Seeing doubles: On two of a kind

Scott B Noegel
University of Washington, USA

Corinna E Nichols
University of Washington, USA

Abstract

This article expands upon a previously published study in this journal that examined a literary strategy which employs linguistic devices of doubling in biblical narratives that reference twins. It demonstrated that Israelite authors employed several devices, including dual forms, gemination, doubled vocabulary, polysemy, and paronomasia on the number 'two', in order to match form to content. Here, we add studies of four biblical passages (Judges 5, Proverbs 20, 30, 31) as well as a brief excursus on a similar strategy in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, and we argue that the strategy of doubling also appears in narratives that feature pairs or the doubling of amounts (i.e. not necessarily texts that employ the term 'twin').

In a previous issue of this journal, Karolien Vermeulen observed that biblical narratives featuring תאומים 'twins' often contain dual forms, geminate noun and verbal forms,[1] the doubling of vocabulary (by way of repetition), polysemy (i.e. double meanings), and

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1. Our use of the term 'geminate' includes all forms that contain repeated consonants including those with so-called reduplicated stems, that is, not merely those roots that repeat the final two consonants. On the use of gemination as a literary device, see Scott B. Noegel, 'Geminate Ballast and Clustering: An Unrecognized Literary Feature in Ancient Semitic Poetry', *JHS* 5 (2004), pp. 1-18; 'More Geminate Ballast and Clustering,' in Ian Wilson and Diana Edelman (eds.), *History, Memory, and Hebrew Scriptures: Studies in Honor of Ehud Ben Zvi on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), pp. 417-32.

Corresponding author:
Scott B Noegel, University of Washington, Box 353120, Denny 229, Seattle, WA 98195, USA.
Email: snoegel@uw.edu

paronomasia upon the word 'two', as a literary strategy to match form to content.[2] Her six examples included stories involving human twins (Gen 25.24; 38.26), double beams of the tabernacle (Exod 26.24; 36.29), and animal twins (Song 4.5; 7.4).

To demonstrate, we turn to two of her examples: the narrator's description of the births of the twins Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25) and Perez and Zerah (Genesis 38). In the account of the former, the narrator uses the geminate form רצץ 'struggle' when describing Rebekah's pregnancy: 'the boys struggled inside her' (Gen 25.22). The pericope also contains a number of words that contain doubled consonants, such as **ובבטנך**, מלאם, ממעיך, לאמים, to list but a few. Anticipating the notion of twinness is Yahweh's promise, which twice repeats the word 'two': 'Two (שני) nations are in your womb and two (שני) peoples shall be separated within you' (Gen 25.23). Moreover, as Vermeulen points out, the word for nations here in the *Kethib* is spelled גיים (instead of the more usual גוים), thus visually doubling the middle consonant of the word.[3]

The narrative concerning the births of Perez and Zerah employs paronomasia upon the word 'two' to underscore the context of twinness. As the narrator informs us: 'and it came to pass, when she travailed, he put out a hand, and the midwife took and bound upon his hand some scarlet (שני), saying: "This one came out first (ראשנה)"' (Gen 38.28). The word שני 'scarlet' here (and appearing a second time [!] in 38.30) suggests שני 'second', thus perfectly and paronomastically anticipating the word ראשנה 'first'.[4] We add to Vermeulen's astute reading that the inversion of numbers, here second before first, reinforces the pattern of ultimogeniture that pervades the Genesis patriarchal narratives (e.g., Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Judah over Reuben).

In this essay, we offer additional evidence for the literary strategy of doubling in texts that feature pairs or the doubling of amounts (i.e. not necessarily texts that employ the term תאומים). Our examples appear in four texts: Judges 5, Proverbs 20, 30, and 31. In addition, we offer a brief excursus that provides earlier evidence for this strategy in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

1. Judges 5

The song of Deborah and Barak offers a fine demonstration. It boasts the success in battle against Yabin, the king of Canaan, and his commander Sisera. The climax of the poem reports the thoughts of Sisera's mother as she peers through the window awaiting his return:

הלא ימצאו יחלקו שלל רחם רחמתים לראש גבר שלל צבעים לסיסרא שלל צבעים
רקמה צבע רקמתים לצוארי שלל:

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2. See Karolien Vermeulen, 'Two of a Kind: Twin Language in the Hebrew Bible', *JSOT* 47 (2012), pp. 135-50. On polysemy and paronomasia in the Hebrew Bible, see the entries by Scott B. Noegel, 'Paronomasia' and 'Polysemy' in Geoffrey Khan, *et al*., (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*. Vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 24-29 and 178-86, respectively.

3. The second *yodh* probably is merely a *mater lectionis*. Nonetheless, the visual effect is obvious.

4. Vermeulen points to a similar case of paronomasia in Song 4.2: 'your teeth (שניך) are like a flock of shorn-ones, who come up from the washing; all of whom are twinned (מתאימות)'. This time the term שנים 'teeth' (here with suffix) paronomastically evokes the word שנים 'two'.

