

Strophe and Meter in Exodus 15

Continuing discovery and publication of Canaanite cuneiform tablets, current research into the language and forms of early Hebrew poetry, and recent contributions to the elucidation of the poem in Ex 15 have recommended further reflections on and reconsideration of certain aspects of this national victory song. We are primarily concerned with the strophic structure of the poem and the associated problem of metrical analysis. Other questions will be dealt with incidentally in the course of the discussion. Throughout, the presentation mentioned above will be assumed.¹

In dealing with questions of strophe and meter, two opposing principles or assumptions must be reckoned with: 1) that in all likelihood the poem has not been transmitted to us precisely in the form in which it was composed, and that changes, some deliberate, some accidental have occurred in the course of transmission; 2) that strophic and metrical or rhythmic structures must be derived or established from the text as we have it, since it would be methodologically untenable to emend the text in the interests of a certain metrical or strophic structure or to base such a structure on an emended text.

In practice, then, if the results are to be at all convincing or persuasive, it is necessary to have a well-preserved text, with a minimum of difficulties in readings and meanings. It should be sufficiently long so that clear-cut patterns or structures can be determined. Then, presumably, if such patterns emerge from the analysis of the preserved materials, minor deviations, anomalies, or inconsistencies could be regarded as the result of accidental change in the process of copying and possibly corrected. At the same time, there must be compelling reasons for regarding the deviations as errors,

and not as deliberate variations from the established scheme and therefore part of it. The following study is an attempt to analyze a representative piece of Hebrew poetry in a good state of preservation to determine whether strophic and/or metrical patterns exist, and to recover them so far as the evidence permits.

The existence of a strophic structure in this poem may be regarded as highly probable if not virtually certain. The single most important clue has been provided by Professor James Muilenburg in his recent study of Exodus 15.² He has correctly identified certain lines which serve a purpose similar to refrains and act as dividers or buffers between the strophes of the poem. They relate closely or loosely both with what precedes and what follows, but stand apart both in form and in content from the strophes themselves. They share certain formal characteristics which distinguish them from the rest of the poem, thus confirming the view that they are deliberately placed to serve as structural markers.

The lines to be considered are vss 6, 11, and the latter half of 16. All three follow a pattern of partial repetition familiar from Ugaritic poetry and a number of Biblical poems. This pattern is usually characterized as abc/abd, in which the first two elements of each colon are identical while the third is different. Variations occur, such as abcd/abef or abc/abd/efg, where the final colon repeats the thought of the preceding cola but uses different words. A well-known example of the last variety, based on a Ugaritic prototype, is to be found in Ps 92: 10:³

kī hinnē 'ōyebēkā yahwē	For behold your enemies, Yahweh
kī hinnē 'ōyebēkā yō'bēdū	For behold, your enemies will perish
yitpārēdū kol - pō'alē 'āwen	May all image makers be scattered

The Canaanite precursor goes as follows:

ht ibk b'lm	Behold your enemies, Baal
ht ibk tmḥṣ	Behold, you shall smash your enemies
ht tšmt šrtk	Behold, you shall destroy your foes

Other examples are scattered through the Psalter, especially Ps 29 (cf Ps 96: 1-2, 7-8); Ps 77: 17. The Song of Deborah, similar in many other respects to this victory ode, also contains numerous examples of this pattern: Judg 5: 3, 5, 6, 7, 12, 19, 21, 23, 24, 27, 30. The lines in Ex 15 follow:

6 ymynk yhwḥ	By your right hand, Yahweh ⁴
n'dry bkḥ	resplendent among the powerful
ymynk yhwḥ	By your right hand, Yahweh
tr'š 'wyb	you have shattered the enemy

11 my kmkh	Who is like you
b'lym yhwḥ	among the gods, Yahweh?
my kmkh	Who is like you
n'dr bqđš	resplendent among the holy ones
nwr' thlt	Awesome in praises
'šh pl'	worker of wonders?
16 ^a 'd y'br	While your people
'mk yhwḥ	pass over, Yahweh
'd y'br	While your people,
'm - zw qnyt	whom you purchased, pass over

It is to be noted that only these three lines have the repetitive pattern described. A possible exception is vs 3, with the repetition of *yhwḥ*, but the similarity is vague and limited, and the metrical structure is significantly different. Furthermore, in each of these refrains or dividers, the name Yahweh appears (twice in 6, once each in 11 and 16^a), whereas it appears nowhere in the material bounded by them (vss 7-10, 12-16^a). To complete the picture, it appears twice in vs 3 and twice in vss 17-18. It also occurs in vs 1 (and 21), which may have had a function similar to that of the dividers. The abbreviated form *Yah* occurs in vs 2, which, however, stands outside the strophic pattern, and requires special comment.

