

History, Memory, Hebrew Scriptures

A Festschrift for Ehud Ben Zvi

edited by

IAN DOUGLAS WILSON and DIANA V. EDELMAN

Winona Lake, Indiana

EISENBRAUNS

2015

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Printed in the United States of America.

www.eisenbrauns.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

History, memory, Hebrew scriptures : a festschrift for Ehud Ben Zvi / edited by Ian Douglas Wilson and Diana V. Edelman.

pages cm

Bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-57506-391-1 (hardback : alk. paper)

1. Bible. Old Testament—Criticism, interpretation, etc. 2. Ben Zvi, Ehud, 1951– honoree. I. Wilson, Ian Douglas, 1981– editor. II. Edelman, Diana Vikander, 1954– editor.

BS1171.3.H587 2015

221.6—dc23

2015023079

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48–1984. ©™

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More Geminate Ballast and Clustering in Biblical Hebrew

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A little more than a decade ago, I published evidence from Hebrew, Ugaritic, and Akkadian texts for a hitherto unrecognized literary device that I labeled “Geminate Ballast and Clustering” (Noegel 2004).¹ Since my article appeared in the *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*, I think it fitting here to offer additional examples of the device in honor of the journal’s founder and visionary, my dear friend and colleague, Ehud Ben Zvi.²

I repeat here my description of the device (Noegel 2004: 1):

My use of the word “geminate” is not restricted to the grammatical geminate forms, i.e., those forms derived from roots whose second and third radicals are identical, but includes any verb or noun derived from roots that contain any two identical root consonants, whether second and third, first and third, or even more rarely first and second. Since reduplicated and some quadraliteral forms also constitute gemination of this sort I include them as well. The device has as its primary characteristic the clustering of geminate forms in close proximity, often, but not strictly in parallelism. I say not strictly, because the main aim of the device appears to have been a general sense of ballast, and unlike word-pairs which are employed as parallels of sense or meaning, geminate clusters belong generally to the realm of sound devices, and serve to balance one stich’s use of gemination with gemination in another.³

To demonstrate, I again turn to Ps 74:13–14.

1. Republished in Ben Zvi 2007: 153–67. For additional Akkadian examples, see Noegel 2011: 182–84.

2. I hold Ehud’s invitation to become Assistant General Editor of his then fledgling journal as a badge of pride, and I appreciate his willingness to allow me to found the journal’s book review section.

3. I adopted the term “clustering” from a similar phenomenon observed by J. Greenfield (1990).

אַתָּה פִּזְרַתְּ בְעֹזְךָ יָם שִׁבְרַתְּ רֵאשֵׁי תַנִּינִים עַל־הַמַּיִם:
אַתָּה רִצַּצְתָּ רֵאשֵׁי לַיִתָּן תַּתַּנְנֹו מֵאֵכֶל לָעַם לְצִיִּים:

(13) You parted the sea by your strength, you broke the heads of the Tannin in the waters.

(14) You crushed the heads of Leviathan, and gave him for food to the people of the wilderness.

In this passage one finds three true geminate forms (i.e., פִּרַר, תַּנַּן, רִצַּץ) and a first and third radical geminate נַתַּן. Moreover, the latter appears in the 2nd person with a suffix to permit the gemination of both the ת and the נ, a type of formation I call “imitation gemination.” We also may add the imitation geminate הַמַּיִם ‘the waters’. Since poets often choose rare lexemes to serve literary purposes, it is likely that the prophet selected the uncommon noun צִיִּים ‘wilderness’, because it geminates the consonant ך. ⁴ Moreover, while one can find strengthened consonants in most passages that use words containing a *dageš ḥazaq*, the doubling of the consonant ז in עֹזְךָ ‘your strength’ is noteworthy, because it represents a true geminate root עֹז. ⁵ Such examples demonstrate that one geminate form often inspired bards to employ another either in parallelism or in close proximity to create poetic ballast.

Having provided an overview, I now present thirty-one additional cases from the Hebrew Bible. I divide them into (1) those that accomplish geminate ballast and parallelism in a single verse, and (2) those that employ it over several verses to form a cluster.

1. Geminate Ballast and Parallelism in a Single Verse

My first example comes from Jacob’s last words to Dan, in which he proclaims: וְהִי־דָן נָחֵשׁ עַל־יָדְרָדְךָ שְׁפִיפֹן עַל־יֶאֱרַח הַנֶּשֶׁף עַקְבֵי־סוּס וַיִּפֹּל רֶכְבּוֹ אַחֲוֹר “Dan shall be a serpent upon the way, an adder upon the path that bites the horse’s heel, so that its rider falls backward” (Gen 49:17). Here again the poet selected a rare word, in this case the *hapax legomenon* שְׁפִיפֹן ‘adder’, in order to achieve geminate ballast with the more common geminate סוּס ‘horse’.

Geminate ballast also appears in the prose narrative describing the ark’s procession into Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:16).⁶ As the narrator informs us, Michal peered

4. On rare lexemes in the service of alliteration, geminate clustering, paronomasia, and polysemy, see, e.g., Noegel, 2004, 2013a, 2013b; Rendsburg 2008.

5. Since the acoustic effects of gemination and that of consonantal doubling due to *dageš ḥazaq* are not identical, I do not treat the latter here unless it conveys a true geminated root. Nevertheless, I do not doubt the possibility that poets sometime exploited linguistic environments of doubling (by way of *dageš ḥazaq*) by adding geminates. Indeed, there are several other cases of *dageš ḥazaq* in this passage, which likely accented the acoustic impact.