Have they not found and divided the spoil? A woman or two women for every man; spoil of dyed materials for Sisera, spoil of dyed works embroidered, dyed works doubly-embroidered for the neck as spoil? (Judg 5.30)

Underscoring the doubleness of the spoil are the dual forms רחמתים 'two women' and רקמתים 'doubly-embroidered', the geminate forms שלל 'spoil' and סיסרא 'Sisera', and the repeated roots שלל 'spoil' (4x), רחם 'woman' (2x), צבע 'dyed work' (3x), and רקם 'embroidered' (2x). Tying the passage together is the pairing of ראש 'head' (for 'each') and צואר 'neck'.[5]

Also preparing the reader for the doubling of spoils is a string of dual forms, repetition, gemination, polysemy, and paronomasia on the number 'two'.

In addition to רחמתים 'two women' (5.30) and רקמתים 'doubly-embroidered' (5.30), dual words include רגלים 'feet' (5.15; 5.27 [2x]) and פעמים 'wheels' (5.28).

Cases of repetition are numerous and often occur twice within the same verse. We point to שיר 'sing' (5.1; 5.3; 5.12), בן 'son' (5.1; 5.6; 5.12), יום 'day' (5.1; 5.6 [2x]), התנדב 'offer oneself' (5.2; 5.9), עם 'people' (5.2; 5.9; 5.11; 5.13; 5.14; 5.15; 5.18; 5.20), ברך 'bless' (5.2; 5.9; 5.24 [2x]), פרע 'lead' (5.2 [2x]), שמע 'hear' (5.3; 5.16), מלכים 'kings' (5.3; 5.19 [2x]), emphatic אנכי 'I' (5.3 [2x]), אלהים 'god(s)' (5.3; 5.5; 5.8), נטף 'drip' (5.4 [2x]), מים 'water' (5.4; 5.19; 5.25), שדה 'field' (5.4; 5.18), שמים 'heaven' (5.4; 5.20), מפני יהוה 'before Yahweh' (5.5 [2x]), חדל 'cease' (5.6; 5.7 [2x]), ארחות 'ways, caravans' (5.6 [2x]), הלך 'go' (5.6 [2x]; 5.10), פרזון 'villages' (5.7; 5.11),[6] קום 'arise' (5.7 [2x]; 5.12), אם 'mother' (5.7; 5.28), לחם 'battle' (5.8; 5.19 [2x]; 5.20 [2x]), שערים 'gates' (5.8; 5.11), ארבעים 'forty' (5.8; 5.31), לב 'heart' (5.9; 5.15; 5.16), חקק 'ruler, decree' (5.9; 5.14; 5.15), רכב 'chariot, ride' (5.10; 5.28 [2x]), ישב 'dwell' (5.10; 5.16; 5.17; 5.23), צדקות 'righteous' (5.11 [2x]), ירד 'descend' (5.11; 5.13 [2x]; 5.14), ירדן 'Jordan' (5.17),[7] עורי 'awake' (5.12 [4x]), שבה '(take) captive' (5.12 [2x]), אדירים 'mighty' (5.13; 5.25), גבר 'warrior, man, might' (5.13; 5.23; 5.30; 5.31), רגלים 'feet' (5.15; 5.27 [2x]), פלגות ראובן גדלים '(in) the divisions of Reuben there was the greatest' (5.15; 5.16), לב 'heart' (5.15; 5.16), נפש 'being' (5.18;

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5. On the sophisticated use of idioms involving body parts, including in the book of Judges, see Scott B. Noegel, 'Bodily Features as Literary Devices in the Hebrew Bible', in Moshe Garsiel, *et al.*, (eds.), *Studies in Bible and Exegesis Presented to Samuel Vargon* (SBE, 10; Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2011), pp. 509-31 (in Hebrew); K. Vermeulen, 'Hands, Heads, and Feet: Body Parts as Poetic Devices in Judges 4-5', *JBL* 136 (2017), pp. 801-19.

6. Robert G. Boling, *Judges: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible, 6A; New York: Doubleday, 1975), p. 109, suggests that there is polysemy at work in 5.7: 'The rulers in Israel ceased (from fighting) and grew complacent'. He avers that the poet exploited the polysemous root חדל as both 'cease' and 'grow complacent'. If his reading is accepted, we have a case of polysemy abetting the other forms of doubling found in the chapter. There is also the matter of 5.16: למה ישבת בין המשפתים לשמע שרקות עדרים לפלגות ראובן גדולים חקרי־לב 'Why did you sit among the sheep-folds, to hear the pipings for the flocks? At the division of Reuben there were great searchings of the heart', which Jack M. Sasson, *Judges: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible, 6D; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 300, sees as similarly polysemous: 'Is Reuben lingering behind, opening his ears only to the bleating of sheep or the whistling of shepherds? Is the tribe deaf to the din of battle that may shape the future of Israel? Or is Reuben so confident in God's victory that it sits the battle out?'