Returning to the repetitive lines (6, 11, 16^a), we observe that vss 6 and 16^a are in couplet form, while vs 11 is more elaborate, having a third element in the form of participial phrases in apposition with *n'dr* and modifying *yhwḥ*. Thus the three refrains or dividers form the skeletal structure on which the poem is built.

It is in the shape of a triangle or pyramid, with the two regular refrains forming the base, and the more elaborate central refrain at the apex.

If we examine the material between Refrains A (vs 6) and B (vs 11), we find that it falls naturally into two parts, dividing at vs 9. This division is strictly in accordance with the content, though there is a corresponding shift in mood and rhythmic movement as well. Vss 7-8 deal with the violent storm and its effects both on the enemy (vs 7) and the sea (vs 8). With vs 9 we have a sharp break, since the poet goes back to an earlier stage of the story, picking up the action with the enemy's decision to pursue, overtake, and conquer. The fate of the enemy described in vs 10, which echoes vss 4-5 (and 1), stands in stark contrast to the glorious and greedy expectations expressed in the preceding verse.

If we turn to the material between Refrains B (vs 11) and C (vs 16^a), we find that it also falls structurally into two parts, though the disjuncture between the sections is not as sharp as in the preceding strophe. We find

the break between vss 14 and 15; it is signaled by the particle 'az, which introduces the second part of the strophe. Vss 15-16 pick up and elaborate the theme of vs 14, the terror of the nations at the demonstration of Yahweh's power.

According to this analysis, each strophe consists of two stanzas or half-strophes: vss 7-8 and 9-10; vss 12-14 and 15-16¹. Closer inspection indicates that each of these stanzas consists of five units or bicola, organized in clusters of two or three units, forming couplets and triads. Thus Stanza B in the first strophe consists of a triad (vs 9) and a couplet (vs 10); Stanza B of the second strophe has the same structure—a triad (vs 15) and a couplet (vs 16¹). Stanza A of Strophe II has a similar structure, with a triad (vss 12-13) and a couplet (vs 14). Although vs 12 stands somewhat apart, so far as content is concerned, it is structurally very similar to 13a and b. Turning to Stanza A in the first strophe, we find a more difficult situation. It is clear that vs 7 constitutes a couplet, its component units being parallel in content and structure. The same is true of 8b and c, which is a couplet containing parallel units. How does the unit 8a fit into the overall pattern? So far as content is concerned, it clearly belongs with 8b and c (cf *n'rmw mym / nšbw . . . nzlym / qp'w thmt*; the opening phrase, *wbrwḥ 'pyk*, applies to all three clauses). But structurally it is more closely related to 7a (and b): cf *wbrb g'wnk / wbrwḥ 'pyk*. Note also that the metrical pattern of vs 7 is 4:4 (or 2:2 / 2:2) and 8a is the same, while the pattern in 8b and c is, in all likelihood, 3:3.

It is to be observed, however, that the syllable count in vs 7 is 12:12 (or 6:6/6:6), while in 8a, it is 10 (6:4); 8b and c have a count of 9:9. In view of the fact that the other three stanzas have the triad first, followed by the couplet, we may conclude that the intended pattern in the first stanza was the same, but that content does not always follow form (as is true in a different sense in vs 12 and also, to some extent, with respect to the stanza division between vss 14 and 15).