6. One finds many poetic figures in prose including alliteration, chiasm, parallelism, punning, and ring structure, to name a few. Scholars have opined that such devices bespeak a poetic

out of her window during the celebration and saw David *וּמְכַרְכֵּר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה* “leaping and dancing before Yahweh.” The passage creates a geminate hendiadys by paralleling two uncommon words: the piel participle *מִפְּזֹז* ‘leaping’ (from *פוזז*) and the pilpel participle *מְכַרְכֵּר* ‘dancing’ (from *כרר*).⁷

Another case of geminate ballast and parallelism occurs in Hab 3:6: *עָמַד וַיִּמְדָּד אֶרֶץ רָאָה וַיִּתַּר גּוֹזִים וַיִּתְפַּצֵּצוּ הַרְרֵי עֵד שָׁחוּ וַגְּבְעוֹת עוֹלָם הִלִּיכוֹת עוֹלָם לֹא* “He stood and shook the earth, he looked, and he made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed—but he marches on forever.” This verse contains three geminate forms: *וַיִּמְדָּד* ‘he shook’, *וַיִּתְפַּצֵּצוּ* ‘crumbled’, and *הַרְרֵי* ‘mountains’. Note again the selection of the rarer form *הַרְרֵי*, instead of the usual *הָרֵי*. The two verbs also constitute geminate parallelism.

In Ps 3:7 we find: *לֹא-אֵירָא מִרְבָּבוֹת עַם אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב שְׂתוֹ עָלַי* “I shall not fear the myriads of people, who surround and assail me.” The poet achieves geminate ballast by using *מִרְבָּבוֹת* ‘myriads’ in the A stich, and *סָבִיב* ‘surround’ in the B stich, both of which alliterate the consonant *ב*.

Observe similarly Ps 9:14: *חַנּוּנֵי יְהוָה רָאָה עֲנֵי מִשְׁנֹאֵי מְרוֹמָי מִשְׁעָרֵי מוֹת* “Have mercy on me, O Yahweh, see how my haters afflict me, raise me from the gates of death.” Here the geminate verb *חַנּוּנֵי* ‘have mercy on me’ in the A stich achieves ballast and parallelism with *מְרוֹמָי* ‘raise me’ in the B stich. Though the latter is a polel of *רום*, the aural effect is the same.

In Ps 107:32 we find: *וַיִּרְמְמוּהוּ בְּקַהֲלֵהֶם וַיִּבְמֹשְׁבּוּ וַיְקַיְמוּהוּ יְהוָה וַיִּתְקַדְּשׁוּהוּ* “Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people, and praise him in the council of the elders.” Observe how *וַיִּרְמְמוּהוּ* ‘exalt him’ chiastically parallels *וַיִּתְקַדְּשׁוּהוּ* ‘praise him’.

See also the father’s advice to his son in Prov 6:25: *אַל-תַּחְמַד יְפִיָּהּ בְּלִבְבָּךְ וְאַל-תִּקְחֶהָ בְּעַפְעָפֶיהָ* “Do not lust in your heart after her beauty, or let her take you with her eyelids.” Here the geminate noun *לִבְבָּךְ* ‘your heart’ and reduplicated noun *עַפְעָפֶיהָ* ‘her eyelids’ achieve geminate ballast and parallelism.

2. Geminate Clusters

The previous examples illustrate how Israelite bards accomplished geminate ballast and parallelism over a single verse.⁸ However, more often they sustained the device over multiple verses, thus forming a cluster. Such is the case in the prose account of Abraham’s battle.

precursor to the prose narrative (e.g., Cross 1973; Cassuto 1975: 69–109).

7. The verb *פוזז* appears elsewhere only in Gen 49:24, also in a geminate cluster (see below). The verb *מְכַרְכֵּר* occurs elsewhere only in the narrator’s previous description of the procession (2 Sam 6:14). A nominal form meaning “dromedary” appears in Isa 66:20.

8. Geminate ballast also can occur in a single stich. Thus, Gen 49:12: “His eyes will be dark (חֲקִילִי) from wine (יַיִן), his teeth white from milk.” See also Ps 72:6: “May he be like rain falling on a cut field, like showers (רַבִּיבִים) watering (וַיִּרְזִיף) the earth,” and Song 3:7: “Behold the litter of Solomon, sixty (שֶׁשִׁים) heroes surround (סָבִיב) it.” Adding to the Song’s gemination is the relative pronoun *שֶׁל* with the name Solomon, i.e., *שֶׁל־שְׁלֹמֹה*.

Genesis 14:5–7

(5) In the fourteenth year, Qedarlaomer and the kings allied with him went out and defeated the Rephaites in Asheteroth Qarnaim, the Zuzites (הַזּוּזִים) in Ham, the Emities in Shaveh Qiriyataim, (6) And the Horites in the hill country (הַרְרָם) of Seir, as far as El Paran near the desert. (7) Then they turned back and went to Ein Mishat, that is Qadesh, and they conquered the whole territory of the Amale-qites, as well as the Amorites who were living in Hazon (חַצְצֹן) Tamar.

Each of the verses contains a geminate form: הַזּוּזִים ‘Zuzites’ (v. 5), הַרְרָם ‘hills’ (v. 6), and חַצְצֹן ‘Hazon’ (v. 7). Here again, the author employed the rarer form הַרְרָם, rather than the expected הָרָם, to complete the cluster.⁹

Genesis 49:23–24

(23) They showed him bitterness (וַיִּמְרְרוּהוּ) and they shot (וַיִּרְבוּ) at him, the archers acted hostilely.
(24) But his bow remained steady, the arms of his hands stayed limber (וַיִּפְּזוּ).

We already have seen a geminate cluster accomplished over a single verse in Jacob’s last words to Dan. Here Jacob addresses Joseph by using three verbal geminates: וַיִּמְרְרוּהוּ ‘they showed him bitterness’, וַיִּרְבוּ ‘they shot’ (from רָבַב), and וַיִּפְּזוּ ‘stayed limber’ (from the rare verb פָּזַז).¹⁰ Though the latter two verbs do not geminate their second radicals orthographically, their use of the *dagesh hazaq* reminds us that both derive from geminate verbs. Observe similarly the poet’s use of the unique expression בַּעֲלֵי הַחֲצִים ‘lords of arrows’ (i.e., ‘archers’), which allows for the geminate noun חֲצִים ‘arrows’ (from חָצַץ).

