

A Simplistic Discussion of Psalms

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An explanation and examples of psalms

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Explanation:

Each poetic segment is a special kind of couplet called a distich. The first part of the distich is written on the left (un-indented), and makes a statement. The second part of the distich is written on the right (indented), and goes along with the first part in one of the following ways:

1. Sameness (or Amplification):

It expresses the same, or a similar, thought in different words. Instead of expressing sameness, it might provide amplification. Or it might do both.

2. Antithesis:

It expresses an antithetical (opposing) thought.

3. Complement:

It expresses a thought that complements, or better explains, the original thought. It gives more detail and/or insight.

Usually, if you take just the first part of each distich, the resulting piece makes some sense, but obviously not as much sense as taking each complete distich. Some, but not all, who write in this manner will write a piece consisting of just the first part of each distich, something like describing having breakfast, and then go back and add a second part to each

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first part to fill out each distich and complete the piece. Others do each second part as they do each first part. In this way they only go through the piece once.

While it is relatively easy to compose a second part for each first part that will finish the piece, the real challenge is to compose second parts that will transform the piece from just a simple work into a real work of art. Composing the second part of each distich quite possibly will lead one into areas of surrealism, humor, or even divergence. While each second part will correspond to its first part, the second parts do not have to make sense or even be logically related to their first parts.

Readily available examples of this writing technique can be found near the middle of the Bible. The following books:

Job

Psalms

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

Song of Solomon

are written to a significant degree in this style. They are known as the "Poetic Books" as opposed to the following "Doctrinal Books":

Genesis through Deuteronomy

Matthew through John

Romans through Jude

"Historical Books":

Joshua through Esther

Acts

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and "Prophetic Books":

Isaiah through Malachi
Revelation

Examples:

I have included two of the pieces I have done this way, with severe annotation, to show what I am talking about. In addition to my own examples I have included two examples from the King James Version of the Bible.

Original text:

Opus:20051128 Nbr:1

Strong coffee flows from cup to mouth,
Espresso to warm the tongue and open the eyes.
Words, once plentiful, now flee from thought
As a hart doth bolt in sudden panic.
The Page continues to lie to me,
Saying I MUST write words MOST PROFOUND.
Its blank stare doth seek to stay my pen,
But I, with blackened stain, do smear it with thoughts.
I confess, in pen and ink, my inability to express any news,
Save the struggle to compose.
For what is a word smith, save one that elucidates with skill,
And what doth one share, but what occupies the mind.
So I am saved from the stagnating pen,
And the lies of the Page drown in a pool of ink.

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Annotated text:

First Part of each Distich only:

Strong coffee flows from cup to mouth.

Words, once plentiful, now flee from thought.

The Page continues to lie to me.

Its blank stare doth seek to stay my pen.

I confess, in pen and ink, my inability to express any news.

For what is a word smith, save one that elucidates with skill,

So I am saved from the stagnating pen.

First Parts with the Second Parts added:

Strong coffee flows from cup to mouth,

Espresso to warm the tongue and open the eyes.

Expresses 'complement'

explains type and effect of the coffee

Words, once plentiful, now flee from thought

As a hart doth bolt in sudden panic.

Expresses 'sameness'

words fleeing, hart bolting

The Page continues to lie to me,

Saying I MUST write words MOST PROFOUND.

Expresses 'complement'

explains what the lie is

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Its blank stare doth seek to stay my pen,
But I, with blackened stain, do smear it with thoughts.
Expresses 'antithesis'
staying the pen opposes smearing the page

I confess, in pen and ink, my inability to express any news,
Save the struggle to compose.
Expresses 'complement'
my confession is the struggle to compose

For what is a word smith, save one that elucidates with skill,
And what doth one share, but what occupies the mind.
Expresses 'complement'
explains what a word smith writes about

So I am saved from the stagnating pen,
And the lies of the Page drown in a pool of ink.
Expresses 'antithesis'
I am saved opposes the lies drowning

Original text:

The Daily Lunch Time Routine

The sky is a dingy gray overhead

Like a sheet too long lain upon between washings.

The air is cold and damp to the face.

The view is gently subdued in shades of gray.

As I walk to the coffee shop my mind doth wander,

The regimen of logic from morning evaporates completely.

I look forward to the soothing peace of pondering with espresso.

Stress and pressure from work leaves the spirit dry.

The drifting of the mind across gently rolling thoughts

Is a warm refreshing mist, nourishing the soul.

Slowly thoughts condense into words upon the page.

Its desire to remain blankly pristine is lost in inken stain.

The works thus written are not, necessarily, profound,

But a vent for work time drudgery they provide.

A sonnet here, a haiku there, with psalms and essays betwixt.

The act of writing is cathartic in the relief it brings.

Could I but take this with me, I would be at peace,

But work doth fill the heart with stress.