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, we may represent the strophic structure of the central section of the Song of the Sea schematically as follows:

Refrain	A	(6)	4:4	or	(2:2/2:2)
Strophe	I	(7-10)			
	A	7	4:4		(2:2/2:2)
		8	4		(2:2)
			3:3		
	B	9	4:4:4		(2:2/2:2/2:2)
		10	4:4		(2:2/2:2)

Refrain	B	(11)	4:4:4	or	(2:2/2:2/2:2)
Strophe	II	(12-16 ¹)			
	A	12	4		(2:2)
		13	4:4		(2:2/2:2)
		14	3:3		
	B	15	4:4:4		(2:2/2:2/2:2)
		16 ¹	4:4		(2:2/2:2)
Refrain	C	16 ²	3:3		

As already observed, the stanzas all have the same basic pattern, consisting of a triad followed by a couplet; the principal variation between Stanzas A and B (in both strophes) is that the concluding couplet in A is 3:3, while in B it is 4:4 (or 2:2/2:2). We note a similar pattern in the refrains: A and C are couplets, while B is a triad; A and B have the pattern 4:4(4) or 2:2/2:2(/2:2), while C is 3:3. It may be added, however, that the analysis depends upon construing *mikāmōkā* in vs 11 as 2, and 'ad - ya^abōr in vs 16 as 1. In other words, the difference between 2:2 or 4 and 3 may not be significant. While on the subject of stress or accent counting, a comment may be in order concerning the controversy over whether the prevailing meter is 4 or 2:2. In my judgment, both characterizations are valid, but for different purposes. With respect to the content of the lines in question, there is rarely if ever any parallelism between the two cola; thus 4:4 (and 3:3) is the appropriate designation to indicate the parallelism in content between lines: for example, 7a/7b, 8b/8c, 9b/9c, 13a/13b, 15a/15b/15c.

To designate such 4 stress lines as 2:2 on the basis of content would be unwarranted. However, there is often a caesura in the middle of such a line, and some indication of it in notation would be appropriate, for example, 7a (after *g'wnk*) and 7b (after *hrnk*), 9b (after *šll*) and 9c (after *hrby*). So long as the distinction is recognized, either or both sets of figures may be used: for example vs 15 can be designated 4:4:4 according to content, and 2:2/2:2/2:2 structurally; the last line (15c) poses a problem, since *kōl* is normally taken with *yšby kn'n* as part of a construct chain. While Masoretic punctuation encourages the division after *kōl*, we may remain hesitant. However, it may be better to take *kōl* adverbially and to compare *nāmōgū kōl* with 'az *nibh^alū* as parallel constructions (i.e., verb plus emphatic adverb). Because of uncertainties in any stress-counting system and an inescapable element of subjectivity in deciding doubtful cases, and in order to reflect certain detailed poetic phenomena more precisely, I have opted for a syllable-counting system. Since there are many more syllables than accents in a line, the element of subjectivity is reduced (i.e., a disagreement over a count of nine or ten syllables is less important than one over two or

three accents), and we have a more sensitive instrument for measuring the length of lines or cola.

There are additional complications since MT hardly reflects the actual pronunciation of words at the time of composition. The question of the length of syllables as well as the number of syllables can hardly be settled in the present state of our knowledge, and allowance must therefore be made for some variation in counting. Furthermore, the poet himself could take advantage of variations in current usage for metrical or rhythmic purposes, and syllables might be elided, or shortened, or lengthened in accordance with the exigencies of the verse. For example, we know that case and verbal endings which existed in older forms of the language were largely lost by the time of Moses and certainly by the time of composition of even very early Hebrew poetry. Nevertheless, case endings have been preserved in certain instances (cf vs 16, *yymth*), we believe for metrical reasons.⁵ We may speculate further that in some instances such case endings, originally incorporated into the poem, have, in the process of transmission, been dropped or lost since their function was not recognized. We can document such developments with regard to other archaic features (like enclitic *mem*)⁶ which were used deliberately by the poet for metrical and other stylistic reasons but which were edited out of the text by modernizers and revisers.

In attempting to determine the approximate time length of a line, it is necessary to consider not only the number of syllables but their length as well. Vowel quantity is a notoriously difficult question in the analysis of classical Hebrew, especially since the artificiality of the Masoretic vocalization is most apparent at this point. Nevertheless, a schematic representation on the basis of a hypothetical *Ursprache* would be equally bad or worse, since the language was already far along in the history of its development when biblical poetry was composed. Striking an appropriate balance is both the goal and the problem, since we do not have adequate controls for the period in question; and we must always recognize the liberty of the poet in using materials of different age and provenience to suit his purposes. The treatment of short vowels is a particularly thorny and difficult subject: some were lengthened, others reduced, still others elided, and a few remained as they were. MT illustrates all these changes, but when and under what conditions did they take place? Consider segolate nouns, which are regularly vocalized as having two syllables. Originally or at an earlier time, they were monosyllabic; but at a still earlier time, they had case endings; and in some words, it is difficult to see how they could have been pronounced as a single syllable. It may be that the process reflected in MT was a sort of compensation for the loss of the final syllables provided by case endings (note that the monosyllabic form is normally retained before pronominal