7. It also is possible that the form ירד that appears twice in 5.13 derives from רדה 'have dominion' or רדד 'trample' (with Rashi). See the discussion by Sasson, *Judges*, p. 295.

5.21), נחל 'wadi' (5.21 [3x]), דהרות 'galloping' (5.22 [2x]), ארר 'curse' (5.23 [3x]), עזרה 'help' (5.23 [2x]), נשים 'women' (5.24 [2x]), הלם 'pound' (5.22; 5.26 [2x]), כרע 'crouch' (5.27 [3x]), and נפל 'fall' (5.27 [3x]). Names also repeat: 'Yahweh' (5.2; 5.3 [2x]; 5.4; 5.5 [2x]; 5.9; 5.11 [2x]; 5.13; 5.23 [3x]; 5.31), 'Israel' (5.2; 5.3; 5.5; 5.7 [2x]; 5.8; 5.9; 5.11), 'Deborah' (5.1; 5.7; 5.12; 5.15), 'Barak' (5.1; 5.12; 5.15), 'Abinoam' (5.1; 5.12), 'Yael' (5.6; 5.24), 'Reuben' (5.15; 5.16), and 'Kishon' (5.21 [2x]).

The poem is also replete with geminate forms: עקלקלות 'meander' (5.6), חוקקי 'governors' (5.9; 5.14), מחצצים 'archers' (5.11), עמם 'people' (5.14), יששכר 'Issachar' (5.15 [2x]), חקקי 'decrees' (5.15), כוכבים 'stars' (5.20), סיסרא 'Sisera' (5.20; 5.26; 5.28; 5.30), סוס 'horse' (5.22), ארר 'curse' (5.23), שדד 'destroy' (5.27), תיבב 'peer' (5.28), and בשש 'tarry' (5.28).[8]

It is fitting that paronomasia on the number שני 'two' occurs in the final verse of the passage, immediately after the doubled women and doubly embroidered garments: 'and the land was quiet for forty years (שנה)' (Judg 5.31).[9]

As in the aforementioned stories of twins, the concatenation of dual forms, gemination, repetition, and paronomasia in the song of Deborah and Barak matches form to content. In this case, it aurally and visually prepares the reader/listener for the doubled spoils that conclude the poem.

2. Proverbs 20

We also find the doubling strategy at work in Prov 20.10-15.[10]

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8. Some repetition in the text operates onomatopoetically. In 5.22, we hear the sound of horses' hooves in the repeated root דהר: 'Then the horses' hooves pounded (הלמו) as the steeds galloped (מדהרות דהרות)'. The rhythmic sound of pounding echoes again when Yael drives the tent peg into Sisera's temple: 'Her (left) hand reached for the tent peg and her right for the workman's hammer (הלמות). She hammered (הלמה) Sisera, crushed (מחקה) his head, and smashed (מחצה), and pierced his temple (חלפה רקתו) (5.26). On the sounds of 5.22, see Sasson, *Judges*, p. 303, who cites George F. Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges* (International Critical Commentary: Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895), p. 161. On the rhythm of 5.26, see Sasson, *Judges*, p. 307.

9. Paronomasia also obtains between חקקי־לב 'resolves of the heart' and חקרי־לב 'searchings of the heart' in 5.15 and 5.16, respectively.

10. As Michael Fox, *Proverbs 10-31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible, 18B; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 605, observes, 'Prov 16.25-22.16 comprises independent clusters with no extended thematic clustering'. Therefore, we have limited our treatment of Proverbs 20 to the aphorisms that share a theme of scales and greed. The Masoretes too struggled to find discrete units in this section, and thus they place פתוחות after Prov 19.9 and 21.30. In agreement with Knut M. Heim, *Like Grapes of Gold Set in Silver: An Interpretation of Proverbial Clusters in Proverbs 10:1-22:16* (BZAW, 273; Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), p. 107, we find Proverbs 20 to be organized mostly based on similarity of sound: 'features which combine sayings into organic units … repetition of sound and sense, consonants, word roots, words, synonyms, etc.'. Heim sees Prov 20.5-13 as a single unit.

אבן ואבן איפה ואיפה תועבה יהוה גם־שניהם: 10

גם במעלליו יתנכר־נער אם־זך ואם־ישר פעלו: 11

אזן שמעת ועין ראה יהוה עשה גם־שניהם: 12

אל־תאהב שנה פן־תורש פקח עיניך שבע־לחם: 13

רע רע יאמר הקונה ואזל לו אז יתהלל: 14

יש זהב ורב־פנינים וכלי יקר שפתי־דעת: 15

10. Stone, stone, weight, weight (i.e. false weights and measures), indeed the two of them are an abomination of Yahweh.

11. Even a child is recognized by his deeds, if they are pure or if his actions are upright.

12. An ear that hears and an eye that sees, Yahweh has made the two of them.

13. Do not love sleep lest you become poor. Keep your eyes open and be sated with bread.

14. 'Bad, Bad', says the buyer, but (then) goes and then boasts (the purchase).