Too soon the time comes to return to an afternoon of labor.

Reluctantly, I leave my little haven of rest.

Patiently, I'll endure as I wait for the morrow.

'Tis but a day 'til I will be freed, again.

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I find my heart joyously expectant of this time each day,
Half an hour of bliss to make the remaining time
bearable.

Annotated text:

First Part of each Distich only:

The sky is a dingy gray overhead.
The air is cold and damp to the face.
As I walk to the coffee shop my mind doth wander.
I look forward to the soothing peace of pondering with
espresso.
The drifting of the mind across gently rolling thoughts.
Slowly thoughts condense into words upon the page.
The works thus written are not, necessarily, profound.
A sonnet here, a haiku there, with psalms and essays betwixt.
Could I but take this with me, I would be at peace.
Too soon the time comes to return to an afternoon of labor.
Patiently, I'll endure as I wait for the morrow.
I find my heart joyously expectant of this time each day.

First Parts with the Second Parts added:

The sky is a dingy gray overhead
Like a sheet too long lain upon between washings.
Expresses 'sameness'
the look of the sky and the look of the sheet

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The air is cold and damp to the face.

The view is gently subdued in shades of gray.

Expresses 'complement'

the feel of the face and the sight of the eye

As I walk to the coffee shop my mind doth wander,

The regimen of logic from morning evaporates completely.

Expresses 'sameness'

wandering mind and evaporating logic

I look forward to the soothing peace of pondering with espresso.

Stress and pressure from work leaves the spirit dry.

Expresses 'antithesis'

peace opposes stress

The drifting of the mind across gently rolling thoughts

Is a warm refreshing mist, nourishing the soul.

Expresses 'sameness'

drifting mind and refreshing mist

Slowly thoughts condense into words upon the page.

Its desire to remain blankly pristine is lost in inken stain.

Expresses 'sameness'

words on page and inken stain

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The works thus written are not, necessarily, profound,
But a vent for work time drudgery they provide.
Expresses 'complement'
writing provides venting

A sonnet here, a haiku there, with psalms and essays betwixt.
The act of writing is cathartic in the relief it brings.
Expresses 'complement'
poetic works provide catharsis

Could I but take this with me, I would be at peace,
But work doth fill the heart with stress.
Expresses 'antithesis'
peace opposes stress

Too soon the time comes to return to an afternoon of labor.
Reluctantly, I leave my little haven of rest.
Expresses 'antithesis'
returning opposes leaving

Patiently, I'll endure as I wait for the morrow.
'Tis but a day 'til I will be freed, again.
Expresses 'antithesis'
enduring opposes being free

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I find my heart joyously expectant of this time each day,
Half an hour of bliss to make the remaining time
bearable.

Expresses 'complement'
expectant of bliss

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Original text:

Psalm 23 - The Shepherd's Psalm

1 The Lord is my shepherd;

I shall not want.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

he leadeth me beside the still waters.

3 He restoreth my soul:

he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil:

for thou art with me;

thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 Thou preparest a table before me

in the presence of mine enemies:

thou anointest my head with oil;

my cup runneth over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

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Annotated text:

First Part of each Distich only:

1 The Lord is my shepherd;

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

3 He restoreth my soul:

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

for thou art with me;

5 Thou preparest a table before me

thou anointest my head with oil;

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

First Parts with the Second Parts added:

1 The Lord is my shepherd;

I shall not want.

Expresses 'compliment'

because of the Lord, I have no wants

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

he leadeth me beside the still waters.

Expresses 'sameness'

green pastures, still waters

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3 He restoreth my soul:

he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Expresses 'sameness'

restores soul, leads in right path

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil:

Expresses 'antithesis'

valley of shadow of death opposes no fear

for thou art with me;

thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Expresses 'complement'

Thy presence provides comfort

5 Thou preparest a table before me

in the presence of mine enemies:

Expresses 'antithesis'

banquet opposes presence of enemies

thou anointest my head with oil;

my cup runneth over.

Expresses 'sameness'

anointed head, overflowing cup

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6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Expresses 'sameness'

goodness and mercy, dwelling in the Lord's house

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Original text:

Psalm 100

- 1 Make a joyful noise unto the Lord,
 all ye lands.
- 2 Serve the Lord with gladness:
 come before his presence with singing.
- 3 Know ye that the Lord
 he is God:
it is he that hath made us,
 and not we ourselves;
we are his people,
 and the sheep of his pasture.
- 4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving,
 and into his courts with praise:
be thankful unto him,
 and bless his name.
- 5 For the Lord is good;
 his mercy is everlasting;
and his truth endureth
 to all generations.