suffixes). The same problem faces us with regard to diphthongs. For the most part, these were contracted in the north of Israel, and the syllable count is not thereby affected. But in the south, they were retained, and at some later date many of these were resolved into two syllables (e.g., *mayim* <*maym*). When? We know too that there were both long and short forms of the pronominal suffixes (e.g., *kā* and *-k* for 2 m.s.).⁷ MT, for the most part, has standardized the long form, but is this true for the twelfth century B.C., or the tenth, or whenever the poem was written? My impression is that the poet was free to make choices among available forms, and did so according to the requirements of the poem, including metrical considerations. Individual problems will be considered as we work through the poem verse by verse.

With all these possible variations to consider, it may be said that the metrical pattern derived by syllable counting emerges with a regularity which matches that of the stress-counting system and, in some cases, improves upon it. On the whole, our poem is so well preserved that any metrical system will work and work well. In a third possible counting system, we attempt to take into account the difference between long and short vowels and between open and closed syllables. To apply this method, we simply count all the vocables in a colon, whether consonants or vowels, and then add one for each long vowel (taking a long vowel as having twice the value of a short vowel):

	Open Syllable	Closed Syllable
Short vowel	2	3
Long vowel	3	4

By using several systems simultaneously, we can check and confirm our results.

Proceeding from the main body of the poem, with its strophes, stanzas, refrains, or dividers (vss 6–16), we turn to the immediately adjacent materials both before and after. The concluding stanza, vss 17–18, is balanced by a corresponding introduction, vss 3–5. More particularly, vs 18 forms an *inclusio* with vs 3. It is Yahweh the warrior, whose martial exploits are celebrated in the poem, who is also the eternal king. We may therefore recognize the parallel structure of these opening and closing stanzas (which together form an inclusive strophe like those in the body of the poem), but in reverse order. Thus vss 3 and 18 complement or balance each other. Similarly, vs 4ab is balanced by 17bc—4:4 (or 2:2 / 2:2) in both cases. That leaves 5 to match 17a. Neither seems to scan with any regularity, but they are roughly similar in length and make adequate sense as they are.

Leaving the details to later discussion, we may conclude that each stanza has five units distributed as follows:

vs 3	4 (2:2)	17	2:2(?)
4	4:4(2:2/2:2)		4:4(2:2/2:2)
5	3:3(?)	18	4(2:2)

Comparison with the stanzas of the main strophes indicates that these opening and closing stanzas belong to the same or a similar pattern, but with greater variation. Thus the introduction (vss 3–5) conforms to the A stanzas of Strophes I and II with a triad (the first element, vs 3, standing somewhat apart, as vs 12 in II A), 4:4:4 (or 2:2 / 2:2 / 2:2), followed by a couplet 3:3 (vs 5 could be taken as 2:3; the syllable count is 8:10, which may be a legitimate variant of the pattern reflected in vs 8bc, 9:9, or 14, 8:8). With regard to the final stanza, if we compare vss 17–18 with IB (9–10) and IIB (15–16), then we might identify vs 17 abc with the opening triad, and vs 18 as a truncated form of the closing couplet. But, in view of the connection between vs 18 and vs 3, we should perhaps look for a closing triad (to match the opening triad of vss 3–4), which we find in 17bc and 18 (the reign of Yahweh affirmed in 18 is predicated on the building of the divine throne and temple in 17). That leaves 17a, which ought to have come out as 3:3 to match vs 5 (or, on the analogy of I and IIB, 4:4). As the text stands, 17a looks like an anomalous and unbalanced 2:2, but it can hardly be anything else.⁸ The syllable count is roughly 9:6, which balances rather cleverly with vs 5: 8/10 (but which could also be counted as 7/9). Thus we would have completely complementary stanzas forming an envelope for the body of the poem.

