

# PARALLELISM AND OTHER POETIC CONSTRUCTIONS IN THE HOLINESS LEGISLATION (LEVITICUS 17–26)

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the compositional style of the Holiness Legislation (HL, Leviticus 17–26), concluding that a significant number of verses are best understood as containing literary, grammatical, lexical, and phonological parallelism. Redefining sentences in HL as parallelistic rather than as linear has significant exegetical ramifications, providing evidence that a verse contains a single law reformulated and heightened in multiple clauses rather than multiple laws. The prolix repetition is often unnecessary to convey the law's kernel, and the nonessential material exposes the author's literary artistry. The parallelism therefore dominates the line by determining its shape and form.

## RÉSUMÉ

Cet article examine le style de composition de la Loi de Sainteté (LS, Lévitique 17–26), en concluant qu'un nombre significatif de versets sont mieux compris comme contenant un parallélisme littéraire, grammatical, lexical et phonologique. Cette redéfinition de certaines phrases de LS, mises en parallèle plutôt que de manière linéaire, a des ramifications exégétiques considérables qui apportent la preuve qu'un verset unique contient une loi unique, reformulée et augmentée par plusieurs clauses, plutôt que plusieurs lois. La répétition prolix est souvent superflue à la transmission du noyau de la loi, et la matière non-essentielle met en relief le talent littéraire de l'auteur. Le parallélisme domine donc la ligne en déterminant sa forme et son format.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The prophet Micah creates a covenantal lawsuit between YHWH and the Israelites, daring the people to present evidence against God. The deity lists his past generosity and blessings, remonstrating that his expectations have been imparted clearly. In a line of simplicity and beauty, Micah enumerates these stipulations:

הגיד לך אדם מה־טוב	He has told you, O mortal, what is good,
ומה־יהוה דורש ממך	And what YHWH requires of you:
כי אִם־עשות משפט	Only to do justice,
ואהבת חסד	And to love kindness,
והצנע לכת עם־אלהיך	And to walk humbly with your God.

Mic 6:8

These lines are self-evidently poetic, and all major treatments of the text regard them as such.<sup>1</sup> The legal genre of the Holiness Legislation (HL, Leviticus 17–26) is entirely different from the prophetic oracles in Micah. However, HL includes a line similar to Micah’s exclamation:

את־משפטי תעשו	My rules you shall observe,
ואת־חקתי תשמרו	And my laws you shall keep,
ללכת בהם	Walking by them;
אני יהוה אלהיכם	I am YHWH your God.

Lev 18:4

Leviticus commands while Micah indicts; the prophetic words succinctly epitomize ethical monotheism while the legal preamble is specific and situational. However, the similarities between the two quotations are apparent, including shared vocabulary, structure, and meaning.<sup>2</sup> And yet, Mic 6:8 is considered poetic with parallelism while Lev 18:4 is usually not.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I format the requirements as a tricolon (so similarly Delbert R. HILLERS, *Micah* [Hermeneia], Philadelphia, Fortress, 1984, 75), but others regard it as a bicolon (e.g., Hans Walter WOLFF, *Micah. A Commentary* [Continental Commentary], trans. Gary STANSELL, Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1990, 164). Francis I. ANDERSEN and David Noel FREEDMAN regard the whole verse as a chiasmic bicolon + quatrain (*Micah* [AB 24E], New York, Doubleday, 2000, 503).

<sup>2</sup> Specifically, note עֲשֵׂה + מִשְׁפָּט in the first colon, הִלַּךְ in the third, and אֱלֹהִים as the final word.

<sup>3</sup> Although some authors have recognized a “poetic ring” to Lev 18:4 (Jacob MILGROM, *Leviticus 17-22* [AB 3A], New York, Doubleday, 2000, 1521; and earlier, Henning Graf REVENTLOW, *Das Heiligkeitgesetz formgeschichtlich untersucht* [WMANT 6], Neukirchen, Neukirchener Verlag, 1961, 58; and Stephen F. BIGGER, “The Family Laws of Leviticus 18 in Their Setting,” *JBL* 98 [1979] 187–203, 191), neither *BHS* nor major translations such as NRSV and NJPS format Lev 18:4 as poetry; they do, however, all format Mic 6:8 as poetry.

This essay will explore the use of parallelism and other devices commonly associated with poetry by the authors of HL, concluding that a significant number of verses in Leviticus 17–26 are best understood as containing parallel constructions. Parallelistic sentences need not necessarily be called poetry, but they are also something other than strict prose. They exist at points other than the poles on a continuum between prose and poetry.<sup>4</sup>

Redefining sentences in HL as parallelistic has significant exegetical ramifications. To demonstrate the point, consider a verse from Genesis where Cain's descendant Lamech laments his cursed fate:

עדה וצלה שמען קולי	A	Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; <sup>5</sup>
נשי למך האזנה אמרתי	B	O wives of Lamech, give ear to my speech.
כי איש הרגתי לפצע	C	I have slain a man for wounding me,
וילד להברתי	D	And a lad for bruising me.

Gen 4:23

Reading the first two clauses (A and B) as prose suggests that Lamech addresses two groups of people: (A) the individuals Adah and Zillah and (B) his wives. However, B reformulates and seconds A, conveying the same information using different vocabulary; Adah and Zillah *are* the wives of Lamech. The two clauses contain only one thought, that Lamech wants his wives to listen to his forthcoming declaration. This dynamic movement and echoing between A and B is its parallelism,

<sup>4</sup> On a hypothetical prose-poetry continuum, see James L. KUGEL, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry. Parallelism and Its History*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981; Jason M. H. GAINES, *The Poetic Priestly Source*, Minneapolis, Fortress, 2015, 22–23, 79–84; Patrick D. MILLER, “Meter, Parallelism, and Tropes. The Search for Poetic Style,” in: *Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology. Collected Essays* (JSOT.S 267), Sheffield, Sheffield Academic, 2000, 250–58 = *JSOT* 28 (1984) 99–106; Tremper LONGMAN III, “Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation,” in: Moisés SILVA (ed.), *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1987, 91–192; and Amittai F. AVIRAM, *Telling Rhythm. Body and Meaning in Poetry*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1994, 46. Many aspects of biblical studies benefit from being conceived as points on a continuum instead of as complete opposites. For example, Susan Niditch says, “The line between vow, prayer, incantation, and lament is thin indeed. Rather, there is a continuum among these related material forms in words” (Susan NIDITCH, *The Responsive Self. Personal Religion in Biblical Literature of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian Periods* [AYBRL], New Haven, Yale University Press, 2015, 92).

<sup>5</sup> For clarity and convenience of discussion, I label clauses with Roman capital letters and indent lines that I regard as containing parallelism. I will use terms associated with biblical poetry, such as “colon,” “line,” and “stanza,” when discussing such texts. I do not mean to imply, though, that I necessarily regard these texts as “poetry” as opposed to “prose.” Instead, I view any text that contains parallelistic construction as “poetic,” and it lies beyond the scope of this paper to declare whether any given line is indeed better called poetry or prose.

which expresses itself in four major ways: literarily, grammatically, lexically, and phonologically.<sup>6</sup> Reading A and B without parallelism would not much change the plot of the story, but understanding that C and D are parallel is essential. Has Lamech killed one person or two? In a parallel reading, the “lad” is the “man”; in a non-parallel understanding, Lamech murders two different individuals. Indeed, a medieval European miniature book illumination memorializing this scene depicts Lamech standing over two bodies, one with a beard and gray hair and the other with a red mane.<sup>7</sup> Understanding the verse requires identifying its parallelism and interpreting the text according to the conventions of parallelism.