Deuteronomy 32:2–43

This poem offers the most prolonged demonstration of a geminate cluster in the Hebrew Bible. Since the text is lengthy, I shall cite only the relevant geminates. The first is רְבִיבִים ‘showers’ (v. 2), which is followed by תְּמִים ‘perfect’ (v. 4). We then find מוֹמָם ‘their blemish’ paralleling the unique reduplicate adjective וּפְתִלְתֵּל ‘crooked’ (v. 5).¹¹ The imitation geminate וַיִּבְנֶנְךָ ‘he created you’ (polel of בָּן) then follows (v. 6). The cluster continues in v. 10 with the geminates יִלֵּל ‘howling’ and יִסְבְּבֵנְהוּ ‘he surrounded him’, and the imitation form יִבְנֶנְהוּ ‘he cared for him’ (hithpolel of בָּן). In v. 12, we find בְּדָד ‘alone’. Contributing to the cluster are: מִחֲלִילְךָ ‘who gave birth to you’ (v. 18), מְרִירָה ‘bitter’ (v. 24), לוֹאִי ‘if not for’ (v. 27), רַבְבָּה ‘myriad’ (v. 30), פְּלִילִים ‘judges’ (v. 31), מְרִרָתָה ‘bitterness’ (v. 32), and תַּנִּינִם ‘serpents’ (v. 33). The cluster concludes with חָלַל ‘slain’ (v. 42) and the imitation geminate construction הִרְגִּינוּ ‘rejoice’ (v. 43). The duplicated expression דוֹרְדוֹדוֹר

9. I thank V. A. Hurowitz (ל"ו) for suggesting this cluster.

10. The verb appears also only in 2 Sam 6:16, itself a geminate cluster (see above).

11. It appears only here.

‘generation to generation’ (v. 7) and the imitation geminate עַמִּים ‘nations’ (v. 8) also add to the effect.

Isaiah 17:9–14

(9) In that day its strong (מַעֲזוֹ) cities, which they left (עָזְבוּ) because of the Israelites, will be like places abandoned to thickets and undergrowth. And all will be desolation (שְׁמָמָה).

(10) You have forgotten God your savior, you have not remembered the Rock, your fortress. Therefore, though you plant the most pleasant (נְעִמּוֹת) plants and sow imported cuttings (זָר תִּזְרְעֵנּוּ),

(11) Though on the day you set them out, you make them grow (תִּשְׁגְּשְׁגוּ), and on the morning when you sow them (זָרְעֶךָ), you make them bud. Yet the harvest will be as nothing in the day of disease and incurable pain.

(12) Woe to the many nations (עַמִּים) that rage—they rage like the raging sea (יָמִים)! Woe to the peoples (לְאֻמִּים) who roar—they roar like the roaring of great waters (מַיִם)!

(13) Although the peoples (לְאֻמִּים) roar like the roar of surging waters (מַיִם), when he rebukes them they flee far away, driven before the wind like chaff on the hills, like tumbleweed (וּכְגִלְגֵּל) before a gale.

(14) In the evening, sudden terror! Before the morning, they are gone (אֵינָנּוּ)! This is the portion of those who loot us, the lot of those who plunder us (לְבַזֵּינוּ).

Isaiah’s geminate cluster begins with מַעֲזוֹ ‘its strong’, whose *dagesh hazaq* reminds us that it derives from עזז. It continues with שְׁמָמָה ‘desolation’ (v. 9), and the rare form נְעִמּוֹת ‘most pleasant’ (v. 9), which duplicates both the נ and מ. The prophet then employs the equally rare form תִּשְׁגְּשְׁגוּ ‘you make them grow’ in the next verse.¹² Gemination resumes with גִּלְגֵּל ‘tumbleweed’ (v. 13), and concludes with אֵינָנּוּ ‘they are gone’ and בַּזֵּינוּ ‘those who plunder us’ (v. 14). Adding to the effect is the prophet’s use of the consonant clusters עז, in מַעֲזוֹ ‘its strong’ and עָזְבוּ ‘they left’ (v. 9), and זר, in זָר ‘foreign’ (v. 10) and תִּזְרְעֵנּוּ ‘you sow them’ (vv. 10, 11). Isaiah’s reference to יָמִים ‘seas’ (v. 12) and repeated use of מַיִם (vv. 12–13) also provide additional alliteration in the service of gemination, as do עַמִּים ‘nations’ (v. 12) and לְאֻמִּים ‘peoples’ (vv. 12–13).¹³

Isaiah 29:8–9

(8) And it will be like when the hungry dreams he is hungry, and behold he is eating, but he awakens and his appetite (נַפְשׁוֹ) remains empty, and like when the thirsty dreams, and behold he is drinking, but he awakens faint and his throat is pulsating (שׁוֹקֵקָה וְנַפְשׁוֹ). So will it be with the hordes of all the nations who fight against Mount Zion.

12. Both forms occur only here.

13. There is much repetition in vv. 12–13 including רַבִּים (vv. 12–13), the root המה ‘make noise’, itself a geminate root, but hidden here (3x in v. 12), and the root שאה ‘roar’ (4x in vv. 12–13).

(9) Linger and be dumbfounded (וַתִּמְהוּ הַתְּמַהְמְהוּ), cry and cry out (וַשְׁעוּ הַשְּׁתַעֲשְׁעוּ). Be drunk, but not from wine, stagger, but not from beer.