It remains to consider vss 1 and 2. Vs 2 may properly be regarded as an Exordium or personal introduction by the precentor, in this case, the “Moses” figure. It is only in vs 2 (cf discussion of *šyrh* in vs 1; the suffix with *ḏny* in vs 17 is purely formal) that the poet speaks in the first person; clearly this section stands by itself from a formal or structural viewpoint as well. It may have constituted the liturgical prologue to the singing of the Song of the Sea in the sanctuary or temple.

Finally, there is the opening line, which is repeated with slight variation as the Song of Miriam in vs 21. The form in vs 1 with *šyrh* belongs to the same pattern as the Song of Deborah (Judg 5: 3), where the subject also is “I.” The form in vs 21 with *širū* is a choral antiphon sung by Miriam and the women in response to the larger poem. Since the longer poem is already supplied with dividers, it would be difficult to position this refrain except at the beginning and end of the poem. It may well be that in liturgical performances the precentor began with vss 1–2 as the Exordium. Thus the

opening and closing verses (1 and 21) form an *inclusio*, as indicated by the arrangement in MT, and with additional information as to how this device functioned in a liturgical setting: with precentor and chorus.

The form of this refrain is unlike those in the body of the poem, though the general metrical pattern is characteristic: 4:4 or 2:2 / 2:2. Concerning the unity and overall symmetry of the poem, there should now be considerably less doubt than there has been. We suggest a date for the original poem in the twelfth century B.C., and attribute its final liturgical form to the worship in Jerusalem under David and Solomon.

Text and Translation

1	6	'ašrā la yahwē	I will sing of Yahweh	2
	5	kī ga'ō ga'ā	that he is highly exalted	2
	5	sūs warōkibō	Horse and its charioteer	2
	4	ramā bayām	he hurled into the sea	2
Exordium (Proem)				
2	7	'ozzī wazimrat(ī) yāh	My mighty fortress is Yah	3
	7	wayāhī lī līšū'ā	He has become my Savior	3
	7	zē 'ēli wa'anwēhū	This is my God whom I admire	3
11		'elōhē 'abī wa'arōmimen- hū	My father's God whom I extol	3
Opening				
3	6	yahwē 'iš milhamā	Yahweh—that man of war	2
	4	yahwē šimō	Whose name is Yahweh	2
4	8	markabōt par'ō wahēlō	Pharaoh's chariot army	3
	4	yarā bayām	He cast into the sea	2
	6	wamibḥar šalīšew	And his elite officers	2
	6	ṭubba'ū bayam sūp	Were drowned in the Reed Sea	2
5	8	tihōmōt yakassiyūmū	The Abyss covered them	2/3
10		yaradū bəməšōlōt kəmə- 'ābn	they went down into the depths like a stone	3
Refrain (A)				
6	5	yamīnka yahwē ne'dōrī bəkōh	By your right hand, Yahweh resplendent among the mighty	2
	5	yamīnka yahwē	By your right hand, Yahweh	2
	4	tir'aš 'ōyēb	you shattered the enemy	2
Strophe I				
A				
7	6	wabərōb ga'ōnka	Through your great majesty	2
	6	tāhar(r)ēs qāmēka	you destroyed your foes	2
	6	tašallah ḥarōnka	You sent forth your anger	2
	6	yō'kilēmō kəqaš	it devoured them like stubble	2