15. There is gold and an abundance of rubies, but lips of knowledge are a precious vessel.

The image of scales automatically evokes thoughts of pairs. Indeed, the proverb suggests the symmetry of a scale by repeating the words אבן 'stone' and איפה 'weight' twice in immediate succession (20.10). The buyer's words רע רע 'bad, bad' (20.14) do so as well.[11] When the theme of false scales is taken up once more in 20.23, repetition again creates a sense of doubling: תועבת יהוה אבן ואבן ומאזני מרמה לא־טוב 'An abomination of Yahweh is a stone and a stone (i.e. false weights) and deceitful scales are not good'.[12] Also repeated are the phrase גם־שניהם 'indeed the two of them' (20.10; 20.12) and the word עינים 'eye(s)' (20.12; 20.13).

Adding to the twinning effect in 20.14 are repeated consonants in the phrase אזל לו אז 'he goes and then', a virtual anagram.[13] This device is emphasized by the preceding twofold repetition of the word שני 'two' (20.10; 20.12).

Contributing also to the doubling strategy are the dual forms עינים 'eyes' (20.13) and שפתים 'lips' (20.15).

Three geminate forms also occur: מעלל 'deeds' (20.11), הלל 'boast' (20.14), and פנינים 'rubies' (20.15).

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11. R. B. Y. Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Anchor Bible, 1; New York: Doubleday, 1965), p. 121, suggests this verse serves as a counterpart to Prov 20.10 and 20.23, which place blame on the dishonest merchant rather than the buyer. W. McKane, *Proverbs, a New Approach* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1970), p. 541, similarly states that both passages 'condemn an aspect of commercial sharp practice'.

12. With regard to this passage, Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, p. 667, notes, 'The present proverb looks like an expansion of Prov 20.23'. Both Deut 25.13-16 and Prov 11.1 convey similar sentiments.

13. Espied by A. Hurowitz, *Proverbs: Introduction and Commentary*. Vols. 1-2 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2012), p. 414 (in Hebrew).

Abetting the doubling is the word שׁנה 'sleep' in 20.13, which paronomastically recalls שׁני 'two'.[14] Similarly, אזן 'ear' in 20.12 suggests מאזנים 'scale', a dual noun that appears shortly thereafter (20.23). Moreover, as Richard Clifford observes, the verb יתנכר in 20.11 is polysemous, meaning either 'disguise' or 'be recognized'.[15] As such, we may read the passage as teaching that if a child can disguise his actions, even more so can an adult. Alternatively, the line could suggest that a child reveals by his actions whether he will be pure and upright as an adult. We add to his observation that מעלל 'deed', suggests מעלל 'acting like a child' (cf. Isa 3.12), a fitting notion given its use with נער 'child'. Victor Hurowitz also has suggested that paronomasia encourages us to hear in the verb אזל 'he goes' in 20.14 the root זול 'make light of, despise'.[16] The gist of the device suggests when the merchant lowers his price, the buyer boasts that he has made a successful deal.

3. Proverbs 30

In Prov 30.10-16, Agur instructs:

אל־תלשׁן עבד אל־אדנו [אדניו] פן־יקללך ואשׁמת: 10

דור אביו יקלל ואת־אמו לא יברך: 11

דור טהור בעיניו ומצאתו לא רחץ: 12

דור מה־רמו עיניו ועפעפיו ינשׂאו: 13

דור | חרבות שׁניו ומאכלות מתלעתיו לאכל עניים מארץ ואביונים מאדם: 14

לעלוקה שׁתי בנות הב הב שׁלושׁ הנה לא תשׂבענה ארבע לא־אמרו הון: 15

שׁאול ועצר רחם ארץ לא־שׂבעה מים ואשׁ לא־אמרה הון: 16

10. Do not slander a servant to his lord, lest he curse you and you be found guilty.

11. There is a generation who curses his father and does not bless his mother.

12. There is a generation who is pure in his own eyes, and yet not cleansed of his own filth.

13. There is a generation whose eyes are haughty, and his eyelids raised.

14. There is a generation whose teeth are swords, and whose jaws are knives to devour the afflicted from the earth, and the needy from humankind.

15. The leech has two daughters, Give (and) Give. There are three things that are not sated, four that do not say, 'Enough!'

16. The grave, and the barren womb, the earth that is not satisfied with water, and the fire that does not say: 'Enough'.

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14. The LXX's μὴ ἀγάπα καταλαλεῖν 'do not love calumny' suggests that its translators understood שׁנה as if derived from the root שׁנה 'change, alter'. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, p. 1024, opines that the rendering reflects a derivation from the root שׁנה 'repeat'.

15. Richard J. Clifford, *Proverbs: A Commentary* (OTL; London/Leiden/Louisville, TN: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), pp. 183-84. The root נכר occurs again in 20.16, but there it means 'foreigner'. On the polysemy here, see Hurowitz, *Proverbs*, pp. 412-13.