Isaiah's use of gemination in this passage is incredibly sophisticated. Not only does he achieve geminate ballast by following שׁוֹקֵקָה 'pulsate' (from שָׁקַק) in v. 8 with the reduplicated verbs הַתְּמַהְמְהוּ 'linger' (hithpalpel of מָהָה) and הַשְּׁתַעֲשְׁעוּ 'behave as blinded' (hithpalpel of שׁוּעַ) in v. 9, but the latter two verbs constitute geminate parallelism. Moreover, each of the three verbs and the noun נַפֶּשׁ is polysemous. Thus, the expression וַנִּפְשׁוּ שׁוֹקֵקָה can mean 'his throat is pulsating' or 'his being attacks' (cf. Isa 33:4, Prov 28:15).¹⁴ As the former it harkens back to the dreamer who dreams of hunger and thirst. As the latter, it anticipates those who fight against Zion. It is thus a case of Janus Parallelism.¹⁵ The verb הַתְּמַהְמְהוּ can mean 'linger' (hithpalpel of מָהָה) or 'be dumbfounded' (hithpalpel of תִּמְהָה). In both meanings it anticipates the staggering objects of Isaiah's prophecy. The verb הַשְּׁתַעֲשְׁעוּ can mean 'cry' (from שׁוּעַ), but also 'take delight in' (hithpalpel of שָׁעַע I, e.g., Ps 19:16) and 'behave as blinded' (hithpalpel of שָׁעַע II, Isa 32:3). As 'cry' it matches וַשְׁעוּ 'cry out', as 'take delight in' it anticipates the mention of wine,¹⁶ and as 'behave as blinded' it foreshadows the shutting of eyes in v. 10: "For Yahweh has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep, He has shut your eyes, the prophets, and He has covered your heads, the seers."¹⁷ The overall effect causes one to linger and be dumbfounded as to the exact meaning of the prophecy. Finally, I note that the passage's context of a dream and Isaiah's apparent interpretation of it fits well the widespread use of polysemy in Near Eastern oneiromancy.¹⁸

Jeremiah 51:1–4

(1) Thus, says Yahweh: Behold (הִנְנִי), I will stir up the spirit of a destroyer against Babylon (בָּבֶל) and the people of Leb Qamay.¹⁹

(2) I will send to Babylon (בָּבֶל) foreigners to winnow her (וַיִּזְרוּהָ זָרִים) and to devastate (וַיִּבְקְרוּ) her land. They will oppose her on every side on the day of her disaster.

14. Note also the use of נִפְשׁוּ meaning 'his appetite' (v. 8). The repeated use of the same lexeme with different meanings constitutes antanaclasis. See Noegel 2013b: 179.

15. A Janus Parallelism is a widespread device in which a polyseme faces back to a previous line in one of its meanings, and forward to a following line in another meaning. See Noegel 1996a.

16. Cf. the delight of the vineyard in Isa 5:7.

17. Isaiah's juxtapositioning of similar sounding roots is reminiscent of the use of an infinitive absolute derived from one root with a finite verb derived from another. On this device, see Noegel 1998a, 1998b.

18. See Noegel 2007.

19. Jewish tradition regards לֵב קָמַי "Leb Qamay" as an atbash cipher for כַּשְׁדִּים "Chaldeans" (see the Targum's rendering (בְּסֻדָּאִי (בְּסֻדָּאִי). On Jeremiah's atbash ciphers, see Noegel, 1996b, 1996c, 1996d.

- (3) Against he who bends (his bow) let the archer bend his bow (יִדְרֹךְ הַיִּדְרֹךְ יִדְרֹךְ), and (likewise) to the one who dons his armor. Do not spare her young men, destroy (בְּחַרְיֵיהָ הַחַרְיִמוֹ) her army.
 (4) They will fall slain (חָלְלִים) in Chaldea, fatally wounded in her streets.

Jeremiah's cluster begins with הִנְנִי 'behold I' and the two-fold mention of בָּבֶל 'Babylon' (vv. 1–2). Following them are ויבַקֶּקוּ 'devastate', סְבִיב 'every side' (v. 2), and חָלְלִים 'slain' (v. 3). Supporting the cluster is the clever expression זָרִים וְזָרוּהָ 'foreigners will winnow her' (v. 2), which juxtaposes the roots זור and זרה, thus allowing him to duplicate the consonant cluster זר. Note similarly his three-fold use of the root דרך (v. 3): יִדְרֹךְ הַיִּדְרֹךְ יִדְרֹךְ: "Against he who bends (his bow) let the archer bend." Jeremiah's interest in repeating consonants is evident also in בְּחַרְיֵיהָ "her young men, destroy" (v. 3). The phrase employs different roots that permit the duplication of the consonant cluster חר. The concatenation of so many repeated consonant groups lends greater force to the cluster.

Nahum 2:3–8

- (3) Indeed, Yahweh will restore the exultation of Jacob like the exultation of Israel, though destroyers have destroyed them (בְּקָקִים בְּקָקוּם) and they have ruined their vines.
 (4) The shield(s) of the soldiers are rouged, the warriors are ruddy. The metal on the chariots flashes on the day they are made ready, the spears of juniper are brandished.
 (5) The chariots move madly (יִתְהוֹלְלוּ) through the streets, rushing back and forth (יִשְׁתַּקְּשְׁקוּן) through the squares. They look like flaming torches, they dart about (יִרוֹצְצוּ) like lightning.
 (6) He remembers his mighty ones, they stumble on the way, they hasten to its wall, prepared is the protector.
 (7) The gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace dissolves.
 (8) It is appointed, she will be exiled and taken up. Her female slaves will moan like the sound of doves, beating upon their breasts (עַל-לִבְבֵהֶן מִתְפַּפֵּת).

