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The Art of Highlighting the Endings of Literary Units in Prophetic Books

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Abstract

This article examines the rhetorical and stylistic phenomenon of "highlighting the ending" in prophetic literary units within the Hebrew Bible, situating it within the broader framework of oral–performative culture. Building on the widely accepted view that prophetic texts originated as oral performances, the study emphasizes that written texts represent only partial records of dynamic communicative events involving voice, gesture, and audience interaction. Against this background, the article analyzes a recurrent device in biblical poetry and prose: the marked prominence of the final element of a literary unit. The study surveys scholarship on orality, performance, and textual transmission, demonstrating that meaning in prophetic literature emerges through embodied delivery as much as through linguistic form. It then categorizes a wide range of techniques used to emphasize endings, including expansion or reduction in final lines, syntactic and verbal shifts, chiastic reversals, deviations from repetition patterns, phonetic effects, and climactic disclosure of information. Through numerous examples from prophetic books, the article shows how these techniques function rhetorically to signal closure, enhance memorability, and guide audience interpretation. Ultimately, the prominence of endings is presented as a deliberate and systematic feature rooted in performative communication.

Keywords: prophetic literature; Hebrew Bible; orality; performance criticism; poetic structure; closure; highlighting the ending; rhetoric; rhythm; parallelism; biblical poetry; literary units

1. Introduction

I concur with the broad and widely accepted view the current scholarship holds that prophetic texts are, first and foremost, oral–performative events rather than detached literary compositions. This perspective implies that understanding biblical texts requires attention to their performative dimension, in which vocal delivery, intonation, rhythm, and gesture formed integral components of the message. The written text constitutes only a partial record of a live performative event; consequently, its full interpretation depends on reconstructing its original oral context. The written form is thus a "shadow" of the primary event. This understanding accords with Carr's (2005) analysis, which argues that the biblical literature emerged through sustained processes of memorization, recitation, and textualization within socially embedded scribal settings. Carr emphasizes that writing in ancient Israel did not replace oral transmission but served as a tool for stabilizing and authorizing traditional material, shaping collective memory and communal identity.

It is important to emphasize that biblical texts were intended to be read aloud, not silently. Vocal performance was a prerequisite for proper comprehension. Indeed, silent reading was virtually nonexistent in the biblical period. Orality and writing should not be

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viewed as opposites; rather, both served the auditory dimension of communication. The biblical text does not stand alone—it is part of an event enacted before an audience. The audience played a significant role in shaping prophetic discourse. The prophet operated in dialogue with listeners, adapting rhetorical strategies to audience reactions. Gesture and voice were essential tools of persuasion.[1] The oral–performative character of prophetic discourse is further illuminated by Culley's ([1963] 2024) seminal study,[2] which demonstrated that many biblical poetic and prophetic units preserve formulaic diction characteristic of oral composition. Culley's identification of recurring lexical and syntactic patterns—formulaic structures designed for audibility, memorability, and rhetorical force—provides essential methodological grounding for recognizing how prophetic speech was shaped by traditional oral techniques.

In this article, I focus on a particular stylistic–rhetorical phenomenon found throughout the Hebrew Bible, both in poetry and prose, and especially in prophetic literature: the marked prominence of the final element within prophetic literary units[3]. This technique closely resembles musical strategies for highlighting endings. The various performative methods used to emphasize closure in prophetic texts are, in my view, a direct product of an oral culture in which the performer played a central role in conveying meaning to the audience. Through vocal and gestural cues, the performer signaled to listeners that a literary unit had reached its conclusion.[4] More recent scholarship, especially that of Vayntrub ([2019] 2025, 2026), has expanded the discussion by examining how biblical texts represent voice, embodiment, and performance. Vayntrub argues that prophetic and poetic materials construct literary images of speech and song that evoke embodied performance even within written form. Her work highlights how biblical authors stylize vocality—tone, gesture, and bodily presence—so that the written text continues to signal its performative origins.

The following section offers a concise yet comprehensive survey of scholarships on orality and performance. Recent scholarship on textual transmission in the ancient Near East and in ancient Israel has increasingly emphasized that texts were composed, transmitted, and interpreted within an oral–performative culture in which vocalization, intonation, rhythm, and gesture formed essential components of communication. Studies of scribal practice show that writing functioned primarily as a support for oral performance. Van der Toorn (2007, pp. 11–12) demonstrates that the Hebrew and Akkadian verbs for "reading" originally denoted vocal recitation, and Talmon (1991, pp. 149–50) further develops this insight by arguing that the fundamental distinction in the biblical period was not between "oral" and "written," but between vocal and silent modes of engagement.

Classical studies reinforce this picture. Already, Hendrickson (1929, p. 192) observed that silent reading was exceptional and even considered deficient, while Mournet (2005, pp. 133–34) highlights the fundamentally social nature of reading in antiquity. Yaghjian (1996, p. 208) adds a further dimension by noting that in biblical culture "knowing" was closely tied to "hearing," so that reading was understood as a renewed auditory encounter with familiar material.

If texts were meant to be heard, their interpretation necessarily depends on reconstructing their performative setting. Hibbitts (1992, pp. 889–905) argued that in performance-oriented cultures no single medium carries the full meaning; speech and gesture operate together as complementary channels. Rhoads (2006, p. 128) similarly maintained that performers "embody" the text, making vocal modulation and physical movement integral to its message.

Anthropological research on gesture supports this integrated view of communication. Kendon (1997, pp. 110–11) showed that speech and gesture emerge as two facets of a single communicative process, a point anticipated by Jousse (1974, p. 50), who regarded gesture

as the primordial basis of human expression. Efron's (1941) classic study of immigrant communities in New York further illustrates how gestures shift and converge across cultures, underscoring both their universality and their central role in meaning-making.

This interdependence of gesture and speech was also central to classical rhetoric. Cicero (1986, p. 191) and Quintilian (1921, pp. 65–184) stressed the need for coherence between gesture and message, warning against uncontrolled or incongruent movements. Graf (1991, pp. 36–58) demonstrated that such prescriptions were shaped by theatrical practice, which influenced oratorical technique and informed Quintilian's descriptions.

These insights are particularly relevant for prophetic literature, whose surviving texts reflect layers of performance, transmission, and editorial activity. Crenshaw (2000, p. 40) noted that prophetic materials were preserved not in state archives but within circles associated with the prophets themselves. Rofé (2006, pp. 229–66) emphasized that the texts are not direct transcripts but products of complex reworking, and Ben Zvi (2003, pp. 276–97) argued that prophetic books emerged as collective creations shaped by ongoing communal transmission. Together, these insights highlight that prophetic literature reflects multilayered processes of performance and transmission, making it essential to read the written texts as products of sustained communal shaping rather than as direct records of prophetic speech.

Repeated performance naturally generated contextual additions and stylistic variation. Niditch (1996, pp. 117–25) suggested that the poetry of the classical prophets may represent written crystallizations of oral performances. Person (1998, pp. 601–9) builds on this premise, arguing that scribes operating with an "oral mentality" prioritized meaning over lexical precision, a tendency reflected in divergences between the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint.

