         peṣaʿ wᵉḥabburâ

B   וּמַכָּה טְרִיָּה[43]   and raw wounds;

         ûmakkâ ṭᵉrîyyâ

C.   לֹא־זֹרוּ[44] וְלֹא חֻבָּשׁוּ   they are not pressed out, nor bound up,

         lōʾ-zōrû wᵉlōʾ ḥubbāšû

D.   וְלֹא רֻכְּכָה בַּשָּׁמֶן   nor softened with oil.

         wᵉlōʾ rukkᵉkâ baššāmen

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[43] The attributive is used elsewhere only in Judg 15:15, where it modifies "jawbone" (i.e., a fresh jawbone rather than an old, brittle one). Here the idea is "newly opened" or "raw." Note the use of collective singulars in the AB couplet.

[44] *zōrû* (note the long ō vowel) is best explained as a *Qal* passive of *zārar,* a *hapax* with the meaning of "pressing out" (i.e. a wound, cf. G-K 67m).

Schema of 1:6 C- F (so as to show the rhetorical structure)

A.   *peṣaʿ*

bruises

        wᵉḥabburâ

        blows

B.   *ûmakkâ ṭᵉrîyyâ*

                              and raw wounds

C.   *lōʾ-zōrû*

they are not pressed out

        wᵉlōʾ ḥubbāšû

        nor bound up

D.   *wᵉlōʾ rukkᵉkâ baššāmen*

                              nor softened with oil

The AB couplet and the CD couplet are essentially two lists placed together. Each list contains three elements, two of which are internal in the first lines of their respective couplets (i.e., internal parallelism in the A and C lines). The two lists are not grammatically parallel to each other in that the first consists of nouns while the second consists of verbal phrases. Only secondarily are the two couplets semantically parallel (i.e., general-specific relationship: the CD couplet gives more information on the AB couplet). Rather, the primary parallelism is structural and phonetic. Structurally, as already noted, these two couplets are lists, and these lists are of increasing length. That is, the first unit of both couplets is the shortest (*peṣaʿ* and *lōʾ-zōrû*). The second is a bit larger (*wᵉḥabburâ* and *wᵉlōʾ ḥubbāšû*). The third is the largest and most grammatically involved (*ûmakkâ ṭᵉrîyyâ* and *wᵉlōʾ rukkᵉkâ baššāmen*). Corresponding to this increasing unit length is a semantic progression, most evident in the last line of each couplet where the picture is made more vivid by the adjective and adverb (i.e., raw, open, hardening wounds). Phonology also serves to connect the corresponding units of these two couplets (the ṣ of *peṣaʿ* and the z of *zōrû* are both sibilants; the ḥ, b sequence in *wᵉḥabburâ* and *ḥubbāšû*; the doubled k in *makkâ* and *rukkᵉkâ* together with the *-kâ* endings). These obvious rhetorical features are not only the main ingredients that hold this quatrain together structurally, but also intensify the meaning. Israel has untended bruises that are not pressed out, blows that are not bound up, and raw wounds that are not softened with oil. The increasing unit length underscores the semantic progression that describes an infection that is progressing beyond a cure.

CONCLUSION

Although this study is not based on a complete analysis of all of Isaiah's material, we can nevertheless observe certain features of the Isaianic quatrain emerging. First of all, we may ascertain the different types of couplet combinations he employs, and gain a general idea of the frequency of these types. Making use of the continuum, we noticed that at one end the "interlocked" quatrain, most usually of the alternating type rather than the chiastic, was the most highly represented in the corpus with 20 examples. The parallel lines of these quatrains are so structurally intertwined that they cannot be analyzed in smaller units (i.e., couplets). Toward the middle of the continuum there are the "integrated" quatrains in which the primary parallelism is between the A and B lines, and between the C and D lines, but both couplets are nevertheless tightly joined on the basis of grammar, semantic, and rhetorical parallelism. This group is also well represented with 15 examples. Finally, there are only a few examples where the grammatical parallelism breaks down completely, producing "semantic" quatrains that are connected only by semantic and/or rhetorical parallelism, at the very end of the continuum.

Secondly, and perhaps more important than the categorization of these structures, is the fact that Isaiah frequently uses these structures, along with grammar, semantics, and rhetorical devices, to enhance his meaning. Isaiah's genius as a poet and theologian lies in the sophisticated interplay of all these aspects. By means of such art he is able to impress upon the mind of his hearers in a few short parallel lines (in our case, the four lines that make up the quatrain) concepts and images that would take paragraphs of ordinary prose to express. Ultimately, this compactness is the result of parallelism that activates all levels of language, melding together form and meaning.[45]

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[45] R. Jakobson, "Grammatical Parallelism and its Russian Facet," *Language* 42 (1966) 399-429.