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Annotated text:

First Part of each Distich only:

1 Make a joyful noise unto the Lord,

2 Serve the Lord with gladness:

3 Know ye that the Lord

it is he that hath made us,

we are his people,

4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving,

be thankful unto him,

5 For the Lord is good;

and his truth endureth

First Parts with the Second Parts added:

1 Make a joyful noise unto the Lord,

all ye lands.

Expresses 'complement'

all lands make joyful noise

2 Serve the Lord with gladness:

come before his presence with singing.

Expresses 'sameness'

serve with gladness, come with singing

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3 Know ye that the Lord
he is God:

Expresses 'complement'
The Lord is God

it is he that hath made us,
and not we ourselves;

Expresses 'antithesis'
God made us opposes us making us

we are his people,
and the sheep of his pasture.

Expresses 'sameness'
his people, his sheep

4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving,
and into his courts with praise:

Expresses 'sameness'
gates with thanksgiving, courts with praise

be thankful unto him,
and bless his name.

Expresses 'sameness'
thankful to him, blessing him

5 For the Lord is good;
his mercy is everlasting;

Expresses 'sameness'
goodness, everlasting mercy

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and his truth endureth
to all generations.

Expresses 'complement'
truth enduring to all generations

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Trouble & Trust psalm guidelines

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Characteristics:

1. Addressed directly to GOD.
(involves GOD personally)
2. Contain the pronouns I, My, and Me.
(I am personally involved)
3. Displays moods of Depression, Defeat, Repentance, or Feeling Neglected by GOD.
(reveals true feelings about GOD and Life)
4. Usually displays a mood of Faith, Trust, Victory, or Deliverance.
(shows evidence of GOD working)
5. Often contains prayers of Forgiveness, Deliverance, or Retaliation Against Enemies.
(reveals the desires of my heart)
6. Often brings Recent Workings of GOD (char. 4) to bear on Present Circumstances (char. 3).
(affirms GOD as GOD and reaffirms my trust in GOD)

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Recipe:

1. Address to GOD directly.
(approach HIM personally as HIS Child)
2. State your present true feelings about GOD and Life.
(tell GOD how it really is right now in your life)
3. Repeat Step 2 in different words for emphasis.
(show GOD how much it really matters to you)
4. State some specific way GOD has worked, or some specific thing GOD has done, personally in your life recently.
(bring to mind that GOD is STILL personally involved in your life)
5. Use what you've stated in Step 4 as a basis for a statement of Renewed Hope and Confidence in GOD getting you through what you've stated in Step 2 and Step 3.
(let GOD know that you STILL know trusting in HIM is worth it)

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Example:

Original text:

Psalm 3

1 Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!

Many are they that rise up against me.

2 Many there be which say of my soul,

There is no help for him in God.

3 But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me;

my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

4 I cried unto the Lord with my voice,

and he heard me out of his holy hill.

5 I laid me down and slept; I awaked;

for the Lord sustained me.

6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people,

that have set themselves against me round about.

7 Arise, O Lord;

save me, O my God:

for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone;

thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

8 Salvation belongeth unto the Lord:

thy blessing is upon thy people.

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Annotated text:

First Part of each Distich only:

1 Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!

2 Many there be which say of my soul,

3 But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me;

4 I cried unto the Lord with my voice,

5 I laid me down and slept; I awaked;

6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people,

7 Arise, O Lord;

for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone;

8 Salvation belongeth unto the Lord:

First Parts with the Second Parts added:

1 Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!

Many are they that rise up against me.

Expresses 'sameness'

trouble me, against me

Characteristics 1, 2, 3

Recipe 1, 2

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2 Many there be which say of my soul,
There is no help for him in God.
Expresses 'complement'
many say and what they say
Characteristics 2, 3
Recipe 3

3 But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me;
my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.
Expresses 'sameness'
shield, glory, and lifter of my head
Characteristics 1, 2, 4
Recipe 1,4

4 I cried unto the Lord with my voice,
and he heard me out of his holy hill.
Expresses 'complement'
I cried and He heard
Characteristics 2, 4
Recipe 4

5 I laid me down and slept; I awaked;
for the Lord sustained me.
Expresses 'complement'
laid down, slept, and awaked for Lord sustained
Characteristics 2, 4
Recipe 4

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6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people,
that have set themselves against me round about.

Expresses 'complement'

no fear of people against me

Characteristics 2, 6

verses 4 and 5 to bear against verses 1 and 2

Recipe 6

7 Arise, O Lord;

save me, O my God:

Expresses 'sameness'

arising, saving

Characteristics 1, 2, 5

Recipe 1

for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone;
thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

Expresses 'sameness'

smitten enemies, broke their teeth

Characteristics 1, 4

Recipe 4

8 Salvation belongeth unto the Lord:

thy blessing is upon thy people.

Expresses 'complement'

Lord's salvation to Lord's people

Characteristics 1, 4

Recipe 6

