

BOOK REVIEWS

Berlin, Adele 2008. *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*. Revised and expanded edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. xxiv+200 pages. Paperback. Price USD 30.00 ISBN 978-0-8028-0397-9

In this book, first published in 1985, Adele Berlin, Robert H. Smith Professor of Biblical Studies at the University of Maryland, analyses parallelism, a major feature of Hebrew poetry, from a linguistic perspective. This newly reprinted edition of Berlin's study (23 years since it was first published) features an additional chapter, 'The Range of Biblical Metaphors in Smikhut (= consuet state constructions)', by late Russian linguist Lida Knorina, written in 1994. Berlin calls this addition 'innovative and instructive to those who value the linguistic analysis of poetry'. It follows from Patrick D. Miller's suggestion in his 1985 review that Berlin should deal with the important poetic phenomena of metaphor, redundancy, and ambiguity in more detail.

Robert Alter and James Kugel, as well as Stephen Geller and Michael O'Connor, among others, have treated the subject, but Berlin's book distinguishes itself by integrating Russian linguist Roman Jakobson's pioneering work as the theoretical foundation for offering parallelism as a pervasive feature with semantic, phonological, morphological and lexical aspects. This time in literary history was also the beginning of the heyday of modern literary theory and biblical scholars soon saw the benefits of applying these analytic methods to the biblical text.

Following Roman Jakobson Adele Berlin accepted that parallelism is to be equated with the poetic function, which 'projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination' or, in other words, that 'similarity is superimposed on contiguity'. Similarity in morphology consists of drawing on words of the same word class; or of different word classes that serve the same syntactic function. Syntactic similarity consists of clauses with the same deep syntactic structure. Lexical similarity consists of words which are lexically associated, either paradigmatically or syntagmatically. Likewise, semantic similarity consists of expressions which are either close in meaning or are syntagmatically related in meaning. Phonological similarity consists of repeating the same or similar group of sounds. All of these types of similarity are brought into play in biblical parallelism. Two or more similar elements are combined in contiguous expression; that is, similarity is superimposed on contiguity. According to Berlin 'similarity' implies 'equivalence' which she used in the sense of 'belonging to the same linguistic category or paradigm, or to the same sequence or syntagm'. Parallel elements (words, sounds, grammatical constructions, etc) are linguistically equivalent in some way. However, in addition to the equivalence that underlies all forms of parallelism there is often a contrast. For after all, equivalent elements are not identical, and their lack of identity, namely, their difference – shows up all the more

clearly when they are placed in contiguity. In biblical parallelism this contrast can be seen in lexical associates, in morphological alternations (e. g. singular // plural; definite // indefinite, etc), in syntactic transformations, in the semantic relationships of parallel lines, and in the arrangements and substitutions of phonemes in sound pairs. Parallelism, then, consists of a network of equivalents and/or contrasts involving many aspects and levels of language. Moreover, by means of these linguistic equivalents and contrasts, parallelism calls attention to itself and to the message which it bears. Parallelism embodies the poetic function, and the poetic function heightens the focus on the message.

Metaphor is a much neglected area of biblical poetry that has lately begun to garner the serious study it deserves. Metaphor, like parallelism, is at the heart of biblical poetry and is also present, less pervasively, in prose. Linguistic approaches to them can help us to better understand their workings. Knorina analyses a subgroup of metaphors, namely those that occur in the construct state and compares them with the nonmetaphorical interpretation of the construction in Biblical Hebrew. She distinguishes three models of metaphorical transfer that correspond to the patterns of three basic types of the construct state construction. The metaphorical interpretation is limited by the possible identification of the construction members with the semantic types of constituents of the nonmetaphorical construction.

Berlin has decided to preserve her discussion intact to avoid unravelling or distorting the original argument. She has simply corrected small errors. She has also added a new and very short introduction to give a sense of the pertinent scholarly activity at the time the book was written and to provide a quick overview of the subsequent study of parallelism. In the section on the study of parallelism since 1985 she states that the study of biblical parallelism reached its apogee in the mid-1980s, and waned after that as there was little new to say of a theoretic nature and as the linguistic study of poetry gave way to other approaches to poetry. There continued to be what she calls derivative studies, including refinements to the older categories of parallelism and analyses of parallelism in specific biblical and other ancient texts. She then provides a list of research on parallelism in biblical poetry, biblical prose, and postbiblical and extrabiblical texts as well as studies addressing the importance of parallelism in exegesis and in translation. She ends the introduction by providing a bibliography of her writings trying to disseminate the understanding of parallelism and of biblical poetry.

The cover and title page indicate that the 2008 edition is a revised and expanded edition. The reader quickly realises that he/she is misled. The main part of the book is a reprint, which reflects minor corrections and is neither revised, nor expanded or updated. The expansion is probably the addition of the work on the metaphor of Knorina, the foreword by David Noel Freedman and the new introduction. Although the aim of the introduction is to embed the book in the academic discussion on biblical parallelism, it is a pity that so little is reflected on the 35 sources in the list of studies since 1985, which she typed

as derivative studies. Adele Berlin is in the position to access these proposals and their possible impact on the direction of the field. The so-called revised and expanded edition still leaves us with the criticism of Patrick D. Miller's suggestion in his 1985 review that Berlin should deal with the important poetic phenomena of metaphor, redundancy, and ambiguity in more detail. However, Adele Berlin's work is still and will be in the future the standard work on biblical parallelism. It is fortunate that it is still available in print.

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