In the Holiness Legislation, YHWH declares that he will punish a person who consumes blood:

ונתתי פני בנפש האכלת אתהדם	A	I will set my face against the person who eats the blood;
והכרתי אתה מקרב עמה	B	I will cut him off from among his people.

Lev 17:10b

Does this punishment involve one divine consequence or two? The meaning of the line can change depending on whether the clauses are parallel. In B-colon, “cutting off” a person can have multiple definitions, such as expulsion (cf. Lev 20:17), where the offender must physically leave his neighbors, and even death. Logically, the community itself would have to enforce any penalty, though 17:10b says that God will do the cutting off himself.<sup>8</sup> Even still, such readings are possible.<sup>9</sup> In this non-parallel reading, YHWH will (1) notice the transgression and pay attention (“set my face against”) and then (2) cause the person to be

<sup>6</sup> For definitions of these different types of parallelism, see J. M. H. GAINES, *Poetic Priestly Source*, 21–88. Foundational modern studies of parallelism are Stephen A. GELLER, *Parallelism in Early Biblical Poetry* (HSM 20), Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1979; Michael O’CONNOR, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, Winona Lake, IN, Eisenbrauns, 1980, reprinted with Afterword, 1997; J. L. KUGEL, *Idea*; Robert ALTER, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, rev. and updated ed., New York, Basic, 2011, 1st ed. 1985; and Adele BERLIN, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, rev. and exp. ed., Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 2008, 1st ed. 1985.

<sup>7</sup> The illustration “Lamech tötet Cain,” produced between 1465–1475 CE, is found in the *Illustrationszyklus Chronik*, held in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Baruch A. LEVINE, *Leviticus. The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (The JPS Torah Commentary), Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1989, 115.

<sup>9</sup> See further in Gordon J. WENHAM, *The Book of Leviticus* (NICOT), Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1979, 242. Of many such understandings, Carmichael suggests that being “cut off” in Leviticus 19 references Joseph’s separation from his family in Genesis (Calum M. CARMICHAEL, “Laws of Leviticus 19,” *HTR* 87 [1994] 247–49, 249); Stephen F. Bigger argues that the phrase in Lev 20:17 refers to banishment (S. F. BIGGER, “The Family Laws,” 197).

executed or driven out (“cut off”).<sup>10</sup> If A and B are parallel, though, such a reading is unlikely. B would instead echo A, and since A conveys the message that God will spurn and feel wrathful towards the offender, the “cutting off” would also reference the removal of divine blessing or attention. Since A is non-physical and confined to the divine sphere, B would be as well. Alternatively, if A is worldly and physical in nature, then B would be too. Past treatments have identified these blood laws (17:10-12) as tightly and artfully structured with chiasmus and inclusios.<sup>11</sup> I go beyond these studies, though, and propose that at the sentence level, 10b and other verses contain parallelism, and that they should be interpreted according to the conventions of biblical poetry.<sup>12</sup> B echoes and seconds A, reformulating and emphasizing the consequences for consuming blood instead of introducing a second event.

The current essay is hardly the first to identify features commonly associated with poetry in HL.<sup>13</sup> Meir Paran compares laws in HL to their

<sup>10</sup> For example, Jacob Milgrom glosses “I will set my face” as the subject, God, “turning his attention to or settling his mind on the object,” while “and I will cut him off” “makes the punishment emphatically imminent” (J. MILGROM, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1471).

<sup>11</sup> Baruch J. Schwartz, “The Prohibitions Concerning the ‘Eating’ of Blood in Leviticus 17,” in: Gary A. ANDERSON and Saul M. OLYAN (ed.), *Priesthood and Cult in Ancient Israel* (JSOT.S 125), Sheffield, Sheffield Academic, 1991, 34–66; J. MILGROM, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1469; and idem, “A Prolegomenon to Leviticus 17:11,” *JBL* 90 (1971) 149–56, 149. See also further comment in Rolf RENDTORFF, “Another Prolegomenon to Leviticus 17:11,” in: David P. WRIGHT, David Noel FREEDMAN, and Avi HURVITZ (ed.), *Pomegranates and Golden Bells. Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, Winona Lake, IN, Eisenbrauns, 1995, 23–28.

<sup>12</sup> Schwartz also calls the repetition in 17:12 “a parallelistic paraphrase” and says that v. 14 has “parallel structure” (B. SCHWARTZ, “Prohibitions,” 46, 62). He stops short, however, of calling the parallelistic phenomena “parallelism.”

<sup>13</sup> In an earlier study of poetic devices in Priestly Pentateuchal texts, I have proposed that P contains at least two compositional layers: a once-independent and nearly complete poetic stratum (“Poetic-P”) and a later prose redaction (“Prosaic-P”) that is fragmentary and supplements the poetic writing (J. M. H. GAINES, *Poetic Priestly Source*). However, I generally restrict discussion to poetic material in Priestly narrative and do not consider HL (although see 462–63 on Lev 18:7). On non-HL Priestly poetic material and/or on P’s poetic compositional style, see also Sean E. MCEVENEUE, *The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer* (AnBib 50), Rome, Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1971; John S. KSELMAN, “The Recovery of Poetic Fragments from the Pentateuchal Priestly Source,” *JBL* 97 (1978) 161–73; idem, “A Note on Gen 7:11,” *CBQ* 35 (1973) 491–93; William Foxwell ALBRIGHT, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, London, Athlone, 1968, 33; Bezalel PORTEN and Uriel RAPPAPORT, “Poetic Structure in Genesis IX 7,” *VT* 21 (1971) 363–69; Frank Moore CROSS, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic. Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1973, 167–68, 301; Jacob MILGROM, *Numbers. The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (The JPS Torah Commentary), Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1989, xxii–xxxii; Mary DOUGLAS, “Poetic Structure in Leviticus,” in: David P. WRIGHT, David Noel FREEDMAN, and Avi

counterparts in Deuteronomy and the Covenant Collection, hypothesizing that differences would expose the “priestly style” of composition. He finds that HL expands many laws with refrains and “reduplications” that do not introduce new material but rather betray HL’s tendency to inflate text into rhythmic and balanced cola. “The priestly writer enjoys playing with words as though they were building blocks which can be put together in a variety of patterns according to the whim of the writer,” Paran explains.<sup>14</sup> Baruch J. Schwartz argues that biblical laws, and HL in particular, are “works of literary art,” and that study of their structure and style is essential.<sup>15</sup> Mary Douglas recognizes Leviticus’s “delight and craftsmanship in design,” noting that the book’s “favourite form is parallelism” while referencing Lev 22:10–13.<sup>16</sup> Jacob Milgrom makes important contributions to the understanding of HL’s compositional style by discussing “introversions” and “parallel panels,” and he identifies many examples of chiasmus in the text.<sup>17</sup> Frank H. Polak calls dozens of verses parallel, especially in Leviticus 19 and 26, and Marjo C.A. Korpel has shown conclusively that Leviticus 26 is replete with poetic features.<sup>18</sup>

My examination is selective and illustrative rather than systematic, chosen to demonstrate the pervasive presence of parallelism but not to provide a complete study of all examples. As such, I put forth verses

HURVITZ (ed.), *Pomegranates and Golden Bells. Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, Winona Lake, IN, Eisenbrauns, 1995, 239–56; Johannes C. DE MOOR, *The Rise of Yahwism. The Roots of Israelite Monotheism* (BETL 91), rev. and enlarged ed., Leuven, Leuven University Press, 1997, 271; and Frank H. POLAK, “Poetic Style and Parallelism in the Creation Account (Genesis 1.1–2.3),” in: Henning Graf REVENTLOW and Yair HOFFMAN (ed.), *Creation in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (JSOT.S 319), London, Sheffield Academic, 2002, 2–31.