8	6	wabərūh 'appēka	By the blast of your nostrils	2
	4	ne'ramū mēm	the waters were heaped up	2
	9	niššabū kəmə-nēd nōzilim	The waves mounted as a bank	3
	9	qapa'ū tihōmōt bəlib-yām	The depths churned in the heart of the sea	3
B				
9	4	'amar 'ōyēb	The enemy boasted	2
	4	'erdop 'aššīg	"I'll pursue, I'll overtake	2
	5	'aḥallēq šalāl	"I'll seize the booty	2
	6	timla'ēmō napšī	my gullet will be filled with them	2
	4	'ariq ḥarbī	"I'll bare my sword	2
	6	tōrišēmō yadī	my hand will dispossess them"	2
10	6	nasāpta bərūḥka	You blew with your breath	2
	4	kissamō yām	the sea covered them	2
	6	šalalū kə'opərt	They sank like lead	2
	5	bəmēm 'addīrim	in the dreadful waters	2
Refrain (B)				
11	4	mī-kamōka	Who is like you	2
	5	bə'ēlim yahwē	among the gods, Yahweh?	2
	4	mī-kamōka	Who is like you	2
	4	ne'dār bəqōdš	resplendent among the holy ones	2
	5	nōrā' təhillōt	Fearsome in praises	2
	3	'ōsē pil'	worker of wonders?	2
Strophe II				
A				
12	6	naḥita yamīnka	You stretched out your hand	2
	5	tibla'ēmō 'arš	the netherworld swallowed them	2
13	7	naḥita bəḥasdika	You led in your kindness	2
	5	'am-zū ga'ālta	the people whom you re-deemed	2
	7	nēhalta bə'ozzika	You guided them with your might	2
	6	'el nawē qodšeka	to your holy habitation	2
14	8	šama'ū 'ammīm yirgazūn	The peoples trembled when they heard	3
	8	ḥil 'aḥaz yōšibē palāšt	Anguish seized the inhabitants of Philistia	3
B				
15	4	'āz nibhalū	Indeed, the generals	2
	5	'allūpē 'əḏōm	of Edom were unnerved	2
	4	'ēlē mō'āb	Shuddering gripped	2
	5	yō'ḥəzēmō rā'd	the chiefs of Moab	2
	4	namōgū kōl	The kings of Canaan	2

	5	yōšibē kənā'n	collapsed completely	2
16	5	tappil 'alēhem	You brought down on them	
	6	'ēmāta wapaḥda	dreadful terror	
	6	bəgadōl zərō'ka	Through your great arm	2
	5	yiddammū ka'ābn	they were struck dumb like a stone	2
Refrain (C)				
	8	'ad-ya'bōr	While your people	2
		'amməka yahwē	passed over, Yahweh	2
	8	'ad-ya'bōr	While your people,	2
		'am-zū qanīta	whom you purchased, passed over	2
Ending				
17	4	tabī'ēmō	You brought them in	(3 or 4)
	(6)	['el gəbūl qōdšəka]	(to your sacred territory)	
	5	watiṭṭa'ēmō	You planted them	3 or 4
	6	bəhar naḥlātəka	in your hereditary mountain	
	6	makōn ləšibtəka	The dais of your throne	2
	5	pa'alta yahwē	Yahweh, you made	2
	5	miqdāš 'adōnay	Your sanctuary, Lord	2
	6	kōninū yadēka	your hands created	2
18	4	yahwē yimlōk	Yahweh has reigned	2
	5	lə'ōlām wa'ed	from everlasting to eternity	2
.....				
21		širū la yahwē	Sing of Yahweh	2
		kī ga'ō ga'ā	that he is highly exalted	2
		sūs warōkibō	Horse and its charioteer	2
		ramā bəyām	he hurled into the sea	2

GENERAL COMMENTS

The received Hebrew text has been followed throughout the proposed reconstruction; the few very slight changes in readings adopted are almost all matters of vocalization, and are defended in the notes to the text. With regard to the vocalization, we have attempted, with more courage than prudence perhaps, to reproduce cultivated Hebrew speech of the twelfth to the tenth centuries B.C. The basis for this representation is inevitably MT, which remains our best source for Hebrew pronunciation in spite of its late date and artificial character. Next in order of importance are the Ugaritic tablets, which offer a partial vocalization of a closely related Canaanite dialect; their great value lies in their antiquity, since this material antedates the classical period of Hebrew poetry (fourteenth to the thirteenth centuries B.C.), and therefore offers an important corrective to MT. Then

there are transcriptions of Canaanite words in a variety of languages, beginning with Egyptian texts of the second millennium, including the Amarna letters and other Akkadian transliterations, and extending to the LXX, the famous second column of the Hexapla, and other late sources.

In our transliterations we have endeavored to represent both long and short vowels. With regard to so-called tone-long vowels, we assume that in most cases short vowels under the accent were lengthened but that unaccented syllables were not (i.e., so-called pretonic lengthening). With regard to short vowels, we employ the symbol "ə" to indicate any short vowel concerning the quality of which we are uncertain (it may be *a*, *i*, *u*, or a variation of these: *o*, *e*). It often reflects MT vocal *shewa*, but we wish to leave open the question of which vowels were slurred over or elided in actual speech. We have accepted the Masoretic vocalization of 2 m.s. forms of the perfect form of the verb and the suffixes attached to nouns and verbs (with final *a*, except that we regard the vowel as short, not long), even though the consonantal text reflects a tradition in which these final vowels were not pronounced. We believe that the longer forms were preserved in cultivated literature, especially poetry of the classical period.