Recent studies have also drawn attention to the dramatic dimension of prophecy. Scholars such as Stacey (1990, p. 30), Lang (1983, p. 81ff), and Peckham (1993, p. 134) identified theatrical elements in prophetic actions,[5] while Doan and Terry (2005, pp. 73, 143) applied Performance Criticism to show how textual cues evoke movements, rhythms, and gestures that allow the prophetic event to be reconstructed as a bodily–vocal performance.

Symbolic prophetic actions—such as Jeremiah's breaking of the jug or Ezekiel's inscription on the brick—have likewise been interpreted as nonverbal communicative acts. Studies by Friebel (1999), Viberg (2007), and Kruger (1998) demonstrate that prophets employed a wide repertoire of rhetorical strategies, including voice, movement, gesture, symbolic action, and even forms of street theatre.

Finally, many biblical traditions reflect ethnopoetic[6] modes of transmission—performances that exist only in the moment of enactment. Jason (1975, p. 6) observed that such compositions "cease to exist" once the performance ends, and Seligman (1996, p. 431) showed that midrashic traditions often preserve independent versions of ancient materials, underscoring the dynamic and continually evolving nature of textual transmission in the biblical world.

The preceding discussion of orality and performance provides a useful backdrop for examining a related rhetorical phenomenon: the highlighting of the ending of literary units in the prophetic books. The marking of closure within a literary unit has been described using several terms, including the Hebrew ḥitum and ḥatimah, both meaning "sealing," as well as the English terms closure, conclusion, climactic conclusion, concluding inversion, and concluding deviation (see Taragan 2010). In this article, I propose employing the broader term "highlighting the ending." This stylistic device is characterized by the emphasis placed on the final member or hemistich of a literary unit. The unit must contain at least three members or hemistichs. This device appears primarily in poetry, although it can also be found in rhythmic prose.

It may occur in one or more of the following ways:

1. Expansion of the final member/hemistich;
2. A change in the verb form—its position, its tense (qatal, yiqtol, qotel), its number (singular or plural), or its conjugation (qal, hiphil, etc.);
3. Reversal of the order of components in the final member/hemistich, creating a chiastic structure[7] with the preceding members/hemistichs;
4. Reduction in the number of words or syllables in the final member/hemistich;
5. Gradual disclosure of information, with the climax in the final member/hemistich;
6. Deviation from a pattern of anaphora,[8] epiphora,[9] or symploce;[10]
7. The final member/hemistich is a generalizing member/hemistich, summarizing the information found in the preceding members;
8. Alternation between affirmative and negative verb forms;
9. A phonetic anaphora between the final member/hemistich and the one preceding it;
10. A combination of several ways of highlighting the ending.

It should be noted that a deliberate deviation at the end of a literary unit is especially striking when the earlier members follow a recognizable pattern, as argued by Watson and Freedman. When the final member deviates from that pattern using one of the ways listed above, the reader's or listener's attention is naturally drawn to the ending.

Particularly instructive are the words of Weiss (1967, p. 141), from which I cite three central statements:

1. "Understanding a poetic work depends on understanding its structure..."
2. "One who grasps the opening and the ending of a work is assuredly on the right path..."
3. "Of all the structural components of a work, the ending is of the greatest functional importance..."

Aristotle (2002, pp. 153, 162) noted that excessive monotonic repetition can distract the listener. Such repetition appears artificial, for the listener anticipates the recurrence of similar sounds. Therefore, it is the deviation from the expected pattern that renders the expression striking and elevated.

Gordis (1945, pp. 144–46) followed Aristotle, stating: "The most dangerous enemy of the spirit of poetry is mechanicalness... therefore, there is a strong tendency among writers and speakers to conclude their words with a powerful statement that leaves a deep impression..." On p. 157 he adds that biblical poetry tends to lengthen toward the end.

Smith (1968, p. 53) likewise discussed the desirable way to mark closure in a literary unit that contains patterned repetition—namely, through breaking the pattern. Similarly, Freedman (1986, p. 45) argued against monotony in repetition and views the breaking of the repetitive sequence as a deliberate rhetorical deviation.

Watson (1984, p. 279) writes: "Too much of the same word or phrase can lead to monotony and therefore becomes boring... various maneuvers were at hand to prevent this happening." He emphasizes that excessive repetition can cause boredom, and that various techniques, especially those used in concluding literary units, serve to prevent this.

Paran (1989, p. 187) noted that this stylistic phenomenon serves a mnemonic function, aiding memory and marking the end of a section.

Taragan (2010) published an article on concluding inversion in Second Isaiah, in which she presents several examples from Isaiah 40–66. I have also discussed this phenomenon briefly in several of my own studies (Yona 1999, 2006, 2007), but only in a limited manner. In the present article, however, I examine the phenomenon in greater depth and offer a more comprehensive analysis.

I must emphasize that most scholars who have studied closure in literary units in Hebrew Scripture have identified three principal ways in which the effect is generated:

1. Lengthening the final member/hemistich;
2. Changing the position of the verb in the final member/hemistich;
3. Altering the word order in the final member/hemistich to create a chiastic structure with what precedes it.

2. Discussion

In this article, I present only a limited number of examples—drawn from the many hundreds I have identified—illustrating the various ways in which the endings of poetic units are marked, restricting myself to cases taken solely from the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible. These examples are accompanied at times by a brief and focused discussion, and at other times by more extensive treatment, depending on what the analysis requires.

2.1. Expansion of the Final Member/Hemistich

2.1.1. Hos 3:4

כִּי יָמִים רַבִּים יֵשְׁבוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

אֵין מֶלֶךְ

וְ**אֵין** שָׂר

וְ**אֵין** זֶבַח

וְ**אֵין** מַצֵּבָה

וְ**אֵין** אֵפוֹד וּתְרָפִים

For the Israelites shall remain many days

without king,

and without prince,

without sacrifice,

without pillar,

and without ephod or teraphim

The audience listening to the prophet's words expects the unit to conclude with a patterned, formulaic sequence—"and no ephod, and no teraphim." This expectation is reinforced by the repeated anaphora of אֵין ("without"), which appears five times at the beginning of the hemistich: in four instances it is followed by a single word, while in the final instance it introduces a two-word phrase. Yet precisely at this point, where the listeners anticipate another predictable repetition, the prophet deliberately disrupts the pattern by marking the last member—both through its expanded length and through its altered construction—thus producing the emphatic form *there is* no $X + Y$. It should be clarified that v. 5 may indeed be a later addition, since its style is more prosaic and it even reverses the punitive thrust expressed in v. 4. Consequently, v. 4 is treated as an independent poetic unit.