16. Hurowitz, *Proverbs*, p. 141, points (with Ramak) to Lam 1.8 for a parallel.

The identity of both daughters with the same name conveys a sense of twinness.[17] Moreover, 30.15 can be read in multiple ways. Either the names of the daughters are both הב, as rendered above, or הב הב records their simultaneous speech 'give, give'![18] Heinrich Schneider avers that the pair refers to the leech's two blood-seeking suckers.[19] The proverb reinforces the passage's twinness by employing dual forms, repetition, gemination, and paronomasia.

Dual forms include the words עינים 'eyes' (occurring twice! [30.12; 30.13]), עפעפים 'eyelids' (30.13), and שנים 'teeth' (30.14).

Repetition occurs in the use of קלל 'curse' (30.10; 30.11), אכל 'eat' (30.14 [2x]), the fourfold use of דור 'generation' (30.11-14), the pair הב הב 'Give (and) Give' (30.15), the verb שעב 'sated' (30.15; 30.16), and the line לא־אמרו הון/לא־אמרה הון 'they/it do/does not say "Enough!"' (30.15; 30.16). Adding to the strategy of doubling is the pair אב 'father' and אם 'mother' (30.11).

Gemination appears in the words קלל 'curse' (30.10; 30.11) and עפעפים 'eyelids' (30.13).

In addition, anticipating the 'two' (שתי) daughters is תלשן 'slander' (30.10) and שניו 'its teeth' (30.14), both of which paronomastically suggest שני 'two'.[20] Moreover, as Michael Fox observes, the latter passage 'serves here as a pivot verse between two epigrams'.[21] It thus faces both what comes before and what follows. The proverb also contains paronomasia on the dual form עינים 'eyes' (30.12; 30.13), by employing the word עניים 'afflicted' immediately afterward (30.14).

Capping the sense of twinness in this passage is 30.15, which builds upon the number two: שלוש הנה לא תשבענה ארבע לא־אמרו הון 'There are three things that are not sated, four that do not say, "Enough!"'.[22] Indeed, as William McKane remarks, the connection

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17. See the comment by Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, p. 876: 'She has two daughters—twins, judging from their identical names and demands. The sentence can simultaneously be read in two ways: They are both named "Give," and they both say "Give!" The image of the leech and her daughters can be used of anyone who leeches off others, and it is a way of ridiculing and chastising a greedy person...'

18. Some manuscripts place a small ב in between the two names, which may have led to the LXX's rendering here, which is widely divergent. It reads, 'The leech has three lovingly beloved daughters, but three did not satisfy her, and the fourth was not pleased to say, "it is enough"', that is, it appears to have read some form of the verb אהב 'love' from the words of the leech (perhaps reading, הב הב as אהב אהב). Might the interpolated ב in those manuscripts served to mark the number 'two'? The LXX also differs in stating that the leech has three daughters instead of two.

19. Heinrich Schneider, 'Die Töchter des Blutgels in Spr 30,15', in Heinrich Gross and Franz Mussner (eds.), *Lex Tua Veritas: Festschrift für Hubert JünkerzurVollendung des 70. Lebensjahres am 8. Aug. 1961. Dargeboten von Kollegen, Freunden u. Schülern* (Trier: Paulinus Verlag, 1961), pp. 257-64, especially p. 262. J. M. Grintz, 'The Proverbs of a Leech', *Tarbiz* 28 (1959), pp. 135-37 (in Hebrew), following Rabbeinu Tam, argues that עלוקה is the name of a sage. The leech is oddly absent from the otherwise thorough study by Tova L. Forti, *Animal Imagery in the Book of Proverbs* (Vetus Testamentum, Supplements 118; Leiden: Brill, 2008).

20. We note that the rare hiphil form תַּלְשֵׁן (usually denominative verbs are formed in the piel) further enhances its paronomastic connection with a שֵׁן 'tooth'. All the other verbal forms of לשׁן occur in the polel.

21. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, p. 867.

22. In fact, the proverb offers a dazzling display of ingenious language. In 30.14, מתלעתיו 'his jaws' suggests תולע 'worm, scarlet', which in turn evokes שני 'scarlet', immediately after

between the two passages 'can be readily understood, both because the number two does suggest the sequence two, three, four and also because the thought of insatiability accords with the contents'.[23] Moreover, both passages contain the verb שבע 'sate', which suggests by way of visual paronomasia the number שבע 'seven', that is, the sum of three and four.