<sup>14</sup> Meir PARAN, *Darkhe ha-signon ha-kohani ba-Torah. Degamin, shimushe lashon, mivnim* (Hebrew), Jerusalem, Magnes, 1989, 27–46, quoted from VII.

<sup>15</sup> B. SCHWARTZ, “Prohibitions,” 34.

<sup>16</sup> Mary DOUGLAS, *Leviticus as Literature*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, 46–47; see also idem, “Poetic Structures,” 239–56.

<sup>17</sup> Milgrom uses “introversion” to refer to “large chiasmus” (J. MILGROM, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1319–25). I call this phenomenon “general chiasmus,” which can occur across pericopes, chapters, or entire biblical books (for example, see the chiasmic study of Jonah in Yehuda T. RADDAY, “Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative,” in: John W. WELCH [ed.], *Chiasmus in Antiquity. Structures, Analogies, Exegesis*, Hildesheim, Gerstenberg, 1981, 59–61). Opposed to this is proximate chiasmus, which I identify at the line/stanza (in poetry) or verse/sentence (in prose) level; see J. M. H. GAINES, *Poetic Priestly Source*, 52–57.

<sup>18</sup> F. H. POLAK, “Poetic Style,” 29; Marjo C.A. KORPEL, “The Epilogue to the Holiness Code,” in: Johannes C. DE MOOR and Wilfred G. E. WATSON (ed.), *Verses in Ancient Near Eastern Prose* (AOAT 43), Kevelaer, Butzon & Bercker, 1993, 123–50. The Samaritan Pentateuch formats Lev 26:3–13 as poetry; see F. W. DOBBS-ALLSOPP, *On Biblical Poetry*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015, 32.

from Leviticus 18–20, 26 as case studies. I also aim to advance previous studies of parallelistic material in HL by exploring the significance of the parallelism for interpretation and criticism.

## 2. PARALLELISM IN ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN LAW COLLECTIONS

Ancient legal texts, such as the Law Collection of Hammurabi (LCH), often contained at least “semi-poetic” prologues and/or epilogues.<sup>19</sup> Leviticus 18:4, cited above, is part of the preamble to the legislation, and therefore its poetic features should not surprise the reader. The same is true of Leviticus 26, the epilogue to the Holiness Legislation, to which I will return below.

Formatting a sentence of Hammurabi’s epilogue using the standard conventions of biblical Hebrew poetry reveals many parallelisms:

- A *dannum enšam ana lā ḥabālim*  
 B *ekūtam almattam šutēšrim*  
 C *ina Bābilim ālim ša <sup>d</sup>Anum u <sup>d</sup>Enlil rēšīšu ullū*  
 D *ina Esagil bītim ša kima šamê u eršetim išdāšu kīnā*

- A In order that the strong not oppress the weak,  
 B To provide justice for the orphan and widow,  
 C In Babylon, the city whose head Anu and Enlil have elevated,  
 D In Esagila, the temple whose foundations are as firm as heaven and earth.

To use the terminology of biblical poetry, A and B show literary parallelism in that both cola express a single idea, first in a negative statement and then in a positive reformulation. *Enšam* (“the weak”) in A expands to *ekūtam* (“the orphan”) and *almattam* (“the widow”) in B, which provides a ballast when B drops the nominative *dannum* (“the strong”). Cola C and D contain equivalent morphological parallelism (*ina* + location [Babylon || Esagila] + appositional noun [the city || the temple] + *ša*); C contains two elements in the relative clause (Anu and Enlil), as does D (heaven and earth). Perhaps alliterative sound play, or at least a similar rhythm, is present in *rēšīšu ullū* (“elevated its head”) || *išdāšu kīnā* (“made firm its foundations”). The first bicolon resembles any of several poetic biblical verses that deal with oppression of underprivileged classes:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>ואלמנה ויתום גר ועני אל-תעשקו<br/>         ורעת איש אחיו אל-תחשבו בלבבכם<br/>         Zech 7:10</p> | <p>Do not oppress the widow and the<br/>         orphan, the stranger and the poor,<br/>         And do not plot evil in your hearts<br/>         one against another.</p> |
|--|--|

<sup>19</sup> Theophile J. MEEK, “The Code of Hammurabi,” in: *ANET*, 1969, 164; see also G. R. DRIVER and John C. MILES, *The Babylonian Laws. I. Legal Commentary*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1952, 36; and M. C. A. KORPEL, “Epilogue,” 146–47.

In contrast to the epilogue, the laws themselves in LCH do not contain many (if any) examples of parallelism. Typical is Law 250:

*šumma alpum sūqam ina alākišu awilām* If an ox, while walking through the  
*ikkipma uštāmīt dīnum šū rugummâm* streets, gores a man to death, the suit  
*ul īšu* has no legal claim.

The sentence is linear and free of internal repetition. The following Law 251, which specifies the punishment for the owner of an ox that is a habitual gorer, duplicates vocabulary from Law 250 and introduces new information but does not parallel 250 structurally. It is a second, though connected, thought. The same situation occurs in the Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon, where the blessings and curses that surround the text are poetic and parallelistic while the internal laws are not.

In the Hebrew Bible, the terrifying curses that cap the Deuteronomic legal code contain parallelism:

והיו שמיך אשר על-ראשך נחשת	A	The heavens above your head will become bronze,
והארץ אשר-תחתך ברזל	B	And the earth beneath you iron.
יתן יהוה את-מטר ארצך אבק ועפר	C	YHWH will make the rain of your land powder and dust,
מנהשמים ירד עליך עד השמדך	D	From the heavens it will fall on you until you are destroyed.

Deut 28:23-24

These two bicola (AB and CD) share numerous examples of literary, grammatical, lexical, and phonological parallelism, as well as marked word order and poetic diction.<sup>20</sup> To reiterate, then, the prologue and epilogue of ancient Near Eastern legal texts often contain parallelism and are therefore something other than pure prose, but the laws themselves are usually prosaic.