2.1.2. Ezek 34:16[11]

אֶת הָאֹבֶדֶת אֲבַקֵּשׁ

וְ**אֶת** הַנִּדַּחַת אָשִׁיב

וְלַנִּשְׁבֶּרֶת אֲחַבֵּשׁ

וְ**אֶת** הַחוֹלָה אֲחַזֵּק

וְ**אֶת** הַשְּׁמֵנָה וְ**אֶת** הַחֲזָקָה אַשְׁמִיד אֶרְעֶנָּה בְּמִשְׁפָּט

I will look for the lost,

and I will bring back the strayed,

and I will bind up the injured,

and I will strengthen the sick;

but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will tend them with justice

In each of the first members, a single object opens the clause, followed by a first-person singular yiqtol verb. In the ending member, however, two objects open the clause, followed by two verbs, expressing the opposite of the earlier actions: instead of aiding the weak, God will destroy the fat and strong and judge them. Even in this example, it must be clarified that the literary unit concludes in v. 16, since v. 17 opens a new prophecy.

2.1.3. Am 2:14–16

וְאָבַד מָנוֹס מִקָּל

וְחָזָק לֹא יְאַמֵּץ כֹּחוֹ

וְגִבּוֹר לֹא יְמַלֵּט נַפְשׁוֹ

וְתֹפֵשׂ הַקָּשֶׁת לֹא יַעֲמֹד

וְקַל בְּרַגְלָיו לֹא יְמַלָּט

וְרֹכֵב הַסּוּס לֹא יְמַלֵּט נַפְשׁוֹ

וְאַמִּיץ לִבּוֹ בַּגִּבּוֹרִים עָרוֹם יָנוּס בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נְאֻם יְהוָה

Flight shall fail the swift,

the strong shall find no strength,

the warrior shall not save his life,

the bowman shall not stand fast,

the fleet-footed shall not escape,

the horseman shall not save his life,

and the stout-hearted warrior shall flee naked on that day—declares the LORD

This unit is bound together by several repetitions. The repetition of "מָנוֹס" ("flight") in the first hemistich and "יָנוּס" ("shall flee") in the last creates an inclusio.[12] In my view, in the fifth hemistich, which ends with the phrase "לֹא יְמַלֵּט" (shall not escape), the word "נַפְשׁוֹ" ("his life") has been omitted and should be restored based on the recurring phrase in the third and fifth members. This restoration creates a broad and precise epiphora linking the fifth and sixth members. It should also be noted that the minor anaphora[13] created by the repeated ו״ו הרצף (the conjunctive *waw*)[14] at the beginning of all seven members is of a very low degree of sophistication. The unit concludes with a hemistich that is relatively long compared to those preceding it, thereby emphasizing the ending. In fact, the final hemistich is a combination of the first two hemistichs, forming together with them a chiastic structure:

מָנוֹס (flight) יְאַמֵּץ (shall find no strength)

וְאַמִּיץ (and the stout-hearted) יָנוּס (shall flee)

2.1.4. Zeph 1:15–16

יוֹם עֶבְרָה הַיּוֹם הַהוּא

יוֹם צָרָה וּמְצוּקָה

יוֹם שֹׁאָה וּמְשׁוֹאָה

יוֹם חֹשֶׁךְ וַאֲפֵלָה

יוֹם עָנָן וַעֲרָפֶל

יוֹם שׁוֹפָר וּתְרוּעָה עַל הֶעָרִים הַבְּצֻרוֹת וְעַל הַפִּנּוֹת הַגְּבֹהוֹת

A day of wrath is that day,

a day of trouble and distress,

a day of calamity and desolation,

a day of darkness and gloom,

a day of clouds and thick darkness,

a day of horn-blast and battle-cry against the fortified towns and against the lofty corner towers

This literary unit is cohesive both in its shared thematic idea and in its stylistic construction, achieved through the anaphoric repetition of the word "יוֹם" ("day") at the beginning of each of the six lines (in the first line the word appears twice, bringing the total number of occurrences to seven).[15] This number is one of the three significant numbers (3, 7, 10) frequently employed in biblical literature, particularly in poetic compositions. The repeated use of "*day*" at the head of the lines underscores the succession of calamities that will unfold on the "Day of the Lord"—a day that is not a favorable occasion to be anticipated, as the people believed, but rather one filled with disasters.

The phrase "הַיּוֹם הַהוּא" (that day), although stated only at the end of the first colon, functions semantically as a temporal marker governing all the subsequent cola. The final colon is longer than the preceding ones, and the added phrase ("against the fortified towns and against the lofty corner towers") functions as an indirect object or locative phrase that retroactively applies to the entire series. I must clarify that vv. 15–16 constitute a distinct poetic unit due to their consistent anaphoric structure and its disruption at the end, whereas vv. 17–18 continue the same thematic line yet exhibit different stylistic features.

2.2. A Change in the Verb Form—Its Position, Tense (Qatal, Yiqtol, Participle), Number, or Stem

Within this broad category, I will present only a single example of the shift in the verb's position in the final clause.

Ezek 34:4

אֶת הַנַּחְלוֹת **לֹא חִזַּקְתֶּם**

וְאֶת הַחוֹלָה **לֹא רְפָאתֶם**

וְלַנִּשְׁבֶּרֶת **לֹא חֲבַשְׁתֶּם**

וְאֶת הַנִּדַּחַת **לֹא הֲשֵׁבֹתֶם**

וְאֶת הָאֹבֶדֶת **לֹא בִקַּשְׁתֶּם**

וּבְחָזְקָה **רְדִיתֶם** אֹתָם וּבְפָרֶךְ

The weak you have not strengthened,

the sick you have not healed,

the injured you have not bound up,

the strayed you have not brought back,

the lost you have not sought,

but with force and harshness you have ruled them

In this example, in the first five clauses the word "לֹא" ("no/not") precedes the verb, forming a grammatically negative construction, and the verb itself appears at the end of the clause. In contrast, in the sixth and final clause the verb appears in an affirmative grammatical form, and its position within the sentence also changes, it no longer appears at the end. It should also be noted that in the final clause the word "אֹתָם" ("them") is used, referring to all the weak and needy individuals who did not receive assistance. I define v. 4 as an independent poetic unit because of a marked structural disruption, even though the oracle itself continues. This is another example of the distinction between stylistic units and thematic-prophetic units.

2.3. Reversal of the Order of Components in the Final Member, Creating a Chiastic Structure with the Preceding Members

Isa 10:2

לְ**הַטּוֹת** מִדִּין דַּלִּים

וְ**לִגְזֹל** מִשְׁפַּט עֲנִיֵּי עַמִּי

לִ**הְיוֹת** אַלְמָנוֹת שְׁלָלָם

וְאֶת יְתוֹמִים **יָבֹזּוּ**

To deny justice to the poor,

to rob My people's afflicted of their rights,

to make widows their spoil,

and they shall plunder orphans

This stylistic–rhetorical unit, which forms part of a broader thematic section concerning the oppressed in society, displays a recurring syntactic pattern in the first three cola, each beginning with an infinitive construct. The final colon, however, contains a *yiqtol* verb placed at the end. This shift creates a chiastic relationship with the preceding cola, but more importantly, it concludes the unit with the verb "יָבֹזּוּ" ("*they shall plunder*") whose negative meaning echoes the wrongdoing described in the earlier cola.