The vocalization of so-called segolate nouns poses a problem, since forms like *'ereš* and *melek* are secondary, the earlier pronunciation being *'arš-* and *malk-*. Originally the nouns had case endings which facilitated pronunciation in some instances, so it may be that with the loss of case endings, the process which resulted in segolate forms was initiated. If this assumption is correct, then there would be no perceptible effect on the meter: for example, *'aršu* → *'ereš* (two syllables each). Nevertheless, the available evidence shows that the monosyllabic forms persisted for a long time and were recognized as such. The same considerations apply to the matter of diphthongs. In Ugaritic, Phoenician, and North Israelite, the diphthongs *ay* and *aw* were regularly contracted to *é* and *ô*. In Southern Israelite (Judahite) as in Aramaic and classical Arabic, the diphthongs were preserved; in MT, they are often resolved into two syllables—for example *mayim* ← *maym* (→ *mēm* in the northern dialect). If we accept the vocalization of the northern dialect as normative, it is on the view that the earliest literature of Israel was composed and transmitted in northern circles, and that under the influence of Canaanite-Phoenician royal culture the court of David or Solomon adopted this mode of expression. There is no significant metrical difference between the northern and southern forms; even if we were to follow MT as is, instead of a reconstructed vocalization, we would secure essentially the same results. We wish to emphasize the flexibility of the language, the variety of forms (long and short) available to the poet, and his prerogative as a poet to vary his choices depending upon the requirements

of a given line. We may add a note about the use of the definite article; the article as such does not occur in the poem, which is strictly in accord with the pattern of Ugaritic poetry (and presumably Canaanite poetry in general). It is presupposed here and there in the vocalization of MT (e.g., *bayyām*, vs 1, 4; *bakkōah*, vs 6; *kaqqaš*, vs 7; *baqqōdeš*, vs 11), but the doubling of the initial consonant of the word is doubtless artificial, and can safely be disregarded. It is to be noted that neither *'ēl* nor *'āšer*, which are elements of Hebrew prose usage, occurs in the poem—another indication that the text has been remarkably well preserved from contamination by prosaic additions or substitutions.

NOTES ON THE VERSES

Verse 1

'āširā: Lit. "Let me sing." This form is to be compared with *širū*, "Sing!" in the parallel passage vs 21. Note the use of the same word *'āširā* in the Song of Deborah (Judg 5: 3) in a more elaborate construction. The verse in Judges supports the view that the preposition *l* before Yahweh is to be rendered "of, about" rather than "to." In Judg 5: 3, the poet is singing to the "kings/potentates" about Yahweh, the God of Israel. Cf also the opening line of the Aeneid: *arma virumque cano*.

sūs warōkibō. MT should be translated: "horse and its charioteer" rather than "horse and its rider." As Ex 15: 19 and 14: 9 (cf 14: 6, 7) make clear, the reference is to chariotry not cavalry. Vs 4 confirms that the poet had in mind the officers as well as the horse-drawn chariots.

The line is usually scanned as a couplet or double bicolon, and schematized as 4:4 or 2:2 / 2:2. Structurally, the main division occurs after *ga'ō ga'ā*, while there are secondary pauses after *yahwē* and *rkbw*, so that either or both analyses can be justified. But it is important to note that there is no parallelism of content either within half-lines or between them. The thought proceeds in consecutive fashion; the verse can be taken as a summary of the content of the poem which follows, especially the first part. The syllable count is as follows: 6:5 / 5:4. The parallel verse, 21, has 5:5 / 5:4. In accordance with the syllable-value system proposed above, we obtain these results: For vs 1, the first bicolon would have the following count: 13 + 3 = 16 (or: 2 + 3 + 3 / 2 + 3 + 3 = 16) for the first colon (the parallel line, vs 21, would have a value of 11 + 3 = 14, or 3 + 3 / 2 + 3 + 3 = 14). The second colon would be: 10 + 3 = 13 (or 3 / 2 + 3 / 2 + 3 = 13). The second bicolon would have the following count: 11 + 3 = 14 (or 4 / 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 = 14) for the first colon; 9 + 2 = 11 (or

2 + 3 / 2 + 4 = 11) for the second colon. The totals for vs 1 would be 16 + 13 = 29 and 14 + 11 = 25; for vs 21, 14 + 13 = 27 and 14 + 11 = 25. The general pattern is standard throughout the poem.