Nahum's cluster opens with the geminate phrase בְּקָקִים בְּקָקוּם "destroyers have destroyed them" (v. 3). It continues in v. 5 with the true geminate verbs יִתְהוֹלְלוּ 'move madly' and יִשְׁתַּקְּשְׁקוּן 'rushing back and forth' (hithpael of שקק), and the imitation geminate יִרוֹצְצוּ 'dart about' (polel of רוע). The latter two also establish geminate parallelism. The cluster concludes in v. 8 with two true geminates: מִתְפַּפֵּת 'beating' (polel of תפף) and לִבְבֵהֶן 'their breasts' (lit., 'their hearts'). Note that the prophet again achieved the parallelism and cluster by using rare hithpael and polel forms.²⁰

20. The polel of שקק appears only here, and that of רוע, only here and Ps 121:5. The polel מִתְפַּפֵּת occurs only here.

Zechariah 2:11–15

(11) Woe, Zion, escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon (בְּבֵל).

(12) For thus says Yahweh of Hosts who sent me after glory to the nations that spoiled (שָׁלַלְיִם) you: “Surely, he who touches you touches the pupil (בְּבִבְתָּת) of his eye.

(13) For behold (הִנְנִי), I will shake my hand over them, they will be a spoil (שָׁלַל) to those who served them, and you will know that Yahweh of Hosts has sent me.

(14) Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold (הִנְנִי), I come, and I will dwell in your midst (בְּתוֹכְךָ), says Yahweh.

(15) And many nations will join themselves to Yahweh in that day, and shall be my people, and I will dwell in your midst (בְּתוֹכְךָ), and you will know that Yahweh of Hosts has sent me to you.”

Inspiring this cluster is the name בְּבֵל ‘Babylon’ (v. 11), to which the prophet twice adds שָׁלַלְיִם ‘spoil’ (vv. 12–13) and הִנְנִי ‘behold’ (vv. 13–14). In addition, he employs the *hapax legomenon* geminate בְּבָה ‘pupil’ (v. 12) and twice uses בְּתוֹכְךָ ‘in your midst’ (vv. 14–15), to geminate the consonant ב.

Zechariah 9:16–17

(16) And Yahweh will save them on that day as the flock of his people, for they will be as the stones of a crown, glittering (מְתַנַּסְסוֹת) over his land.

(17) For how great is their goodness, and how great is their beauty! Grain will make the young men flourish (יִנְוָבּ), and the new wine the maidens.

Zechariah creates geminate ballast again by employing rare lexemes, in this case the verbs מְתַנַּסְסוֹת ‘glittering’ in v. 16 (from נָסַס) and יִנְוָבּ ‘flourish’ in v. 17 (polel of נוּב).²¹ Moreover, he anticipated the cluster with יְעוֹרְרֵתִי ‘I stir’ (v. 13).

Zechariah 11:2–3

(2) Wail (הִילָל), O cypress-tree, for the cedar is fallen, because the glorious ones are destroyed (שָׁדְדוּ). Wail (הִילָלוּ), O you oaks of Bashan, for the strong forest is come down.

(3) Hark! The wailing (יִלְלֹת) of the shepherds, for their glory is destroyed (שָׁדְדָה). Hark! The roaring of young lions, for the thickets of the Jordan are destroyed (שָׁדְדוּ).

Zechariah adeptly makes use of three geminate forms: הִילָל ‘wail’, שָׁדְדוּ ‘destroyed’, and הִילָלוּ ‘wail’ (v. 2); and then repeats them in varied form: יִלְלֹת ‘howling’, שָׁדְדָה and שָׁדְדוּ, both ‘destroyed’ (v. 3).

21. The verb נָסַס appears only here and Isa 59:19; Ps 60:6—the latter also in a geminate cluster (see below). The verb נוּב occurs also in Ps 62:11; 92:15; Prov 10:31. The polel occurs only here.

Malachi 1:3–4

(3) But Esau I hated, and made his mountains a desolation (שָׁמָמָה), and gave his heritage to the jackals of the wilderness.

(4) Whereas Edom said, “We are beaten down (רָשַׁעְנוּ), but we will return and rebuild the ruins.”

Malachi accomplishes geminate ballast by following the geminate noun שָׁמָמָה ‘desolation’ (v. 3) with the rare verb רָשַׁעְנוּ ‘we are beaten down’ (v. 4).²²

Psalms 8:3–4

(3) From the mouth of babes (עוֹלָלִים) and sucklings you have founded strength, on account of your enemies (צוֹרְרֵיךָ), to still the adversary and avenger.

(4) When I behold your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars (כּוֹכָבִים), which you have established (בוֹנֵנֶתֶה).

Three true geminates form the basis of the psalmist’s cluster: עוֹלָלִים ‘babes’ and צוֹרְרֵיךָ ‘your enemies’ (v. 3), and כּוֹכָבִים ‘stars’ (v. 4). Adding to the cluster is the imitation construction בוֹנֵנֶתֶה ‘you have established’ in v. 4 (pole of בּוֹן).

Psalms 18:4–6

(4) I called to He who is praiseworthy (מְהֻלָּל), and I have been saved from my foes.

(5) The cords of death engulfed me (אֶפְפּוֹנִי), the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.

(6) The cords of Sheol surrounded me (סָבְבוּנִי), the snares of death confronted me.

This passage contains a true geminate in each verse: מְהֻלָּל ‘who is praiseworthy’ (v. 4), אֶפְפּוֹנִי ‘engulfed me’ (v. 5), and סָבְבוּנִי ‘surrounded me’ (v. 6). The latter two constitute geminate parallelism.

Psalms 18:26–27

(26) With the kind, you show yourself kind (תִּתְחַסֵּד), and with the blameless man (גִּבּוֹר תָּמִים), you show yourself blameless (תִּתְמַם),

(27) With the purified, you show yourself pure (תִּתְבַּרַר), and with the devious, you show yourself tortuous (תִּתְפַּתֵּל).