4. Proverbs 31

Our final biblical example is the crown jewel of the book of Proverbs, the famous acrostic in 31.10-31. Scholars have mined this poem well for its numerous cases of double meaning. For instance, Gary Rendsburg has pointed to a case of double poly-semy in 31.19: 'Her hands she sends forth to the spindle (כישור), and her palms grasp the whorl (פלך)'.[24] Here the word כישור can mean 'spindle' or '(with) skill', and פלך is both 'whorl' and '(with) dexterity'. Al Wolters also has uncovered a case of bilingual polysemy in 31.27: 'She oversees (צופיה) the ways of her household'—the rare fem-inine participle form צופיה 'she oversees' here chosen to evoke the Greek Σοφία 'wis-dom/Wisdom'.[25] Tzvi Novak also has observed that we can render Prov 31.17 as 'She girds her loins with strength and strengthens her arms' or 'She girds strength around her loins and binds her arms (in preparation for work)'.[26] We also find double polysemy in 30.18: טעמה כי־טוב סחרה. The verb טעם can mean 'perceive' or 'decree', and the noun סחרה can mean 'trade' or 'gain'. The ambiguity allows us to render the line as 'she per-ceives that her gain is good', or 'she decrees that her merchandise is good'.[27] The first word

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encountering שניו 'his teeth' (30.14). We then are reminded of the color scarlet in the same verse with the word אדם 'humankind', which suggests אדם 'red'. Since the leech appears in the next verse (30.15), one cannot also help but hear a suggestion of דם 'blood' in אדם. Moreover, 'worms' are closely associated with 'teeth' and 'eyes', as is well attested in Akkadian incanta-tions against the *tūltu* 'worm'. Given such allusions and the reference to 'excrement' in 30.12, one wonders if רמו in 30.13 alludes to רמה 'maggot'. We note that רמה 'maggot' is a word pair with תולעה 'worm' in Isa 14.11 and Job 25.6. On the clever use of scarlet in biblical nar-ratives, see Scott B. Noegel, 'Scarlet and Harlots: Seeing Red in the Hebrew Bible', *HUCA* 87 (2017), pp. 1-47. For Akkadian incantations against the worm, see Graham Cunningham, *'Deliver Me from Evil': Mesopotamian Incantations, 2500-1500 BC* (Studia Pohl, 17; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2007), pp. 106-107.

23. McKane, *Proverbs, a New Approach*, p. 653.
24. The meaning '(with) dexterity, skill' was first suggested by Al Wolters, 'The Meaning of *Kîšor* (Prov 31:19)', *HUCA* 65 (1994), pp. 91-104. The double polysemy was seen by Gary A. Rendsburg, 'Double Polysemy in Proverbs 31:19', in Asma Afsaruddin and A. H. Mathias Zahniser (eds.), *Humanism, Culture, and Language in the Near East: Studies in Honor of Georg Krotkoff* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), pp. 267-74; 'Literary and Linguistic Matters in the Book of Proverbs', in John Jarick (ed.), *Perspectives on Israelite Wisdom: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (LHBOTS, 618; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), pp. 111-47, especially p. 121.
25. A. Wolters, '*Ṣopîyyâ* (Prov 31:27) as a Hymnic Participle and Play on Sophia', *JBL* 104 (1985), pp. 577-87.
26. See Tzvi Novak, '"She Binds Her Arms": Rereading Proverbs 31:17', *JBL* 128 (2009), pp. 107-13, who is inclined to accept the second option. Prov 31.17a is ambiguous as it stands, whereas אמץ in 31.17b is polysemous, meaning both 'strengthen' and 'bind'.
27. See Hurowitz, *Proverbs*, p. 599, who discusses the polysemous verb טעם.

in the final verse (31.31) is also polysemous: תנו־לה מפרי ידיה. One can read it as either 'Give her of the works of her hands' or 'Recount for her the works of her hands'.[28] The latter offers a perfect parallel for הלל in the next stich (cf. Judg 5.11). Another well-known case of polysemy in this poem is of special import, because it conveys doubling in meaning as well as in form. It appears in 31.21: לא־תירא לביתה משלג כי כל־ביתה לבש שנים 'She does not fear for her household on account of snow, because all of her household are dressed in a two-ply-garment'. As Rendsburg has shown, we can also understand שנים as 'scarlet'.[29] As a two-ply garment, שנים faces back to the snow, and as 'scarlet' it looks forward to ארגמן 'purple' and שש 'linen' in the next verse. In addition, שש 'linen' constitutes a case of numerical paronomasia as it suggests שש 'six', especially in such close proximity to שנים.[30]

The doubleness of the garment finds contextual reinforcement in the use of בית 'household', a lexeme that also suggests the name of the letter ב, that is, which doubles as the number 'two'.[31] Moreover, as if to emphasize the reference, the poet has employed בית two times in the verse. Bolstering the pivot function of the polyseme שנים is the fact that the verse in which it occurs occupies the central position of the acrostic, that is, it is the last word in the 11th of 22 lines (the acrostic ל line). Thus, שנים divides the poem into two equal halves. Moreover, at the very center of this verse is the word משלג 'on account of the snow', whose segholate pausal form allows one to hear in it the word משל 'proverb'.[32]

In addition, on both sides of the passage, we find dual forms, gemination, repetition, and paronomasia. Dual forms include two uses of the word ידים 'hands' and two of כפים 'palms', placed chiastically in the previous two verses (31.19-20).[33] The terms also evoke the names of the previous two letters of the alphabet, י and כ.[34] The noun כפים 'palms' also occurs in 31.13 and 31.16. The poet also employed the duals חיים 'life' (31.12), מתנים 'loins' (31.17), and זרעות 'arms' (31.17).

