

Psalm 103--Aspects of Hebrew Poetry  
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THINK CONCEPTUALLY!

1. Poetry in the OT.
  - A. 1/3 of the OT is poetry.
  - B. The majority of poetry is in prophetic speech.
  - C. Poetry, by its nature, is compact--thus xlation expands it more.
  
2. The nature of Hebrew poetry.
  - A. Difficult to define.
  - B. Unimportant elements:
    - (1) Rhyme.
    - (2) Metre.
      - (a) Even if these were important, they are lost in translation.
  - C. Important elements:
    - (1) Terseness.
    - (2) Parallelism.
    - (3) Imagery.
    - (4) Structure
      - (a) Note: Parallelism and structure are important in Heb. prose as well.
  - D. Some aspects just don't come across in translation.
  - E. Purposes/uses of poetry:
    - (1) Emotional expressions.
    - (2) Presentation of history.
    - (3) Overt teaching, including what we would call doctrine and practice.
  
3. Emphasis today: structure (parallelism).
  - A. Conceptual relationship between parts.
    - (1) Not just identical, opposite, or additions/clarifications.
    - (2) Often poetic lists.
  - B. Macro-, mid-, and micro-parallelism.
  - C. The relationship between parts is OFTEN conceptual, not necessarily based on form.
  
4. Macro-parallelism.
  - A. Begins and ends with, "Bless the LORD, O my soul!"
  
5. Mid-parallelism.
  - A. Bless, bless, bless, don't forget.
  - B. Pardons, heals, redeems, crowns, satisfies.
  
6. Micro-parallelism.
  - A. The individual elements within sections.
  - B. More difficult to spot in English, ESPECIALLY because the word order gets changed, even in more literal translations.
  - C. Bless/bless, my soul/everything within me, the LORD/His holy name.
  - D. Pardons/heals/redeems..., your iniquity/your diseases/your life....

Notes: and בָּרַךְ and הִלֵּל have dif. connotations. בָּרַךְ bless God = declare God the origin of power for success, prosperity, fertility = praise God (Holladay 49). הִלֵּל = praise God. My comment: it appears as though בָּרַךְ tends to be "bless God because He does X for us."