2.4. Reduction in the Number of Words or Syllables in the Final Member/Cola

2.4.1. Jer 1:5

בְּטֶרֶם אֶצָּרְךָ (כתיב: אצורך) בַּבֶּטֶן יְדַעְתִּיךָ

וּבְטֶרֶם תֵּצֵא מֵרֶחֶם הִקְדַּשְׁתִּיךָ

נָבִיא לַגּוֹיִם נְתַתִּיךָ

Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you;

before you were born, I consecrated you;

I appointed you a prophet to the nations

Verse 5 constitutes an independent stylistic–rhetorical unit in which the words of God are presented, whereas in verse 6 the speaker shifts to Jeremiah, who responds to the divine message. Thus, in this case the short literary unit can be identified not only on stylistic–rhetorical grounds but also on thematic grounds. The final colon of this unit is shorter and contains the most crucial information: Jeremiah's prophetic mission to the nations. It also breaks the anaphoric pattern, thereby highlighting the ending.

2.4.2. Ezek 34:25

וְכָרַתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם

וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי חַיָּה רָעָה מִן הָאָרֶץ

וְיָשְׁבוּ בַמִּדְבָּר לָבֶטַח

וְיָשְׁנוּ בַּיְּעָרִים

I will make a covenant of peace with them,

and I will banish wild beasts from the land,

so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness

and sleep in the forests

The final colon is shorter than the preceding ones. It is possible that the Hebrew word לָבֶטַח ("securely"), which concludes the preceding colon, also serves the final colon. In other words, the intended meaning may be: "and they shall dwell in the forests securely." This phenomenon reflects *pivot parallelism*,[16] a syntactic-stylistic device characteristic of Biblical Hebrew—though also attested in Ugaritic texts and in the *Book of Ben Sira*—in which a word or phrase closing one clause simultaneously functions, within the underlying syntactic structure, as the initial constituent of the subsequent clause. Accordingly, a precise synonymous parallelism emerges between the last colon and the one before it. The idea conveyed in these two colas is that they are able to dwell securely even in dangerous places, because God has made a covenant with them and has eliminated the wild beasts from the land.

2.5. Gradual Disclosure of Information, with the Climax in the Final Member/Cola

Isa 66:6

קוֹל שָׁאוֹן מֵעִיר

קוֹל מֵהֵיכָל

קוֹל יְהוָה מְשַׁלֵּם גְּמוּל לְאֹיְבָיו

The sound of tumult from the city,

the sound from the Temple,

the sound of the LORD repaying recompense to His enemies

I do not accept the JPS translation because it fails to recognize the phrases "קוֹל שָׁאוֹן" ("the sound of tumult") and "קוֹל יְהוָה" ("the voice of the LORD") as construct forms:

> "Hark! A tumult from the city, Hark! It comes from the Temple! The voice of the LORD rendering recompense to His enemies!"

The triple repetition of the word "קוֹל" (sound) constitutes a perfectly anaphoric recurrence. In the first two lines of the unit the word "קוֹל" appears, while in the third line the owner of the voice is revealed, since it is accompanied by the explicative construct "יְהוָה" ("the Lord"). In fact, there is here a graduated disclosure regarding the identification of this sound. In the first line its identity is unknown, except for the accompanying explanatory clause that this is the sound of a "שָׁאוֹן" ("tumult") and that the sound is heard from a city, yet the text does not specify which city is meant. In the second line there is a hint, because "the sound" occurs adjacent to the phrase "מֵהֵיכָל" ("from the temple"), and the temple is associated by association both with God and with the king. In the third line the solution is given—the sound is the sound of the Lord. This solution leaves no doubt that the city

mentioned in the first line is Jerusalem, the city of election, and that the temple is the holy sanctuary of the Lord. There is no finer way to present the relation among the triangle's lines: the Lord, the temple, Jerusalem. The third line is the longest in this rhyme and effects a concluding turn. For this reason, it seems to me that the speaker, wishing to draw his listeners' attention, planned his words carefully and chose to mention the particular detail ("the sound of the Lord") precisely in the final line after twice invoking the general term ("sound"). The motif of God acting through a recurring sound appears in several prominent biblical passages.[17]

2.6. Deviation from Patterned Repetition: Anaphora, Epiphora, or Symploce

2.6.1. Isa 26:15

יָסַפְתָּ לַגּוֹי יְהוָה

יָסַפְתָּ לַגּוֹי נִכְבָּדְתָּ

רִחַקְתָּ כָּל קַצְוֵי אָרֶץ

You have added to the nation, O LORD,

You have added to the nation, You are glorified;

You have extended all the borders of the land

The formula whereby a recurrent lexical unit, "יָסַפְתָּ לַגּוֹי" ("you have added to the nation"), serves as an anaphoric marker in the first two hemistichs is intentionally disrupted by its omission from the last hemistich. The listener's ear—trained by the patterned recurrence of the phrase at the head of each preceding hemistich—naturally anticipates its return in the final one. Its absence, however, constitutes a marked departure from the expected formal pattern, and this very breach functions to emphasise the ending of the literary unit, lending it the kind of rhetorical prominence and structural weight often exploited in biblical poetic composition.

2.6.2. Isa 24:19–20

רֹעָה הִתְרֹעֲעָה הָאָרֶץ

פּוֹר הִתְפּוֹרְרָה **אֶרֶץ**

מוֹט הִתְמוֹטְטָה **אָרֶץ**

נוֹעַ תָּנוּעַ **אֶרֶץ** כַּשִּׁכּוֹר וְהִתְנוֹדְדָה כַּמְּלוּנָה

וְכָבֵד עָלֶיהָ פִּשְׁעָהּ וְנָפְלָה וְלֹא תֹסִיף קוּם

The earth is utterly broken,

the earth is torn apart,

the earth is violently shaken.

The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut;

its transgression weighs upon it, and it falls, never to rise again

The word "ארץ" ("earth") functions as an epiphoric element, appearing at the end of each of the first three hemistichs and thereby shaping a stable rhetorical and prosodic pattern characteristic of parallel structures in biblical poetry. In the fourth line, the word does indeed recur, yet since it no longer appears at the end of the line, the previously continuous epiphoric pattern is disrupted. In the fifth line—syntactically subordinate to and closely integrated with the unit that precedes it—the word "ארץ" ("earth") is absent from the overt formulation, though its semantic presence is implicitly maintained through the cohesive ties linking it to the preceding line.

2.6.3. Am 4:1

(שִׁמְעוּ הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה פָּרוֹת הַבָּשָׁן אֲשֶׁר בְּהַר שֹׁמְרוֹן)

הָעֹשְׁקוֹת דַּלִּים

הָרֹצְצוֹת אֶבְיוֹנִים

הָאֹמְרֹת לַאֲדֹנֵיהֶם

הָבִיאָה וְנִשְׁתֶּה

(Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on the hill of Samaria),

who oppress the poor,

who crush the needy,

who say to their husbands,

'Bring and let us drink!'