Turning to the epilogue of the Holiness Legislation, I need not enumerate all examples of parallelism in Lev 26:3-45 (Korpel does so thoroughly and expertly), but I will give two verses as example:

<sup>20</sup> In terms of literary parallelism, B heightens A, progressing from a softer to a harder metal; D heightens C, culminating in the land's destruction. Lexically, נחשת and ברזל are an established correlative word-pair (for example, Isa 60:17; Jer. 1:18; Ps. 107:16), as are שמים and ארץ. Phonologically, /š/ and /k/ repeat in A, and gutturals dominate the end of C. A and C contain standard verb-first word order, but B and D are marked. Cf. Lev 26:19, and see further in Wilfred G. E. WATSON, *Classical Hebrew Poetry. A Guide to Its Techniques* (JSOT.S 26), Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1984, 53.

אם־בחקתי תלכו	A	If my laws you follow,
ואת־מצותי תשמרו	B	And my commandments you observe,
ועשיתם אתם	C	And you do them,
ונתתי גשמיכם בעתם	D	I will give your rains in their season,
ונתנה הארץ יבולה	E	And the land will give its produce,
ועץ השדה יתן פריו	F	And the tree of the field give its fruit.

Lev 26:3-4

The lexical parallelism is self-evident in the first tricolon, with חקה (A) and מצוה (B) being an established synonymous word-pair (here also paralleling אתם in C); the verbs  $\sqrt{\text{הלך}}$ ,  $\sqrt{\text{שמר}}$ , and  $\sqrt{\text{עשׂ}}$  often parallel each other in established poetic texts.<sup>21</sup> In the second tricolon, all three clauses express the singular idea that Israel will be blessed with abundance if the people obey God. E refers back to D (the rain will allow the land to sprout vegetation) but also heightens the imagery, and F both specifies E (by identifying one type of expected produce) and refers back to D and its promise of rain.<sup>22</sup> Such parallelistic lines abound in Leviticus 26.

I propose that – unlike the ancient Near Eastern legal collections just noted – in the Holiness Legislation, the parallel constructions permeate large sections of the *laws themselves*. The parallelistic lines are not restricted to the prologue and epilogue, as is the wont of ancient legal texts. Instead, the persistent presence of parallelism in HL is unusual and deserves further comment.

### 3. LEVITICUS 18

A law’s “kernel,” its essential meaning, is the simplest expression in which that law can appear. In the Decalogue, for example, לֹא תִנָּאֵף, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exod 20:14), is both the kernel and the entire law. In the Sabbath commandment, the kernel is זָכוֹר אֶת־יְמֵי הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ, “Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy” (20:8). Even if the specific prohibitions about seventh-day work are included in the kernel (20:9-10),

<sup>21</sup> On חקה and מצוה, see the only other example in Ps 89:32. משפט and חקה are a far more common pairing, occurring over a dozen times in Ezekiel and in Ps 18:23. See poetic examples of  $\sqrt{\text{הלך}}$  and  $\sqrt{\text{שמר}}$  being set parallel in Mic 6:16; Zech 3:7; Mal 3:14; Ps 78:10; and Prov 2:20. All three verbs  $\sqrt{\text{הלך}}$ ,  $\sqrt{\text{שמר}}$ , and  $\sqrt{\text{עשׂ}}$  appear in Ezek 11:20; 18:9; 20:19,21; 36:27; and 37:24. Levine argues that the first two verbs “reinforce one another, yielding the sense of thoroughgoing observance” (B. LEVINE, *Leviticus*, 182).

<sup>22</sup> Beyond the internal parallelism of these lines, they also repeat (or reverse) in the curses section (26:14-38); cf. Baruch A. LEVINE, “The Epilogue to the Holiness Code. Priestly Statements on the Destiny of Israel,” in: Jacob NEUSNER, Baruch A. LEVINE, and Ernest S. FRERICHS (ed.), *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*, Philadelphia, Fortress, 1987, 9–34, 20.

the justification that “in six days did YHWH make the heavens and the earth...” (20:11) adds coloring and reasoning but does not alter or expand the law. Any text beyond the kernel of a law exposes the lawgiver’s compositional style. As discussed earlier, Paran compared Holiness laws to their Pentateuchal predecessors, noting the expansions and modifications to arrive at a “priestly style.”<sup>23</sup> Inspired by this method, I propose comparing Holiness laws to their hypothetical kernels. If the law *requires* a parallel construction in order to express itself fully, then the parallelism is operational and not only stylistic. If, however, a parallel construction is superfluous for expressing the kernel of the law, then the parallelism is stylistic and artistic.<sup>24</sup>

In verses with parallelism, the repetition is often unnecessary to convey the information – it lies beyond the kernel. In that sense, the parallelism, pedestrian though it is, dominates the line by determining its shape and form. For example, consider Lev 18:3:

כמעשה ארץ־מצרים אשר ישבתם־בה לא תעשו	A	As is done in the land of Egypt, in which you settled, you shall not do.
וכמעשה ארץ־כנען אשר אני מביא אתכם שמה לא תעשו	B	And as is done in the land of Canaan, into which I am bringing you, you shall not do.
ובחקתיהם לא תלכו	C	And by their laws you shall not abide.

Little about this verse puts the reader in mind of poetry, but poetic parallelism determines its structure. The grammatical structures of A and B are identical, and the lexical parallelism is near complete (either repetitive or antonymic). The marked word order, with the verb falling at the end of the sentences (cf. 18:5, which begins **ושמרתם**), has the effect of drawing attention to the form of the words themselves. The author could have written a clumsier non-parallel sentence that would contain the law’s kernel, such as:

<sup>23</sup> M. PARAN, *Darkhe*, 27–46.

<sup>24</sup> Such reasoning has the potential to become circular, as identifying a law’s kernel is perhaps subjective. A helpful question to ask is whether observance of the law would change – at least, in the modern critic’s opinion – if certain text were excised. In Exod 20:4–6, God commands, “You shall not make for yourselves an idol or any figure of what is in the heavens above, on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them, and you shall not serve them; for I, YHWH your God, am a jealous God, visiting parents’ guilt on children, even to the third and fourth generation of those who spurn me, but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.” The kernel ends with “you shall not serve them,” as deleting any clause before that would change the law’s practical observance, and deleting the justification that begins “for I, YHWH,” would not change the law’s implementation.

לא תעשו כמעשה ארץ־מצרים או ארץ־כנען  
of Egypt or the land of Canaan.

Surely the listener (and ancient reader) knows that the Israelites have recently departed Egypt and aim to settle in Canaan. The relative clauses, though, lend importance and a sense of history to the commandment in Lev 18:3, also applying the prohibition merismically to the entire Israelite world. In other words, the parallel construction creates the meaning of “You shall not do as anyone else anywhere has done, whether you encountered them in your past or will meet them in your future.” The C-colon, which lacks a geographic or temporal expansion, concretizes this point. Whether the Holiness Legislation dates to the Babylonian, Persian, or Greek periods, the parallelism helps this law remain a potent order against assimilation.

Because this statute precedes a chapter on sexual laws, interpreters since the days of Sifra have sought to find specific “doings,” meaning sexual abominations, that are unique to Egypt and Canaan, likely sibling sexual relationships in the former and bestiality or male/male sexual encounters in the latter.<sup>25</sup> As noted already, v. 18:4 also contains parallelism:

את־משפטי תעשו	My rules you shall observe,
ואת־חקתי תשמרו	And my laws you shall keep,
ללכת בהם	Walking by them:
אני יהוה אלהיכם	I am YHWH your God.