This crafty cluster employs two geminate roots (i.e., תָּמַם and בָּרַר) in תִּתְמַם ‘show yourself blameless’ (v. 26) and תִּתְבַּרַר ‘show yourself pure’ (v. 27), and combines them with two additional hithpaal forms. The four verbs therefore also geminate the consonant ת. In addition, the three-fold repetition of roots as nouns followed

22. Jer 5:17 is the only other occurrence of the root.

by hithpael verbs lends a reduplicating effect that bolsters the gemination. Moreover, the gemination present in the root ברר is anticipated alliteratively by the otherwise superfluous noun גִּבֹּר ‘man’ (v. 26).

Psalm 27:5–7

(5) For he will protect me (יִצְפֶּנִּי) in his covering in the day of evil, he will hide me in the shelter of his tent and set me high (יְרוֹמְמֵנִי) upon a rock.

(6) And now my head will be exulted above the foes who surround me (סָבְבוּתַי). Let me sacrifice at his tent, sacrifices of shouting, let me sing and let me make song to Yahweh.

(7) Hear, O Yahweh, my voice when I call, have mercy on me (וְחַנּוּנִי) and answer me (וְעֹנֵנִי).

This cluster combines the geminate סָבְבוּתַי ‘surround me’ (v. 6) with four imitation forms: יִצְפֶּנִּי ‘he will protect me’, יְרוֹמְמֵנִי ‘set me high’ (v. 5), וְחַנּוּנִי ‘have mercy upon me’, and וְעֹנֵנִי ‘answer me’ (v. 7). With the exception of יְרוֹמְמֵנִי (a pole of רום), the other verbs attach the 1st person singular object suffix (i.e., ך), which allows the poet to geminate the consonant ך.

Psalm 31:10–14

(10) Have mercy upon me (חַנּוּנִי), Yahweh, for I am in distress. My eyes grow weak (עֲשָׂשָׁה) with sorrow, my soul and body with grief.

(11) My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning, my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak (עֲשִׂשׁוּ).

(12) Because of all my enemies (צָרָרִי), I am a reproach, to my neighbors especially, and a dread to those who know me, those who see me on the street flee (נָדְדוּ) from me.

(13) I am forgotten as if I were dead. I have become like broken vessel (כְּכֵלִי).

(14) Indeed, I hear many whispering, “Terror surrounds (מִסְבֵּבִי)!” They conspire against me and plot (זָמְמוּ) to take my life.

Several geminate forms ballast this cluster including חַנּוּנִי ‘have mercy upon me’ and עֲשָׂשָׁה ‘grow weak’ (v. 10), the latter of which repeats in varied form (v. 11). Two geminates follow: צָרָרִי ‘my enemies’ and נָדְדוּ ‘they flee’ (v. 12). The passage concludes with two more: מִסְבֵּבִי ‘surrounds’ and זָמְמוּ ‘they plot’ (v. 14). Adding to the device are two imitation geminates: כְּכֵלִי ‘like a vessel’ (v. 13) and עֲתָתִי ‘my times’ (v. 16).

Psalm 34:3–5

(3) I will glory (תִּתְהַלֵּל) in Yahweh, let the afflicted hear and rejoice.

(4) Glorify Yahweh with me, let us exalt (וְנִרְוַמְמָה) his name together.

(5) I sought Yahweh, and he answered me (וְעֹנֵנִי), he delivered me from all my fears.

The cluster in this acrostic employs the true geminate **תְּתַהַלַּל** ‘I will glory’ (v. 3), with the imitation constructions **וַיְנַרְוֵמָּה** ‘let us exalt’ in v. 4 (polel of **רום**) and **וַעֲנַנִּי** ‘he answered me’ in v. 5.

Psalms 42:4–12

(4) My tears have been my food day and night (**וּלְיַלְלָה יוֹמָם**), while people say to me all day long, “Where is your God?”

(5) Let me remember these things as I pour out my soul: how I passed among the throng leading them (**אֲדַרְסֵם**) to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise among the festival (**חַוּגָה**) crowd.

(6) Why, my soul, are you downcast (**תִּשְׁתַּוְּחָהּ**)? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

(7) My soul is downcast (**תִּשְׁתַּוְּחָהּ**) within me. Therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.

(8) Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls, all your breakers and waves (**גְּלִיָּהּ**) have swept over me.

(9) By day (**יוֹמָם**) Yahweh directs his love, at night (**בְּלַיְלָהּ**) his song is with me—a prayer to the God of my life.

(10) I say to God my Rock, “Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by a foe?”

(11) My bones suffer mortal agony as my enemies (**צוֹרְרָי**) taunt me, saying to me all day long, “Where is your God?”

(12) Why, my soul, are you downcast (**תִּשְׁתַּוְּחָהּ**)? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

This cluster contains no less than ten geminate forms, three of which repeat in various ways. Thus, **וּלְיַלְלָה יוֹמָם** “day and night” (the former an imitation form with adverbial **מ**, and the latter a true geminate noun) appears twice (vv. 4, 9), and the true geminate verb **תִּשְׁתַּוְּחָהּ** ‘downcast’ occurs three times (vv. 6, 7, 12). Geminate forms occurring once include **אֲדַרְסֵם** ‘leading them’, **חַוּגָה** ‘festival’ (v. 5), and **צוֹרְרָי** ‘my enemies’ (v. 11).

Psalms 60:3–10

(3) God you have rejected us, breached upon us, you have been angry—restore us (**תִּשְׁבֹּב**)!

(4) You have shaken the land and torn it open. Heal its fractures, for it quakes.

(5) You have shown your people difficulty, you made us drink wine (**יַיִן**) that makes us stagger.

(6) But you have given (**נִתְתָּהּ**) to those who fear you a banner to be unfurled (**לְהִתְנוֹסֵס**) against the bow. Selah.

(7) In order that those who love you (**יְדִידֶיךָ**) would be rescued, your right hand saves and answers us (**וַעֲנַנִּי**).

(8) God spoke from his sanctuary: “Let me exalt, let me parcel out Shechem and measure off (**אֶמְדֶּד**) the Valley of Sukkoth.