In this literary unit we observe a minor symploce—that is, a minor anaphora recurring at the beginning of the first three hemistichs, paired with a minor epiphora recurring at their conclusions. All four hemistichs open with the letter *he*. The first three hemistichs begin with the definite article *he* and end with the letter *mem* (in the first two instances marking the masculine plural form, and in the third forming part of a pronominal suffix). In the final hemistich, the deviation from the established formula becomes especially pronounced: the adjective is replaced by an imperative verb; the function of the initial *he* shifts—from the definite article in the first three hemistichs to the causative *he* of the *Hiphil* stem; and the minor epiphora is broken due to the absence of the final *mem*.

2.6.4. Am 9:3–4

אִם יַחְתְּרוּ בִשְׁאוֹל **מִשָּׁם** יָדִי תִקָּחֵם

וְ**אִם** יַעֲלוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם **מִשָּׁם** אוֹרִידֵם

וְ**אִם** יֵחָבְאוּ בְּרֹאשׁ הַכַּרְמֶל **מִשָּׁם** אֲחַפֵּשׂ וּלְקַחְתִּים

וְ**אִם** יִסָּתְרוּ מִנֶּגֶד עֵינַי בְּקַרְקַע הַיָּם **מִשָּׁם אֲצַוֶּה אֶת** הַנָּחָשׁ וּנְשָׁכָם

וְ**אִם** יֵלְכוּ בַשְּׁבִי לִפְנֵי אֹיְבֵיהֶם **מִשָּׁם אֲצַוֶּה אֶת** הַחֶרֶב וְהָרָגָתַם

וְשַׂמְתִּי עֵינִי עֲלֵיהֶם לָרָעָה וְלֹא לְטוֹבָה

Though they dig down to Sheol, from there My hand will take them;

though they ascend to heaven, from there I will bring them down;

though they hide on the top of Carmel, from there I will search them out and seize them;

though they hide from My sight at the bottom of the sea, from there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them;

though they go into captivity before their enemies, from there I will command the sword, and it shall slay them;

and I will set My eyes upon them for evil and not for good

This literary unit likewise contains a minor symploce—that is, a combination of minor anaphora and minor epiphora—which is broken in the final clause, thereby rendering it highly prominent. The minor anaphora here is the conditional particle "אִם" ("though"), consisting of two consonants, to which one must add the initial *yod* of the verb in the *yiqtol* form. This minor anaphora recurs in the first five hemistichs.

Each of the first five clauses is divided into two parts, and at the head of each part stands an anaphoric repetition ("אִם" ["though"] ... "מִשָּׁם" ["from there"] ...). At the end of these five clauses there is a minor epiphora of the consonant *mem*, functioning as a pronominal suffix marking a third-person plural object. The final clause deviates from this pattern: it lacks the conditional particle "אִם" ("though"); it employs the *weqatal* form "וְשַׂמְתִּי" ("and I will set"), which is grammatically parallel to the *yiqtol* form; and it omits the minor epiphora. These changes create a marked emphasis on the ending.

It should be noted that the first two clauses are closely linked and exhibit a merismus[18] structure ("Sheol–heaven," that is, everything from the lowest to the highest). The third and fourth clauses likewise display a merismic structure, but in reverse order ("the top of Carmel–the floor of the sea," that is, from top to bottom). The fifth clause has no parallel counterpart and serves as preparation for the final clause, which is the most strongly emphasized.

Another conspicuous phonetic feature is the repetition of the consonant ℵ*aleph* (marking the imperfect form) in the verbs appearing in the second part of the second, third, fourth, and fifth hemistichs. In the first and last hemistichs this phenomenon does not occur. Strictly speaking, the author could have written in the first clause מִשָּׁם אֶקָּחֵם ("from there I will take them") but instead chose the formulation "מִשָּׁם יָדִי תִּקָּחֵם" ("from there My hand will take them") thereby highlighting the opening clause as well through a deliberate deviation from the recurring pattern.

2.7. The Final Member/Cola Is a Generalizing Member/Cola, Summarizing the Preceding Information

Ezek 31:8

אֲרָזִים לֹא־עֲמָמֻהוּ בְּגַן־אֱלֹהִים

בְּרוֹשִׁים לֹא דָמוּ אֶל־סְעַפֹּתָיו

וְעַרְמֹנִים לֹא־הָיוּ כְּפֹרְאֹתָיו

כָּל־עֵץ בְּגַן־אֱלֹהִים לֹא־דָמָה אֵלָיו בְּיָפְיוֹ

The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it;

the cypresses could not match its boughs;

the plane trees could not compare with its branches;

no tree in the garden of God resembled it in beauty

At the head of each of the first three members of the literary unit, a specific tree is mentioned, whereas at the head of the final member the general designation "no tree" appears, emphasizing that the reference is to all the trees growing in the garden of God. The repetition of the phrase "the garden of God" in both the first and the last members creates a literary envelope (*inclusio*) that binds the entire unit together. The structure of the unit indicates that the phrase "the garden of God," which appears at the end of the first member, functions at the deep structural level for the second and third members as well.[19] This rhetorical technique—marked by a deliberate deviation from the patterned sequence in which each of the first three members names a different specific tree—serves to avoid an explicit enumeration of every single tree by name. Instead, only several representative trees are mentioned, and the unit concludes with the general expression "no tree."

2.8. Alternation Between Affirmative and Negative Verb Forms

2.8.1. Ezek 34:3

אֶת הַחֵלֶב **תֹּאכֵלוּ**

וְאֶת הַצֶּמֶר **תִּלְבָּשׁוּ**

הַבְּרִיאָה **תִּזְבָּחוּ**

הַצֹּאן לֹא תִרְעוּ

You eat the fat,

you clothe yourselves with the wool,

you slaughter the fatlings,

but you do not tend the flock

The prophet structures the information he conveys in a notably sophisticated manner. The first two hemistichs are linked through the precise anaphora created by the repeated preposition, whereas in the final two hemistichs the speaker departs from this pattern: instead of repeating the preposition *ʾet*, he opens each hemistich with the definite article *ha-*, a shift that itself produces a minor anaphora. Moreover, in the first three hemistichs, the verb appears in an affirmative form and in a fixed position at the end of the hemistich. In the fourth and final hemistich, although the verb remains in the same position, its grammatical polarity shifts to negative, marking the ending.

2.8.2. Ezek 36:29

וְ**הוֹשַׁעְתִּי** אֶתְכֶם מִכֹּל טֻמְאוֹתֵיכֶם

וְ**קָרָאתִי** אֶל הַדָּגָן

וְהִרְבֵּיתִי אֹתוֹ

וְ**לֹא אֶתֵּן** עֲלֵיכֶם רָעָב

I will deliver you from all your impurities;

I will summon the grain

and make it abundant;

and I will not bring famine upon you

Here too, the first three members contain affirmative verbs, while the final member shifts to a negative form, highlighting the ending.