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28. Hurowitz, *Proverbs*, pp. 591, 604. Although the reading requires revocalization to תַּנּוּ, the pre-Masoretic text would have been ambiguous.

29. Of course, the reading requires revocalization, but the pre-Masoretic text would have been ambiguous. See Rendsburg, 'Literary and Linguistic Matters in the Book of Proverbs', in *Perspectives on Israelite Wisdom*, pp. 120-21. Moreover, scarlet and white (i.e. snow) are considered opposites. Cf. Isa 1.18. See also Noegel, 'Scarlet and Harlots'. The two colors find a refrain in שש וארגמן 'linen and crimson' in the next verse (31.22), which are white and red, respectively, noted by Hurowitz, *Proverbs*, p. 601.

30. On numerical paronomasia, see Scott B. Noegel, *'Word Play' in Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Ancient Near East Monographs; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature Press), forthcoming.

31. The first stich of the second (ב) passage employs the consonant ב four times: לב בעלה בטח בה 'The heart of her husband trusts in her'. See Hurowitz, *Proverbs*, p. 597.

32. We thank Tom Hornsten for this observation.

33. On chiasm in this chapter, see M. H. Lichtenstein, 'Chiasm and Symmetry in Proverbs 31', *CBQ* 44 (1982), pp. 202-11; K. Brockmöller, '"Chiasmus und Symmetrie": Zur Diskussion um eine sinnvolle Struktur in Spr 31, 10-31', *BN* 110 (2001), pp. 12-17; M. Cholin, 'Structure de Proverbes 31, 10-31', *RB* 108 (2001), pp. 331-48.

34. According to Hurowitz, *Proverbs*, p. 590, this happens several times in the acrostic (e.g., also the letters ג, פ). In addition, the author has frequently repeated the consonant that leads the line in the words that follow (e.g., in the acrostic line that begins with ל, we find (לא... לביתה... משלג... כל... לבש.

Geminate forms include פנינים 'rubies' (31.10), שלל 'spoil' (31.11), לילה 'night' (31.15), זממה 'considers' (31.16), [בלילה] בליל 'night' (31.18), שש 'linen' (31.22), and הלל 'praise' (31.28; 31.30; 31.31).

With regard to doubling through repetition, we count more than 20 cases in the brief poem: אשה 'woman' (31.10; 31.30), רחק 'far' (31.10; 31.14), מכר 'price' (31.10; 31.24), בעל 'husband' (31.11; 31.23; 31.28), חיל 'valor' (31.10; 31.29), טוב 'good' (31.12; 31.18), עשה 'do' (31.13; 31.22; 31.24; 31.29), כף 'palms' (31.13; 31.16; 31.19; 31.20), סחר 'merchant, merchandise' (31.14 [2x]; 31.18), לחם 'bread' (31.14; 31.27), קום 'arise' (31.15; 31.28), נתן 'give' (31.15; 31.24, 31.31), בית 'house' (31.15; 31.21 [2x]; 31.27), פרי 'fruit' (31.16; 31.31), חגר 'gird, girdle' (31.17; 31.24), יד 'hands' (31.19, 31.20, 31.31), שלח 'send' (31.19; 31.20), ירא 'fear' (31.21; 31.30), בית 'house' (31.15; 31.21 [2x]; 31.27), לבש 'clothe' (31.21; 31.22; 31.25), שערים 'gates' (31.23; 31.31), and הלל 'praise' (31.28; 31.30; 30.31).[35]

Moreover, as Katrin Brockmöller has shown, 10 repeated lexemes/phrases occur chiastically, thus providing the poem with a mirrored framework.[36] These include אשה 'woman' (31.10; 31.30), חיל 'valor' (31.10; 31.29), בעל 'husband' (31.11; 31.23; 31.28), לחם 'bread' (31.14; 31.27), בית 'house' (31.15; 31.21 [2x]; 31.27), לקח/נתן 'take/give' (31.16; 31.24), חגר 'gird, girdle' (31.17; 31.24), לא 'not' (31.18; 31.21), וידיה שלחה 'and she sends her hands' (31.19; 31.20), and כף 'palms' (31.19; 31.20).

Paronomasia on the number two also occurs. The feminine and masculine forms of the word 'two' (i.e. שתים and שנים) are evoked aurally and visually by the word פשתים 'flax' (31.13) and לשונה 'her tongue' (31.26), respectively.

Finally, we note that the poem also contains the familial pairs 'wife' and 'husband' (31.10-11), and 'sons' and 'daughters' (31.28-29), thus representing a complete בית.

5. Conclusion

The four texts we have examined (Judges 5, Proverbs 20, 30, 31) provide additional evidence for the existence of a literary strategy that employs dual forms, repetition, geminate nouns and verbal forms, polysemy, and paronomasia upon the word 'two', to match form to content. The strategy is not limited to narratives that reference the word תאומים 'twins' but includes texts that feature doubles of various kinds, in our case, of spoils, scales, leeches, and garments.