Reading 18:3-4 sensitive to the parallelism suggests that instead of referring to specific sexual acts, the preamble to the sexual laws creates a complete picture of what you are not to do (as others have done) and what you must do (follow YHWH’s laws) that then leads into the sex laws. Perhaps, then, vv. 3-4 are staple covenant language appropriated for the present purpose. Verse 5, which transitions to the sexual prohibitions, does not contain any of the parallelism that pervades vv. 3-4:

ושמרתם את־חקתי ואת־משפטי אשר יעשה	You shall keep my laws and my rules,
אתם האדם וחי בהם אני יהוה	which when a person does them, he lives by them; I am YHWH.

This statement collapses the parallel construction of v. 4, which assigns *חקה* and *משפט* different verbs, and places them in one clause with standard word order restored. Notice also that the order of the two nouns is reversed in v. 5 from v. 4: “my rules ... and my laws” becomes “my laws

<sup>25</sup> See summary in J. MILGROM, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1518–20; also Robert ALTER, *The Five Books of Moses. A Translation with Commentary*, New York, Norton, 2004, 620.

and my rules.” The verbs also reverse order:  $\sqrt{\text{עשׂי}}$  is followed by  $\sqrt{\text{שמר}}$  in v. 4, but  $\sqrt{\text{שמר}}$  is followed by  $\sqrt{\text{עשׂי}}$  in v. 5. I do not view vv. 4 and 5 as simply chiasmatic, though, because there is a great deal of interference from non-chiasmatic words. Across 4 and 5, the chiasmus would have to be  $abcdxe \parallel d'c'a'b'zye'$ :

e	d	c	b	a	xyz	
		ואת־חקתי	תעשו	את־משפטי		4
	תשמרו				ללכת בהם	
אני יהוה אלהיכם	ושמרתם	את־חקתי		ואת־משפטי		5
			אשר יעשה		אתם האדם וחי בהם	
אני יהוה						

Many elements are chiasmatic, but the exceptions (the unparalleled elements in  $xyz$ , the unreversed  $a'b'$ , and the outlier  $e'$ ) suggest instead that another literary force may be at work beyond chiasmus. “Seidel’s Law” describes a situation when a later author quotes from an earlier text and reverses the order of the constituents:  $AB$  becomes  $BA$ .<sup>26</sup> The difference in style between v. 4 and v. 5, one with parallelism and one without, might suggest one of two options: a single author is drawing upon standard covenantal language in v. 4 but then composes an original sentence in v. 5, reversing some of the vocabulary in the process; or, the two verses represent two different authors, with the author of v. 5 acknowledging the preexistent v. 4 by reversing its vocabulary.<sup>27</sup> Though variations in style

<sup>26</sup> Moshe SEIDEL, “Parallels Between Isaiah and Psalms” (Hebrew), *Sinai* 38 (1955–1956) 149–72, 229–40, 272–80. See also Pancratius BEENTJES, “Inverted Quotations in the Bible. A Neglected Stylistic Pattern,” *Bib* 63 (1982) 506–23. Bernard M. LEVINSON discusses the law and its practical implications in *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1998, 18–20.

<sup>27</sup> Another possibility is that the author of v. 5 borrows the reverse order from 18:26; see discussion below.

need not necessarily point to textual layers, the circumstance where a text switches between lines with numerous examples of parallel constructions and verses without any parallelism requires study.

The sexual laws themselves have long been described as chiasmic, but once again, I view the structure of the sentences as more complex than that. The prohibition of sexual relationships between a man and his mother (18:7) can serve as an example:

ערוֹת אבִיךָ	A	The nakedness of your father,
וְערוֹת אִמֶּךָ	B	That is, the nakedness of your mother,
לֹא תִגְלֶה	C	You shall not expose.
אִמֶּךָ הִוא	D	She is your mother!
לֹא תִגְלֶה עֲרוֹתֶיהָ	E	Do not expose her nakedness.

The kernel of the law would be עֲרוֹת אִמֶּךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה (וְערוֹת אבִיךָ) in B and C (and possibly A), and the additional text exposes the author's compositional style. Calling this line an abxb'a' or axa' chiasmus does not appear correct, as עֲרוֹת אבִיךָ has no reversed element; colon D is the reverse of B (with C as the center), but colon E does not continue the reversing.<sup>28</sup> At best, this sentence could be understood as an abcb'c'b' split-member chiasmus.<sup>29</sup> However, I propose that a better understanding of the line results from viewing it as a pentacolon with multiple examples of parallelism. A and B vary the gender of the parent with lexical parallelism, equating the mother's nakedness with that of the father; B therefore clarifies A, which often occurs in parallel lines.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, A and B could translate as "The nakedness of your father, / More specifically, the nakedness of your mother...."<sup>31</sup> C parallels E, which is an expanded and heightened version of C.

A law such as 18:13 is not commonly labeled chiasmic, as are so many other verses in ch. 18. However, its construction is parallelistic, as A-colon contains the kernel and B-colon is nonessential:

עֲרוֹת אֲחוֹת־אִמֶּךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה	A	The nakedness of your mother's sister you shall not expose,
כִּי־שָׂאֵר אִמֶּךָ הִוא	B	For she is your mother's flesh.

<sup>28</sup> On the text as chiasmic, see J. MILGROM, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1322.

<sup>29</sup> I borrow the term from W. G. E. WATSON, *Classical*, 203.

<sup>30</sup> Says Kugel, B often "[goes beyond] A in force or specificity" (J. L. KUGEL, *Idea*, 8).

<sup>31</sup> Levine reads A-colon to mean "the nakedness reserved for your father, belonging to your father" (B. LEVINE, *Leviticus*, 120). Alternatively, the mother's nakedness has had sexual contact with the father's, rendering her taboo (R. ALTER, *Five Books*, 621).

The B-colon provides further justification and does not reiterate A's verb (as, indeed, a nominal sentence cannot); the law could have ended with "do not expose her nakedness" (cf. 18:7), which would have created a partial chiasm. In short, the literary device most operative in Leviticus 18 is not chiasmus, as many have claimed, but rather parallelism.

Not all verses in Leviticus 18 contain parallel constructions. As mentioned already, the transitional restatement in 18:5 is not parallel, nor is the heading thesis statement of the chapter in v. 6 ("Any man: you shall not approach the flesh of his kin to uncover nakedness; I am YHWH"). All of the laws in vv. 7-16 contain parallel constructions, but the situation ends in v. 17. The law in v. 17 begins "You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter," but the expected parallel reformulation does not appear. Instead, a different law with new phraseology and a different concern (marriage instead of "exposing nakedness") short-circuits the expected reformulation of 17a. Verse 21 may contain parallelism, setting a transgression involving Molech (likely child sacrifice) as commensurate with a violation against God:

ומזרעך לא־תתן להעביר למלך	A From your seed you shall not give as an offering to Molech,
ולא תחלל את־שם אלהיך	B (So that) you do not profane the name of your God;
אני יהוה	C I am YHWH.