2.9. A Phonetic Anaphora Between the Final Member/Hemistich and the One Preceding It

Isa 5:1

אָשִׁירָה נָּא לִידִידִי

שִׁירַת דּוֹדִי לְכַרְמוֹ

כֶּרֶם הָיָה לִידִידִי

בְּ**קֶרֶן** בֶּן-שָׁמֶן

Let me sing for my beloved

my beloved's song about His vineyard

My beloved had a vineyard

on a fertile hillside

The structure of this verse is exceptionally tight, both syntactically and phonologically (i.e., in terms of rhyme). The connection between the first and second clauses is reinforced through the anaphora "אָשִׁירָה" ("Let me sing")//"שִׁירַת דּוֹדִי" ("my beloved's song"). The link between the second and third clauses is further strengthened by concatenation—namely,

the appearance of a form of "כֶּרֶם" ("vineyard") at the end of the second clause and again at the beginning of the third—and by a chiastic structure in which the second clause ends with a form of "כֶּרֶם" and the third begins with it. In addition, the first and third clauses are connected by their shared ending, "לִידִידִי" ("about/belonging to my beloved").

The final member of the unit contains no lexical items found in the preceding clauses. Its climactic force derives from an anaphoric echo not through exact repetition but through phonological resemblance: "קֶרֶן" ("horn/hill"), whose sound subtly evokes "כֶּרֶם" ("vineyard").[20]

2.10. Combination of Several Ways of Highlighting the Ending

2.10.1. Breaking the Epiphora and Using a Pivot Word

Am 7:14

לֹא נָבִיא **אָנֹכִי**

וְלֹא בֶן נָבִיא **אָנֹכִי**

כִּי בוֹקֵר **אָנֹכִי**

וּבוֹלֵס שִׁקְמִים

I am not a prophet,

nor am I the son of a prophet;

I am a herdsman,

and a dresser of sycamore figs

The structure of this poetic unit shows that the final clause is not an independent statement. In this respect, the final member differs from all the other members of the unit, each of which is a nominal sentence with a subject and a predicate nominative. In my opinion, the pronoun "אָנֹכִי" ("I") at the end of the third clause functions as a pivot word; that is, it serves both as the predicate of the third clause and the subject of the fourth clause. My reason for holding this view is that the pronoun in question is repeated at each of the end of the first three clauses, thereby creating epiphora. Consequently, we would have expected this lexeme to appear at the end of the final member as well. However, the poet deliberately creates a surprising ending by leaving a dangling predicate, which forces us to treat this predicate as completing a clause that begins with ("I") at the end of line 3. The deep structure of the final clause is therefore: *"I am a* dresser *of sycamore figs."* The conspicuous absence of the word ("I") in the final member breaks the symmetry found in all the other members and produces an anomaly that emphasizes the ending of the unit.

2.10.2. Breaking the Anaphora, Lengthening the Final Member/Hemistich, and Altering the Verb's Position and Form to Create a Chiastic Pattern

Mic 7:5

אַל תַּאֲמִינוּ בְרֵעַ

אַל תִּבְטְחוּ בְּאַלּוּף

מִשֹּׁכֶבֶת חֵיקֶךָ שְׁמֹר פִּתְחֵי פִיךָ

Do not trust a neighbor;

Have no confidence in a friend;

Guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your bosom

The first two cola open with the same negation particle, "**אַל**" (ʾal), and their word order is identical. In the third colon, there is a marked deviation from this anaphoric

repetition, and the verb's position shifts while its form changes from *yiqtol* to the imperative. The altered word order creates a chiastic pattern between the final colon and the two that precede it. The greater length of the final colon, in comparison with the preceding two, further underscores the ending.

2.10.3. Breaking the Anaphora, Lengthening the Final Member/Hemistich, and Creating a Partial Chiastic Pattern with the One Preceding It

Am 3:3–7

הֲיֵלְכוּ שְׁנַיִם יַחְדָּו בִּלְתִּי אִם נוֹעָדוּ

הֲיִשְׁאַג אַרְיֵה בַּיַּעַר וְטֶרֶף אֵין לוֹ

הֲיִתֵּן כְּפִיר קוֹלוֹ מִמְּעֹנָתוֹ בִּלְתִּי אִם לָכָד

הֲתִפֹּל צִפּוֹר עַל פַּח הָאָרֶץ וּמוֹקֵשׁ אֵין לָהּ

הֲיַעֲלֶה פַּח מִן הָאֲדָמָה וְלָכוֹד לֹא יִלְכֹּד

אִם יִתָּקַע שׁוֹפָר בְּעִיר וְעָם לֹא יֶחֱרָדוּ

אִם תִּהְיֶה רָעָה בְּעִיר וַיהוָה לֹא עָשָׂה

כִּי לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה דָּבָר כִּי אִם גָּלָה סוֹדוֹ אֶל עֲבָדָיו הַנְּבִיאִים

Can two walk together Without having met?

Does a lion roar in the forest When it has no prey?

Does a great beast let out a cry from its den Without having made a capture?

Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground When there is no lure for it?

Does a trap spring up from the ground Unless it has caught something?

When the horn is blown in a town, Do the people not tremble?

Can misfortune come to a town If the LORD has not caused it?

Indeed, my Lord GOD does nothing Without revealing His counsel To His servants the prophets.

Of the unit's eight hemistichs, seven are cast as rhetorical questions.[21] The first five open with the interrogative *hā-* and the remaining two with the interrogative *'im*. These repetitions form two minor anaphoric sequences. The final hemistich of the unit is marked in three ways: first, by the disruption of the minor anaphora—that is, the break in the series of rhetorical questions; second, by its greater length relative to the preceding hemistichs; and third, by the creation of a partial chiastic pattern with the colon immediately before it:

וַיהוָה לֹא עָשָׂה ("If the LORD has not caused it?")

כִּי לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה ("Indeed, my Lord GOD does nothing")

2.10.4. Expansion of the Final Verse, and Its Epiphora

Hos 14:6–8

אֶהְיֶה כַטַּל לְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִפְרַח כַּשּׁוֹשַׁנָּה וְיַךְ שָׁרָשָׁיו כַּ**לְּבָנוֹן**

יֵלְכוּ יֹנְקוֹתָיו וִיהִי כַזַּיִת הוֹדוֹ וְרֵיחַ לוֹ כַּ**לְּבָנוֹן**

יָשֻׁבוּ יֹשְׁבֵי בְצִלּוֹ יְחַיּוּ דָגָן וְיִפְרְחוּ כַגָּפֶן זִכְרוֹ **כְּיֵין לְבָנוֹן**

I will be to Israel like dew; He shall blossom like the lily; He shall strike root like the Lebanon.

His shoots shall spread out; His beauty shall be like the olive tree, And his fragrance like the Lebanon.

> They who sit in his shade shall return; They shall revive the grain and blossom like the vine; His renown shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

In this literary unit the word "Lebanon" recurs three times, at the ends of three verses, each comprising three hemistichs. In the first two instances the bare word "Lebanon" appears, to be understood as an elliptical expression[22] meaning "ארזי הלבנון" (the cedars of Lebanon), as likewise in *Song of Songs* 4:11: "and the scent of your garments is like the scent of Lebanon." In the third instance it functions as the modifier in the phrase "יֵין לְבָנוֹן" ("wine of Lebanon"), which effects a closing turn for the entire unit. The emendations (see *BHS*) proposing to read כַּלְּבָנָה (in v. 6) instead of כַּלְּבָנוֹן, and כַּלְּבֹנָה (in v. 7) are unconvincing, and, in my view, reveal a discomfort with the exact verbal repetition.[23] It should also be noted that in the second hemistich of the final line there are two segments, each containing a verb and an object ("they shall revive the grain"; "they shall blossom like the vine"). This is a deviation from the first two lines, in which the second hemistich contains only one verb and one object ("he shall blossom like the lily"; "his beauty shall be like the olive tree").