Excursus: *Epic of Gilgamesh* VI 7-21

We also suggest that Ishtar's proposal to Gilgamesh represents the earliest use of the strategy of doubling.[37] The passage reads:

6. The lady Ishtar looked covetously on the beauty of Gilgamesh:

7. 'Come, Gilgamesh, you be the bridegroom!

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35. The repetition is also discussed by Victor Hurowitz, 'The Seventh Pillar: Reconsidering the Literary Structure and Unity of Proverbs 31', *ZAW* 113 (2001), pp. 209-18, especially pp. 214-15.

36. Brockmöller, 'Chiasmus und Symmetrie', pp. 13-14.

37. I adopt the translation of A. R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*. Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 618-19.

8. Grant me your fruits, I insist.

9. You shall be my husband and I shall be your wife!

10. Let me harness for you a chariot of lapis lazuli and gold,

11. whose wheels are gold and whose horns are amber.

12. You shall have in harness, 'storm-lions', huge mules.

13. Come into our house with scents of cedar!

14. When you come into our house,

15. doorway and throne shall kiss your feet.

16. Kings, courtiers, and nobles shall be bowed down beneath you,

17. they shall bring you tribute, [*all* the] produce of mountain and land.

18. Your nanny-goats shall bear triplets and your ewes twins,

19. your donkey foal under load shall outpace a mule.

20. At the chariot your horse shall gallop majestically,

21. at the yoke your ox shall acquire no rival.

The poet has reinforced Ishtar's desire to couple with Gilgamesh by emphasizing items in pairs. These include 'husband and wife' (l. 9), 'lapis lazuli' and 'gold' (l. 10), 'wheels' and 'horns' (l. 11), 'storm-lions' and 'huge mules' (l. 12), 'doorway' and 'throne' (l. 15), 'mountain' and 'land' (l. 17), 'nanny-goats' and 'ewes' (l. 18), and 'horse' and 'ox' (ll. 20-21). The mention of a 'chariot' (l. 10) also implies a team of two animals. The use of the same cuneiform sign KUR for the pair *šadû* 'mountain' and *mātu* 'land' (l. 17) further emphasizes their twinness.

Ishtar's proposal also repeats several roots, including the cognate accusative construction *qāšu qīšamma* (lit.) 'give me a gift' (l. 8), the root *ṣamādu* 'harness' in verbal (l. 9) and nominal forms (l. 12), the word *ḫurāṣu* (KÙ.SIG$_{17}$) 'gold' (ll. 10-11), the expression *ana bīti* (É) (ll. 13-14), and the verb *erēbu* 'enter' (ll. 13-14). One also finds repeated consonants in the verb *līlida* 'they will bear' (l. 18), and by way of paronomasia between *rubûtu* 'lady' (l. 6), *rabûti* 'great' (l. 12), and *rubû* 'nobles' (l. 16).

Three dual forms, *īnū* 'eyes' (l. 6), *qarnā* 'horns' (l. 11) and *šēpī* 'feet' (l. 15), and one geminate form, *sīsû* 'horse' (l. 20), assist the theme of doubling.

The poet's interest in twinning is especially evident in the climax to Ishtar's speech, which A. R. George sees as a reversal of the pattern $x, x + 1$, found elsewhere in the epic.[38] Here, we find 'Your nanny-goats shall bear triplets (*takšī*) and your

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38. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, Vol. 1, pp. 797-98; Vol. 2, p. 831.

ewes twins (*tūʾami*)' (l. 18).[39] Ishtar concludes her request by promising that his ox 'shall acquire no rival (*šānina*)', a remark that paronomastically evokes the number *šanû* 'two'.

Finally, we note that though the name Gilgamesh appears consistently in the epic as ᵈGIŠ-*gím-maš*, in the present context of literary doubling one cannot help but hear the word *māšu* 'twin', especially as it occurs twice in her proposal.[40]

39. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, Vol. 2, p. 831, also observes that the line recalls the proverb in Laḫar and Ašnan, 8-9, which appears in the normative order: U₈.E SILA₄ MIN. BI NU.UB.TU.UD ÙZ.E MÁŠ.EŠ₅.BI NU.UB.TU.UD 'No ewe had given birth to ewes, nor nanny-goat to its triplet kids'.
40. There may be an analogue to the doubling strategy in the Sumerian proverb: KA₅.A MÁŠ. BI MU.UN.ŠUB MÁŠ.TAB.BA.NI ÀM.I.I 'the fox dropped her young. Her twins came out'. As Bendt Alster, *Proverbs of Ancient Sumer: The World's Earliest Proverb Collections* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1997), p. 416, notes, 'Since MÁŠ means "young" (of an animal), MÁŠ.TAB.BA means "double cubs," but also "twin"'. Cited by Jacob Klein and Yitschak Sefati, 'Word Play in Sumerian Literature', in Scott B. Noegel (ed.), *Puns and Pundits: Wordplay in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Literature* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2000), pp. 23-61, especially p. 35, n. 39.