However, this possible parallelism is of a different sort entirely than the constructions observed in the earlier sexual laws. In 18:7, the verse contains only one thought – prohibition of a man having sex with his mother – that the author reinforces by reformulating the law in 7b. Verse 21 has no reformulation, and even setting B-colon as a rationale for A-colon shows that B is not a parallel image. Both A and B are part of the law's kernel. Scholars have long viewed vv. 17 (or, in my understanding, 17b) through 23 as an editorial expansion of the text, and the current study supports the conclusion that 7-17a and 17b-23 are distinct units.

The concluding verses of Leviticus 18 again evince parallelism and general chiasmus, as can be seen in yet another regulation regarding God's "laws and rules" (cf. 18:4.5 above):

ושמרתם אתם את־חקתי ואת־משפטי	A You, yourselves, shall keep my laws and my rules;
ולא תעשו מכל התועבת האלה	B You shall not do any of these abominations,
האזרח והגר הגר בתוכם	C The native and the sojourner sojourning in your midst.
Lev 18:26	

In v. 5, אֶת־חֻקֵי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי appeared in a phrase instead of in parallel cola, and I therefore saw no parallelism in that opening verse. In contrast, v. 26 sets “my laws and my rules” as parallel to “these abominations,” also employing a positive || negative syntax. The word אֶתֶם in A is unparalleled in B, drawing attention to the 2nd person, personal nature of the law.<sup>32</sup>

Formatting 18:26 as I have above requires a comment on the nature of tricola. Kugel understands some supposed tricola as bicola with a lopsided second colon.<sup>33</sup> Alternatively, Stephen A. Geller argues that readers should understand tricola as a series of “interlocking couplets,” meaning AB and BC.<sup>34</sup> To this I also add the couplet AC. In my understanding, the A- and B-cola interact with C such that if one of the three cola were removed, the hypothetical poetic line would still be complete. And in keeping with the nature of a tricolon, three bicola could emerge in v. 26 that each reads as logical:

1. You, yourselves, shall keep my laws and my rules; / You shall not do any of these abominations.
2. You, yourselves, shall keep my laws and my rules, / The native and the sojourner sojourning in your midst.
3. You shall not do any of these abominations, / The native and the sojourner sojourning in your midst.

The parallelism is heightening and specifying across all three cola.

The foregoing evaluation has shown four distinct sections after the dialogue introduction (vv. 1-2) in Leviticus 18. Verses 3-4 are parallelistic, as are vv. 24-30; these verses are written in the same style and connect to each other in ideology and purpose. Verses 5-6, which lack parallelism, take the somewhat generic parallelistic prologue (3-4) and epilogue (24-30) and tie them directly to sexual practices. Two sets of laws then appear, vv. 7-17a (parallelistic) and 17b-23 (not parallelistic). Instead of considering changes in lexicon, this study’s sensitivity to parallelism, exploring the compositional style of the text, supports past attempts to determine text blocks or strata, differentiating sentences that lack parallelism in a chapter otherwise full of parallelistic material.

<sup>32</sup> Stephen K. SHERWOOD argues, “The ‘you’ here is emphatic – *you*, as opposed to those who are being vomited from the land” (*Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* [Berit Olam], Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 2002, 74, emphasis original).

<sup>33</sup> See J. L. KUGEL, *Idea*, 52.

<sup>34</sup> S. A. GELLER, *Parallelism*, 14.

## 4. LEVITICUS 19

Not all instances of parallel construction should be regarded as parallelism and read according to the conventions of the style. For example, Kugel labels 19:3 a “normal binary sentence.”<sup>35</sup> At first glance, the sentence structure does appear to be parallel:

אִישׁ אָמוּ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ	A	Each man: his mother and his father you shall revere,
וְאֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ	B	And my Sabbaths you shall keep;
אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם	C	I am YHWH your God.

Cola A and B have substitutional grammatical parallelism: “his mother and his father,” singular nouns with 3rd person suffixes, becomes “my Sabbaths,” a plural noun with a 1st person suffix.<sup>36</sup>  $\sqrt{\text{ירא}}$  and  $\sqrt{\text{שמר}}$  are an established poetic word-pair (Ps. 119:63; Eccl. 12:13). Other poetic devices might also be present in the text, such as marked word order, alliteration ( $/s/$  and  $/t/$  repeat in B) and assonance ( $/i/$  dominates in A). A-colon lacks a defined direct object marker (cf. Exod 20:12, **כבד את־אביך**, **וְאֶת־אִמְךָ**), which often drops in poetry.<sup>37</sup> A and B are therefore slightly poetic in their construction, but the evidence is not yet sufficient to label the cola parallel. In addition, both A and B contain information essential for the law; neither is the kernel without the other. I cannot propose a way in which reading A and B as parallel as opposed to linear changes the understanding of the verse.

Leviticus 19:14 presents a circumstance where the law’s kernel only appears when the cola are read as parallel:

לֹא־תִקְלַל חֵרֵשׁ	A	You shall not insult the deaf,
וּלְפָנַי עוֹר לֹא תִתֵּן מַכְשֵׁל	B	And before the blind you shall not place a hindrance.
וִירֵאתָ מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ	C	You shall fear your God,
אֲנִי יְהוָה	D	I am YHWH.

<sup>35</sup> J. L. KUGEL, *Idea*, 105.

<sup>36</sup> A similar construction exists in Ps 78:5:

יָקַם עֲדוֹת בִּיעֻקֵּב	He established a decree in <b>Jacob</b> ,
וְתוֹרָה שֵׁם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל	And a law he appointed in <b>Israel</b> ,
אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ	Which he commanded <b>our ancestors</b>
לְהוֹדִיעֵם לְבָנֵיהֶם	To make them known to <b>their children</b> .

The psalmist parallels the singular names of the patriarch, applied to the Israelite nation, with plural mentions of ancestors and descendants; in the second bicolon, the possessive suffixes change from 1st to 3rd person.

<sup>37</sup> David Noel FREEDMAN, “Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy. An Essay on Biblical Poetry,” *JBL* 96 (1977) 5–26; idem, “Another Look at Biblical Hebrew Poetry,” in: Elaine R. FOLLIS (ed.), *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry* (JSOT.S 40), Sheffield, Sheffield Academic, 1987, 11–28.

The lexical parallelism in AB is quite common, as “blind” and “deaf” pair often in poetic texts.<sup>38</sup> It is reasonable to ask, though, why the author chose to separate the two impairments into two phrases – why the kernel needs two formulations. A prose sentence could easily read, “Do not insult or hinder the deaf or the blind” (cf. Exod 4:11). A parallel reading of the bicolon, using the conventions of biblical poetry, suggests instead that the author is heightening the strictness of the statute: “Do not insult the deaf” with words, an act that could transpire whether or not the deaf person is present.<sup>39</sup> By the very nature of the disability, a deaf person would not likely be aware that any denigration has occurred. However, if a person places a physical obstacle (commonly “stumbling block”) in front of a blind person, the disabled individual, upon tripping or falling, would be fully aware of the event. AB also contains partial chiasmus (ab ll xb'a'y), but B-colon introduces two expanded elements, adding *לפני* and intensifying the action by introducing a physical object (the intangible verbal insult becomes a tangible stumbling block). The prohibited violation is more serious in B-colon, and the pronouncement, to which the interrupted chiasmus draws attention, is weightier.