2.10.5. Expansion of the Final Member/Hemistich and Change in the Verb Form

Ezek 4:2

> וְנָתַתָּה עָלֶיהָ מָצוֹר
>
> וּבָנִיתָ עָלֶיהָ דָּיֵק
>
> וְשָׁפַכְתָּ עָלֶיהָ סֹלְלָה
>
> וְנָתַתָּה עָלֶיהָ מַחֲנוֹת
>
> וְשִׂים עָלֶיהָ כָּרִים סָבִיב

> Lay siege against it;
>
> Build towers against it;
>
> Raise a mound against it;
>
> Set camps against it;
>
> And set battering rams all around it.

All the hemistichs are bound together through *mesophora*,[24] that is, the repetition of a word in the middle of the lines. In the present case, the word "עָלֶיהָ" ("against it") recurs in all five lines in precisely the same position, immediately following the verb. The final hemistich is highlighted in two ways: first, by a change in the verbal form—whereas in all the preceding hemistichs the verb appears in the *wayyiqtol* form, in the concluding line of the literary unit it appears in the imperative; and second, by the fact that this hemistich is longer than the ones that precede it—its number of words is four, whereas in all the others the number stands at three.

3. Conclusions

The present study demonstrates that the phenomenon of *highlighting the ending* constitutes a deliberate, systematic, and functionally significant rhetorical strategy within prophetic literature. Across the prophetic corpus, the final hemistich of a literary unit consistently emerges as a marked site of communicative intensity, where structural, syntactic, and phonetic deviations converge to produce heightened emphasis. The techniques surveyed—expansion or reduction in the final line, shifts in verbal form or position, chiastic reversal, disruption of patterned repetition, phonetic reinforcement, and climactic disclosure—form a coherent stylistic system that reflects the communicative logic of an oral–performative culture.

As scholarship on orality and performance has shown (Van der Toorn 2007; Talmon 1991; Hibbitts 1992; Rhoads 2006; Kendon 1997), prophetic discourse was originally embedded in embodied, vocal events rather than in silent textual consumption. Within such a cultural matrix, the marked prominence of the ending served as a performative cue: it signaled closure, guided audience interpretation, and enhanced memorability. The prophet's voice, rhythm, gesture, and interaction with listeners shaped the delivery of the message, and the final hemistich functioned as the moment in which these performative elements converged most forcefully.

The recurrent deviation of the final member from an established pattern—whether through lengthening, inversion, syntactic shift, or the introduction of new information—corresponds to broader rhetorical principles articulated by Aristotle (2002), Gordis (1945), Smith (1968), Freedman (1986), and Watson (1984). These thinkers emphasize that variation, rather than mechanical repetition, generates emphasis and prevents monotony. The prophetic examples examined here—from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, and Zephaniah—demonstrate that this principle is deeply embedded in biblical poetics and consistently exploited to shape audience perception.

Furthermore, the analysis suggests that written prophetic texts preserve discernible traces of their oral origins. If the written form represents only a "shadow" of the primary performative event, as argued in the introduction (Van der Toorn 2007; Talmon 1991), then the systematic marking of endings provides a means of recovering aspects of that event. These stylistic signals allow us to glimpse the acoustic, rhythmic, and gestural dynamics that informed prophetic proclamation and to understand how meaning was produced through real-time interaction between prophet and audience.

By integrating literary analysis with insights from orality and performance studies, this article contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of biblical poetics and prophetic communication. It demonstrates that the shaping of endings is not merely an aesthetic preference but a functional component of prophetic rhetoric, rooted in the cognitive, mnemonic, and performative needs of oral transmission. Recognizing this phenomenon enriches our reading of the prophetic books and deepens our appreciation of the complex interplay between form, performance, and meaning in the Hebrew Bible. Ultimately, the study highlights the ending of the literary unit as a privileged site where prophetic artistry and communicative intent become most visible.

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Notes

[1] These assertions derive from a broad body of scholarship dealing with orality, performance, and textual transmission, and they serve as the theoretical framework for the subsequent analysis of poetic closure.

[2] I relied solely on this book by Culley and did not include additional important studies of his.

[3] A "literary unit" refers to a discrete, structurally coherent segment within a prophetic text—typically consisting of three or more cola or members—that functions as an independent rhetorical and poetic entity within the larger prophetic composition. Such a unit does not necessarily coincide with a complete oracle or a self-contained prophetic speech; rather, it represents a smaller building block within the broader discourse, marked by internal cohesion, parallelism, rhythmic organization, and identifiable structural boundaries. These units often exhibit their own internal patterns of repetition, syntactic arrangement, and rhetorical progression, which allow them to be analyzed as meaningful sub-sections of the prophetic text. In the context of this study,

the term "literary unit" designates precisely these sub-structures—segments that are smaller than full oracles yet sufficiently organized to display deliberate stylistic features, including the phenomenon of highlighting the ending.

[4] I clarify that I do not claim the full recoverability of vocal or gestural cues. Rather, I argue that the written text preserves structural and poetic traces that guide the reader toward recognizing the ways in which the ending was highlighted in live performance.

[5] See also Robertson (1995), who reads the book of Zephaniah as a drama, and Eaton's (1983) important volume which includes an extensive discussion of the roles of prophets, including explicit attention to prophetic actions as dramatic symbols intended to elicit a public response.

[6] Ethnopoetics is a scholarly approach that examines how different cultures create and transmit poetry, narrative, and artistic speech, emphasizing the central role of performance—rather than the written text alone—in shaping meaning.

[7] The chiasmus has been discussed in many studies, and here it will suffice to mention a few of them: König (1900, pp. 145–48); Lund (1930, 1933); Loewenstamm (1955); Zeidel (1956, pp. 150–51); Segal (1977, p. 58); Brin and Hoffman (1962); Weiss (1967, pp. 60, 69, 209–10); Sapan (1976); Watson (1984, pp. 201–6); Pardee (1988, pp. 6–7, n. 3).

[8] Literary anaphora refers to the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of hemistichs, strophes, or stanzas. At times, the repeated elements appear in identical structural patterns, whereas in other cases their formal configuration varies. This phenomenon is of particular significance: (a) in marking the onset of hemistichs, strophes, or stanzas; (b) in creating textual cohesion through parallelism or other forms of interdependent structuring; and (c) in generating tension and anticipation for new material that follows the familiar or recurrent element. Anaphora has been examined extensively in both ancient and modern scholarship, and several studies may be noted: Messer-Leon (1864, pp. 147–48); Avishur (1973, p. 18ff.; 2002, passim); Kugel (1981, pp. 34–42); Watson (1984, p. 276), who discusses Akkadian, Ugaritic, and biblical examples (for additional biblical instances, see ibid., pp. 358–59); Alonso-Schökel (1988, pp. 77–78, 198). For a comprehensive analysis of the types of anaphora in Isaiah 40–66, see Taragan (2006, pp. 44–87).