- (9) Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine. Ephraim is the strength of my head, Judah is my scepter (יְדִידִיָּהּ).
- (10) Moab is my washbasin, on Edom I toss my sandal, over (עָלַי נַעֲלִי) Philistia I shout in triumph (הִתְרַעְעִי).²³

The psalmist begins his cluster with תְּשׁוּבָבָה ‘restore us’ in v. 3 (polel of שׁוּב), and continues with יַיִן ‘wine’ (v. 5), and the rare geminate לְהִתְנַסֵּס ‘to be unfurled’ in v. 6 (from נָסַס).²³ Three true geminates follow: יְדִידִיָּהּ ‘those who love you’ (v. 7), אֶמְדֶּד ‘measure off’ (v. 8), and מְחֹקְקִי ‘my scepter’ (v. 9). Finishing the cluster is הִתְרַעְעִי ‘I will shout in triumph’ (v. 10). Providing additional imitation gemination are נָתַתָּה ‘you have given’ (v. 6), וַעֲנֵנוּ ‘answers us’ (v. 7), and the clever use of עָלַי נַעֲלִי ‘sandal, over’ (v. 10).²⁴ Note also that each of the last four verses ends with one of the aforementioned geminate forms.

Psalms 129:1–6

- (1) A Song of Ascents: “They have greatly oppressed me (צָרְרוּנִי) from my youth,” let Israel say:
- (2) “They have greatly oppressed me (צָרְרוּנִי) from my youth, but they have not gained the victory over me.
- (3) Plowmen have plowed my back and made their furrows long.
- (4) But Yahweh is righteous, he has cut (קָצַץ) the cords of the wicked.”
- (5) May all who hate Zion be turned back in shame.
- (6) May they be like grass on the rooves (גִּגּוֹת), which withers before it can grow.

This passage clusters three geminate forms, one of which it repeats: צָרְרוּנִי ‘they have oppressed me’ (vv. 1–2), קָצַץ ‘he has cut’ (v. 4), and גִּגּוֹת ‘rooves’ (v. 6).

Psalms 143:4–5

- (4) My spirit grows faint (וַתִּתְעַטֵּף) within me, my heart within me is appalled (יִשְׁתּוֹמֵם).
- (5) I remember the days (יָמִים) of long ago, I meditate (אֶשׁוּחָה) on all your works and I consider what your hands have done.

Two geminate forms form this cluster: יִשְׁתּוֹמֵם ‘appalled’ in v. 4 (hithpoel of שָׁמַם) and אֶשׁוּחָה ‘I meditate’ (hithpoel of שׁוּחַ) in v. 5. Note also the geminated consonant ת in the hithpael form וַתִּתְעַטֵּף ‘grows faint’ (v. 4), and geminated consonant מ in the plural noun יָמִים ‘days’ (v. 5).

Job 26:5–14

- (5) “The dead are in deep anguish (יְחֹלְלוּ), those beneath the waters (מִיַּם) and all that live in them.

23. The verb נָסַס appears elsewhere only in Zech 9:16–17 and Isa 59:19, the former also in a geminate cluster (see above).

24. This passage appears nearly verbatim in Ps 108:8–10, with the same cluster of geminates.

- (6) The realm of the dead is naked before God, Destruction lies uncovered.
 (7) He spreads out the northern skies over empty space, he suspends the earth over nothing.
 (8) He binds (צָרַר) the waters (מַיִם) in his clouds, yet the storm-clouds (עַנְנֵי) do not burst under their weight.
 (9) He covers the face of the full moon, spreading his storm-clouds (עַנְנֵי) over it.
 (10) He marks out the horizon (הִקְיֵהוּ) on the face of the waters (מַיִם), for a boundary between light and darkness.
 (11) The pillars of the heavens (שָׁמַיִם) quake (יִרְפּוּ), aghast at his rebuke.
 (12) By his power he stilled the sea, by his wisdom he cut Rahab to pieces.
 (13) By his breath the heavens (שָׁמַיִם) became fair, his hand pierced (חָלְלָהּ) the fleeing serpent.
 (14) And these are but the outer fringe of his works. How faint the whisper we hear of him! Who then can understand (יִתְבּוֹנֵן) the thunder of his power?"

We first find gemination in יְחוּלְלֵי ‘they are in anguish’ (v. 5). The cluster resumes with צָרַר ‘binds’ and עַנְנֵי ‘storm-cloud’ (v. 8), the latter of which repeats with variation (v. 9). We then encounter the *hapax legomenon* יִרְפּוּ ‘they quake’ (v. 11). Concluding the cluster is חָלְלָהּ ‘pierced’ (v. 13), and יִתְבּוֹנֵן ‘understand’ (hithpoel of בִּין) in v. 14. Contributing to the gemination are מַיִם ‘water’ (vv. 5, 8, 10), שָׁמַיִם ‘heavens’ (vv. 11, 13), and הִקְיֵהוּ ‘He marks out the horizon’ (v. 10).

Song 2:16–17

- (16) My beloved (דּוֹדִי) is mine, and I am his, grazing among the lilies (שׁוֹשַׁנִּים),
 (17) Until the day(-wind) blows, and the shadows (הַצֵּלִלִים) flee. Turn, liken yourself, my beloved (דּוֹדִי), to a gazelle, or to a fawn of the hinds, upon the mountains of cleavage.²⁵

Three geminate forms cluster here: דּוֹדִי ‘my beloved’, (vv. 16–17 [2x]), שׁוֹשַׁנִּים ‘lilies’ (v. 16), and הַצֵּלִלִים ‘shadows’ (v. 17).

Song 5:1–16

My final example of geminate ballast and clustering is also one of the most sophisticated. Since Song 5 is lengthy, I will highlight only the specific geminates.