Read without parallelism, this law prohibits two specific acts: insulting the deaf and hindering the free movement of the blind. If the two cola are taken as a parallel construction instead of as a two-itemed list, then a new translation is possible, repurposing Kugel’s “A, what’s more, B” understanding of many supposedly-parallel lines: “You shall not *passively*, intangibly, insult the disabled behind their back (without their knowledge), / And, what’s more, you shall not *actively*, tangibly, obstruct the disabled in their everyday life.”<sup>40</sup> Such a reading would make it unnecessary to attempt to read A-colon as producing a physical consequence for the deaf person (as others have done) since actual bodily harm might befall the blind person in B-colon.<sup>41</sup> I therefore interpret Lev 19:14a as a strong, single prohibition against distressing or damaging disabled individuals in any way. Milgrom adopts a reading similar to mine (“it is hardly conceivable that H literally meant that one is only forbidden to place a stumbling block before the blind”), but he does so only by citing H’s tendency towards generalization, and he finds no need to read other

<sup>38</sup> See Isa 29:18; 35:5; 42:18-19; and 43:8.

<sup>39</sup> The *pi'el* of קלל “has an (exclusively) declarative sense” (*HALOT* III, 1996, 1104).

<sup>40</sup> J. L. KUGEL, *Idea*, 8.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. J. MILGROM, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1639.

laws equally broadly.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, Milgrom has adopted a parallelistic reading of this verse without describing it as such.

The second half of the verse (“You shall fear your God, / I am YHWH”) also can be read as a bicolon with epithetic lexical parallelism (אלהים || יהוה) that heightens from the general to the specific. This bicolon provides the motivation for observing the verse, implying that “You shall observe this commandment because you shall fear what your God will do to you if you violate it, / That is, what the mighty YHWH will do.”

I can propose three options for understanding the phrases “I am YHWH” and “I am YHWH your God” in Leviticus 19. First, the phrase can create literary and lexical parallelism with previous text to create a bicolon (as in 19:14), expanding the moral justification:

מפני שיבה תקום	A	Before the aged you shall rise,
והדרת פני זקן	B	And you shall show deference to the old. <sup>43</sup>
ויראת מאלהיך	C	You shall fear your God,
אני יהוה	D	I am YHWH.

Lev 19:32

Second, though less convincingly, the phrase can sit outside the parallelism of a bicolon but interact with the text to create a tricolon. In Lev 19:3, the final “I am YHWH your God” does not share obvious parallelism with the first two cola (except for the presence of another possessive suffix, making the three phrases contain all three persons). Before the revolution in studying biblical poetry in the 1970s and ‘80s, perhaps this final phrase would have been labeled an example of Robert Lowth’s “synthetic” parallelism if the verse were indeed poetic.<sup>44</sup> Again, three logical bicola could emerge from Lev 19:3:

1. Each man: his mother and his father you shall revere, / And my Sabbaths you shall keep.
2. Each man: his mother and his father you shall revere; / I am YHWH your God.
3. My Sabbaths you shall keep; / I am YHWH your God.

<sup>42</sup> J. MILGROM, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1639.

<sup>43</sup> The chiasmus (W. G. E. WATSON, *Classical*, 47) and lexical parallelism in AB is familiar to readers of biblical wisdom literature, and perhaps the parallelism in this example blurs the distinction between the authoritative nature of a law and the suggestive tone of a proverb.

<sup>44</sup> Even a century ago, though, some commentators had dismissed this catchall category altogether (George B. GRAY, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry. Considered with Special Reference to the Criticism and Interpretation of the Old Testament*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1915, 49–51).

However, the logic here is circular. By deciding that clause C *should* be parallel, I create parallelism where none is obvious.<sup>45</sup>

Third, the phrases can function as a refrain, which helps mark the structure.<sup>46</sup> In all but two circumstances in Leviticus 19, **אני יהוה אלהיכם** or **יהוה אני** appear at the end of a sentence that shows at least some parallelism.<sup>47</sup> Save for 19:25, the “I am YHWH (your God)” clauses demarcate the end of parallel lines. For example, vv. 27-28 concern physical alteration of the human body, especially as related to Canaanite death rituals:

לא תקפו פאת ראשכם	A	You shall not round off the side-growth of your head,
ולא תשחית את פאת זקנך	B	And you shall not destroy the side-growth of your beard.
ושרט לנפש לא תתנו בבשרכם	C	A gash for the dead you shall not make in your flesh,
וכתבת קעקע לא תתנו בכמ	D	And tattooed writing you shall not set on yourself.
אני יהוה	E	I am YHWH.

Perhaps A and B should not be considered parallel but rather two clauses that describe two locations that should be neither shaved nor trimmed. Leviticus 21:5 (“They shall not make bald spots on their head, and the edge of their beard they shall not shave, and in their flesh they shall not make a gash”) also lists two locations to be spared tonsorial attention, also using a different verb for each. However, the prohibition of gashes in honor of the dead in 21:5 contains no parallel element, unlike in 19:28. In short, that both the hair and skin modification laws contain two formulations in 19:28 but not in 21:5 makes conspicuous the parallel constructions in the

<sup>45</sup> In contrast, see the discussion of isolated lines in poetry in F. W. DOBBS-ALLSOPP, *On Biblical Poetry*, 84–89.

<sup>46</sup> Wenham argues that H uses the phrase (both in and beyond Leviticus 17–26) in three circumstances: when evoking the redemption from slavery in Egypt, when Israel must imitate God by being holy, and as a motive for following a particular law (G. J. WENHAM, *Leviticus*, 251). The phrase links back the proclamation **יהוה אלהיך** made at Sinai (Exod 20:2; Deut 5:6), in effect declaring that those who recognized God’s authority at Sinai must continue to accept God’s laws. Milgrom argues that the phrase “I am YHWH your God” is an ellipsis for “I YHWH your God (have spoken)” (J. MILGROM, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1518).

<sup>47</sup> Leviticus 19:2.3.4.10.12.14.16.18.28.29.30.31.32.34. One of the exceptions is v. 36, where **אני יהוה אלהיכם** begins rather than ends a sentence (as do all of the other examples), so its nature is inherently different; verse 25 also closes with **אני יהוה אלהיכם** at the end of a relatively lengthy section concerning planting and harvesting in Israel (vv. 23-24), though the section lacks parallelism.

former.<sup>48</sup> Leviticus 19 is a composite mix of laws on a multitude of topics, and the parallelistic structure of some sentences, in addition to the presence of the divine justification formula, can help scholars identify strata and/or units.

## 5. LEVITICUS 20

Leviticus 20 is itself a reformulation of the laws of ch. 18, restating prohibitions against worshiping Molech (20:2-5 versus 18:21), illicit sexual relationships (e.g., a man sleeping with his daughter-in-law, 20:12 versus 18:15), and prohibitions against a man approaching a menstruating woman (20:18 versus 18:19). Chapter 20 also draws from other parts of HL (describing proper child-parent relationships, 20:9 versus 19:3) and even non-HL parts of the Priestly source (20:25 versus 11:2-40).