[9] Epiphora is the repetition of one word or more (whether the repetition is precise or variegated) at the end of hemistichs, strophes, or stanzas. It is of great significance since it emphasizes the end of units, both short and long, and creates phonetic dependency between the parts of the literary unit in which it appears. Also, this phenomenon, like anaphora, has been the subject of many old as well as modern studies, and I shall mention a few of them: (Messer-Leon 1864, p. 148; Avishur 1973, p. 19 ff.; 2002, passim); Watson (1984, pp. 276–77); Alonso-Schökel (1988, p. 78); Taragan (2006, pp. 88–100).

[10] Symploce is a literary phenomenon in which both anaphora and epiphora occur within a single unit. This dual repetition creates a highly marked rhetorical pattern and establishes a tight connection between the parallel segments of the structure. For examples of simplex in biblical strophes, see Avishur (2002, pp. 39, 286, and p. 63 for Phoenician strophes).

[11] cf. v. 4. אֶת־הַנַּחְלוֹת לֹא חִזַּקְתֶּם וְאֶת־הַחוֹלָה לֹא־רִפָּאתֶם, וְלַנִּשְׁבֶּרֶת לֹא חֲבַשְׁתֶּם, וְאֶת־הַנִּדַּחַת לֹא הֲשֵׁבֹתֶם, וְאֶת־הָאֹבֶדֶת לֹא בִקַּשְׁתֶּם; וּבְחָזְקָה רְדִיתֶם אֹתָם, וּבְפָרֶךְ. (The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, and the lost you have not sought; and with force you have ruled them, and with harshness.)

[12] Moulton (1896, pp. 53–54, 70, 77ff, 150–51), was the first to designate as "envelope figure" the repetition of a phrase or clause at the beginning and end of a stanza, or of the entire composition. For additional material on *inclusio* in modern scholarship, see Watson (1984, pp. 285–86); Müller (1986, pp. 120–23, 200–207); König (1900, pp. 300, 350); Muilenburg (1953, p. 104); Kessler (1978) explains the functions of the literary envelope; Lundbom (1975), the chapter on *inclusio*; Paran (1989), especially pp. 150–62; Kalimi (2000), chapter 14 ("Framework"), pp. 279–308; Avishur (1984, pp. 228–42) notes word-pairs which appear as *inclusio* both in biblical literature as well as in Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Aramaic; Taragan (2006, pp. 173–234) discusses the importance of the literary frameworks in the collection of prophecies in Isa 40–66; For important study see Chapman (2023).

[13] Researchers sometimes refer to the phenomenon of minor anaphora by the term "opening alliterations." This rhetorical device involves the recurrence of a particular letter or of various function words—such as prepositions, conjunctions, conditional markers, and the like—at the beginning of poetic hemistichs or clauses, though it may also appear in rhythmical prose. For a detailed discussion of the phenomenon, see Yogev and Yona (2015), who classify its occurrences according to different levels of sophistication.

[14] The employment of the Hebrew term *vav ha-reṣef* is original to this article (S. Y.) and is not attested in prior studies.

[15] On literary units employing threefold, sevenfold, or tenfold repetition of specific elements in the Hebrew Bible and early Semitic literature, see Avishur (1973).

[16] See Sivan and Yona (1994, 1998). In these studies, Sivan and Yona offer a comprehensive and historically informed survey of the scholarly investigation of this phenomenon, tracing its treatment from the medieval Hebrew grammarians through the developments of modern linguistic research. They identify and analyze occurrences of pivot parallelism in Biblical Hebrew, in Ugaritic literature, and in the Book of Ben Sira.

[17] For example: "The Lord will roar from Zion and utter his voice from Jerusalem" (Am 1:2; the phrase recurs in Joel 4:16 with the addition of the conjunction vav).

[18] On this phenomenon, see Honeyman (1952, pp. 11–18); Brongers (1965, pp. 110–14); Watson (1984, pp. 125–26); for a survey of the research and the types of *merismus* in the Bible and the Semitic languages, see ibid., pp. 321–24; Geller (1979, p. 35);

Alonso-Schökel (1988, pp. 83–84). On the phenomenon in the Bible and in north-western Semitic, see at length: Krašovec (1977). He enumeratess 272 words which, in his opinion, exemplify *merismus*. However, his list is incomplete, and several of his examples do not demonstrate this phenomenon.

[19] On the three types of the phenomenon of drawing between hemistichs (מושך עצמו ואחר עצמו--"drawing itself and another with it")–anterior, posterior, and mutual drawing–see Segal (1947, pp. 139–42); Watson (1975, pp. 484–91); Hagay (1983) etc.

[20] A sound-based closing turn that accentuates the ending of the unit appears in the short satirical poem on drunkenness in Prov 23:29–35, understood by some as an ironic depiction (Alonso-Schökel, 1988, p. 165). In line with Alonso Schökel (ibid), Fox (2009, pp. 740–41), and Hurowitz (2012, pp. 472–76), this unit is viewed as a mockery of wine-drinkers and as a warning against drunkenness. Prophetic denunciations of drunkards are found in Isa 5:11 and 28:1–8. A lengthy passage on wine also appears in Ben Sira 31:25–31, reconstructed into Hebrew by Segal (1977). The section in vv. 29–30 is structured in a distinctive form consisting of riddles followed by their solution. Six interrogatives open with *lemi* ("to whom"), and in the seventh clause the answer is provided, comprising two cola: *lammeʾaḥarim ʿal hayyayin, labbaʾim laḥqor mimsakh*. The relationship between the answer and the preceding questions is created through the consonantal cluster *lam*, which forms a phonetic link to the earlier interrogatives. At the same time, it highlights the ending by deviating from the anaphora of *lemi*. The riddles: *lemi ʾoy, lemi ʾavoy, lemi midyanim (medonim), lemi siaḥ, lemi peṣaʿim ḥinnam; lemi ḥakhlilut ʿenayim*. The solution/answer: *lammeʾaḥarim ʿal hayyayin, labbaʾim laḥqor mimsakh*. (see also Avishur, 1973, p. 26).

[21] See Christensen (1975). It is the classic and most influential study devoted exclusively to the rhetorical questions in Amos chapter 3.

[22] On this phenomenon, see Zilber (1972, pp. 3–10); Mandel (1983, pp. 23–40); Nir (1990, pp. 48–49); Waltke and O'Connor (1990). § 32.2–32.3; Joüon and Muraoka (2006). § 155–157.

[23] For the various scholarly interpretations of this unit, see Gruber (2017) for his excellent commentary on these verses.

[24] This refers to the repetition of a word or phrase in the middle of sub-lines and hemistichs. I use the term *mesophora* instead of *meta-phora* to avoid confusion with *metaphor*, which denotes a type of semantic shift. For the term *mesophora*, see Yona (2006, pp. 79, 101; 2011, p. 139).

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