25. Geminate ballast is achieved similarly in Song 4:5–6: “Grazing among the lilies (שׁוֹשַׁנִּים), until the day(-wind) blows, and the shadows (הַצֵּלִלִים) flee,” though this time without דּוֹדִי ‘my beloved’. This geminate cluster was espied by K. Vermeulen (2012: 147), though she incorrectly characterizes my understanding of the device’s function. In Noegel 2004: 18, n. 12, I cited a personal communication received from W. Watson opining that geminate clusters “may function to denote reiterated action (e.g., Ps 12:7) or multiplicity of object (e.g., Isa 7:19).” However, I do not share this view (see my conclusion here and previously), because most cases give no evidence of this. Nevertheless, I shared the suggestion, because it might explain some cases. On variation as a hallmark feature in the Song, and for the translations of the poem found herein, see Noegel and Rendsburg 2009. The use of gemination is not restricted in the Song to cases that involve “twinning,” as espied first by F. Landy (1983: 94–95), and then Vermuelen (2012).

Inspiring the cluster is the geminate דוּד ‘beloved’, which appears twelve times in the chapter (vv. 2, 4, 5, 6 [2x], 8, 9 [4x], 10, 16).²⁶ Anticipating its frequent repetition is the clever use of דוּדִים ‘love’ (v. 1).²⁷ We then find the double geminate expression לִילָה רְסִיסִי “droplets of the night” (v. 2). Following are אֵיכָבָה ‘how’ (v. 4 [2x]), מְרַבְּבִים ‘go-about’, and רְדִידִי ‘my shawl’ (v. 7). Also contributing are מְרַבְּבָה ‘a myriad’ (v. 10) and תִּלְתְּלִים ‘curled’ (v. 11). Concluding the cluster are שׁוֹשְׁנִים ‘lilies’ (v. 13), גְּלִילֵי ‘bracelets’, בְּתָרְשֵׁשׁ ‘beryl’ (v. 14), and שֵׁשׁ ‘marble’ (v. 15). Moreover, a number of imitation geminates add to the effect, including שְׁתִּיתִי ‘I have drunk’ (v. 1), אָחֹתִי רְעִיתִי יוֹנָתִי תַמְרוֹתִי “my sister, my darling, my dove, my perfect one” (v. 2), עֲנֵנִי ‘answer me’ (v. 6), שְׁכָבָה ‘that you’ (v. 9), מַיִם ‘water’ (v. 12), and שְׁפֹתוֹתַי ‘his lips’ (v. 13). The result is a remarkable cluster of gemination.

3. Conclusion

Currently, there are forty-eight known cases of geminate ballast and clustering in the Hebrew Bible, of which twelve occur in a single verse.²⁸ Twenty also constitute geminate parallelism.²⁹ Only three appear in prose.³⁰ While fifteen occur in prophetic texts (mostly Isaiah and Zechariah), the majority (sixteen) appear in the Psalms.

While the creativity with which the Israelites integrated geminate ballast and clustering appears to have known no bounds, the repeated parallelism of some geminate roots in different texts,³¹ the use of rare lexemes and verbal formations,³²

26. Of course, דוּד appears many other times in the Song, but not in conjunction with so many other geminate forms.

27. Note also the alliterative use of דָּ ‘hand’ in vv. 4, 5, 14.

28. These include: Gen 14:5–7; 22:22–25; 49:17 (S); 49:23–24; Deut 32:2–43; Judg 5:28; 2 Sam 6:16 (S); Isa 2:4; 7:19; 10:14; 17:9–14; 24:19–20; 29:8–9; Jer 31:22 (S); 51:1–4; Amos 9:13 (S); Jon 2:6 (S); Nah 2:3–8; Hab 2:6–7; 3:6 (S); Zech 2:11–15; 9:16–17; 11:2–3; Mal 1:3–4; Ps 3:7 (S); 6:8 (S); 8:3–4; 9:14 (S); 12:7 (S); 18:4–6; 18:26–27; 27:5–7; 31:10–14; 34:3–5; 42:4–12; 60:3–10; 74:13–14; 107:32 (S); 129:1–6; 143:4–5; Prov 6:25 (S); Job 3:5–9; 12:16–17; 16:12–16; 26:5–14; Song 2:16–17; 4:5–6; 5:1–16. The siglum (S) marks those that occur in a single verse. If we add the three cases in n. 8 (i.e., Gen 49:12; Ps 72:6; Song 3:7), and two from the previous study (i.e., 135:9; 139:21) that appear in a single stich, the number totals fifty-three.

29. These include: Deut 32:5; 2 Sam 6:16; Isa 2:4; 7:19; 10:14; 24:19–20; 29:8–9; Jon 2:6; Nah 2:3–8; Hab 3:6; Zech 11:2–3; Ps 9:14; 18:4–6; 18:26–27; 74:13–14; 107:32; Prov 6:25; Job 3:5–9; 12:16–17; 16:12–16.

30. For the third (Gen 22:22–25), see Vermeulen (2012: 140–14), who examines geminate clusters as a form of doubling employed in conjunction with references to “twins” and other sets of two (and puns on the word שְׁנַיִם ‘two’). To her observations I add Gen 49:12: “His eyes will be dark (חֹכְלִילִי) from wine (יַיִן), his teeth (שֵׁנַיִם) white from milk.” The brief verse combines two geminate forms in conjunction with the dual form עֵינַיִם ‘eyes’, and שְׁנַיִם ‘teeth’, itself suggestive of two.

31. Both Ps 18:4–6 and Jonah 2:6 employ the geminates אַפְּי ‘engulf’ and סַבְּבִי ‘surround’ in parallelism.

32. See, e.g., Gen 14:5–7; 49:17 (H); 49:23–24; Deut 32:5; Judg 5:28 (H); Isa 7:19 (H); 10:14; 17:9–14; 24:19–20; Nah 2:3–8; Hab 2:6–7 (H); 3:6; Zech 2:11–15 (H); 9:16–17; Mal 1:3–4; Ps

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