The parallelism in the laws of Lev 20:9-21 has far less consistency – in both directions of the prose-poetry continuum – than the laws in Leviticus 18 from which they take inspiration; Lev 18:7-17a contains persistent parallelism while Lev 20:9-21 does not, but also 18:17b-23 evinces no parallelism, while 20:9-21 contains some. 20:10 can illustrate the point:

וַאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִנְאֹף אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ אִישׁ	A	A man who commits adultery with the wife of (another) man,
אֲשֶׁר יִנְאֹף אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ רֵעֵהוּ	B	Who commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor,
מִוְת־יָוִם הַנֶּאֱפָת וְהַנֶּאֱפֹת	C	He shall be put to death, the adulterer and the adulteress.

Milgrom calls this line “as far from poetry as imaginable,” and the duplicate relative clause in B is difficult to explain.<sup>49</sup> I submit that an answer lies in A and B being parallel.

<sup>48</sup> If C and D (Lev 19:28) are read as parallel, then the “tattooed writing” is a further explanation of the “gash for the dead.” (The practice of tattooing oneself with names or dates after a loved one’s death even persists in some modern cultures.) The verse might not contain a blanket prohibition against tattooing, but only of tattoos undertaken in grief after a person’s passing. If all four cola parallel each other, then the prohibition against cutting hair might also only apply to mourning rituals, a notion substantiated by Deut 14:1b, which only forbids shaving as a sign of grief (“You shall not gash yourselves or create baldness between your eyes [shave your head] because of the dead”); such an interpretation becomes even more likely if the Holiness Legislation depends upon Deuteronomy (see Jeffrey STACKERT, *Rewriting the Torah: Literary Revision in Deuteronomy and the Holiness Legislation* [FAT 52], Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

<sup>49</sup> J. MILGROM, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1747.

For this verse to contain the sort of parallelism under discussion in this paper, then A and B must both be original to the text. Perhaps B is a dit-tography, supported by a Greek manuscript that lacks *אשר ינאף את-אשת* in that clause. However, most ancient witnesses support MT, so the missing words in Greek are likely the result of its own haplography. Instead, most commentators argue that the verse has expanded. Perhaps *את-אשת איש* glosses *רעהו*; or, B might clarify A (see the gloss in my translation) in order to make clear that a man does not commit adultery through sex with his own wife. Alternatively, *רעהו*, “his neighbor,” in B might be a synonym for *עמיתך*, “your fellow,” in the parallel law in Lev 18:20.<sup>50</sup> The most reasonable argument is that B explicitly limits the law to adultery with an Israelite’s wife.<sup>51</sup> If so, Michael Fishbane argues that the clarification might have been added “in the natural course of handling received cases,” restricting the law to manageable ethnic proportions.<sup>52</sup>

A parallelistic reading of Lev 20:10 suggests that the entire sentence (clauses A and B) can indeed be original, and that no text or source criticism is necessary.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, studies that try to explain the pleonasm in clause B overlook the inherent prolixity in the line: the verb *נאף* itself means “to commit adultery,” and while some texts explicitly refer to committing adultery *with a woman* (Prov 6:32 or Jer 29:23) or *with a man* (Exod 16:32), the verb certainly can stand on its own (Exod 20:14). In other words, this law would convey the same information – have the same kernel – if it read *איש אשר ינאף מות-ייומת*; if theories that the law applies specifically to Israelites are correct, all that is required is *איש אשר ינאף את-אשת רעהו מות-ייומת*. The author chose to use more words than necessary (by including “with the wife of [another] man” in A), so the author using one more clause than necessary (“who commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor” in B) is not cause by itself to hypothesize textual expansion. Instead, reading 20:10 as parallel suggests that B heightens A by moving from the general crime of adultery to the specific infraction of adultery with an Israelite woman: “A man who commits adultery with the wife of (another) man, *and, what’s even worse*, who commits adultery with the wife of his (Israelite) neighbor...”. The verse presents the single idea that adultery is a capital crime by having B reformulate and heighten A.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Ezek 18:6,20, which contain the phrase *אשת רעהו* instead of the expected *אשת עמיתך* from Lev 18:20.

<sup>51</sup> See J. MILGROM, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1747.

<sup>52</sup> Michael FISHBANE, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985, 169.

<sup>53</sup> The masculine singular verb in clause C suggests that *והנאפת* may not be original to the verse, but this does not affect the parallelism in A and B.

As mentioned earlier, though, the parallelism in Leviticus 20 is erratic. The death penalty clause (C) in 20:10 contains no parallel element beyond the repetition of  $\sqrt{\text{נאָר}}$ . The verse can separate into two bicola (A || C and B || C), but A || B is not complete in itself. Rather than see these points as a reason to doubt the parallelism between clauses A and B, though, it exemplifies a trend in the chapter. Milgrom notes that vv. 10-20 contain introversion (ABCXC'B'A'), but he cautions, “This example of a meaningless introversion ... provides a warning that structure, regardless of its perfect form, may be a matter of chance or, more likely, a purely aesthetic exercise.”<sup>54</sup> While I would replace “meaningless” with “a meaning or purpose that I cannot identify,” the same description could apply to the parallelism in vv. 10-21.

Leviticus 20:14 displays the same phenomenon:

וַאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִקַּח אֶת־אִשָּׁה וְאֶת־אִמָּהּ	A	If a man marries a woman and her mother,
זָמָה הוּא	B	it is depravity.
בְּאֵשׁ יִשְׂרְפוּ אֹתוֹ וְאֶת־הֶן	C	In fire they shall be burned, he and they,
וְלֹא־תִהְיֶה זָמָה בְּתוֹכְכֶם	D	that there be no depravity in your midst.

B and D contain parallel images and positive || negative syntax (“there is” || “there must not be”). The diction in A and C could indicate phonological parallelism between the first two words ( $wā'îš$  ||  $bā'ēš$ ), made more obvious by the marked word order in C. However, I can suggest no reason why the author might have structured the verse as it appears, beyond the fact that B describes the actions in A as a crime. Any parallelism in this verse is slight and, perhaps, “meaningless.” Given the overall chiasmic structure between Leviticus 18–20 (ABA') and the self-contained chiasmus through 20:1-27, the author(s) of Leviticus 20 obviously placed a great emphasis on artificial stylistic devices. The parallelism, though, appears to be an afterthought, sometimes imported from the previous versions of laws and sometimes a simple linguistic reflex.

## 6. SUMMARY

Many of the laws in the Holiness Legislation (Leviticus 17–26) are prolix – or, more charitably, florid. The kernel of a law, its essential meaning, is often shorter than the actual verse. The extra, unnecessary material that an author chooses to include in a law exposes the author’s compositional style, and in many cases, the style in operation is parallelism. A

<sup>54</sup> J. MILGROM, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1320.

significant number of verses in HL that scholars have previously identified as chiasmic are better understood as parallel. Because successive cola in parallel lines echo or second earlier cola, identifying certain verses as parallel – and not just as parallelistic – allows for new exegetical interpretations.

In future research, I intend to test the hypothesis that when seeking to identify Holiness material outside the standard corpus of Leviticus 17–26, noting the presence or absence of parallelism can provide support in making a positive identification. If the authors of HL tend to write in parallelism, then finding conspicuous parallelism in a suspect text could buttress lexical and ideological evidence.