Verse 2

'*ozzi wazimrāl yāh*, Lit. "My strength and fortress is Yah." The following points may be noted. The first person suffix is to be understood with *zmrt*; the text can be explained in one or more of several ways: the suffix of 'zy is to be taken with *zmrt* as well (double-duty suffix); the *yod* at the beginning of "Yah" is to be understood as also representing the suffix at the end of *zmrt*. This was an epigraphic device which obviated the necessity of writing the same letter twice in succession. In early orthography, the *yod* of the first person suffix would not have been written. That the suffix was at least understood if not actually pronounced is demonstrated by the reading of the Samaritan Pentateuch (*zmrtly*), along with some MSS of MT. The second proposal seems most attractive to us, and we have adopted it. Further, we take the two words as an example of hendiadys: "Yah is my mighty fortress."⁹ Concerning the form *yāh*, it does not occur in other early poems and its usage here may be questioned; or else the whole verse may be regarded as late.

wayāhī lī lyšw'h, Lit. "He belongs to me for salvation." The use of f.s. abstract nouns to represent concrete objects or persons is well attested in the Psalter; and in particular, *yšw'h* is used often of Yahweh with the meaning, "Savior."¹⁰

w'nwhw . . . w'rmmnhw. The *waw* before the verb in each case is emphatic, not conjunctive.

With regard to the meter, the situation is not so clear. Normally vs 2a would be scanned as 3:3, but it is also possible to read it as 3:2, 2:3, or 2:2, depending on how the combination *zmrt yh* is construed in the first colon and *wyhy-ly* in the second. Syllable counting is similarly subject to differing interpretations, but the total is larger and the net variation therefore less important. Thus MT has 6 syllables for the first colon, while our preferred reconstruction comes to 7. The second colon, following MT, has 7 syllables (if we take the *shewa* in *wyhy* as vocal; if we regard the *shewa* as silent, then the total is 6). On the other hand, MT has elided a syllable in *līšū'ā < ləyāšū'ā*; the longer form may still have been in vogue when the poem was composed, or the poet may have preferred it here. In that case, the total could be 8. Averaging the differences, and assuming that the two cola were meant to balance, we emerge with a proposed 7:7 syllable count, acknowledging that it is approximate but insisting that it is not likely to be more than one syllable off:—that is, 6–7 / 6–8 represents the maximum range.

By following the vocable system already described, the first colon in MT would have a count of 16 vocables plus 3 long vowels = 19 (or by syllables, 3 + 3 / 2 + 3 + 4 / 4 = 19). However, according to our reconstruction, the total would be 17 + 3 = 20 (or 3 + 3 / 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 / 4 = 20). The second colon in MT would have a count of 14 + 5 = 19 (2 + 2 + 3 / 3 / 3 + 3 + 3 = 19). If we restore the elided syllable in *lyšw'h*, the count would be 16 + 4 = 20 (or 2 + 2 + 3 / 3 / 2 + 2 + 3 + 3 = 20). If we regard the *shewa* in *wyhy* as silent, the total would be 18. The pattern can be described as follows 2a—19–20 / 18–20. The variation in each case is about the same, but its net importance has diminished. However we describe the mathematical ratios, we can say that the two cola balance—that is, they were meant to be said or sung in the same time.

Turning to vs 2b, we find a more complex situation. The meter would probably be regarded as 3:3, though the first colon could with much justice be counted as 2 by taking *zh 'ly* as one stress, while the second is so much longer that 4 would seem more appropriate (taking *'rmmnhw* as 2). Syllable counting serves to clarify the situation by pinpointing the discrepancy between the two cola; the first has 7 syllables, the second 11. Nevertheless, the cola balance; only in each case, the second term is considerably longer than the one it matches: *'lhy 'by // 'ly* and *w'rmmnhw // w'nwhw*. Even the addition of *zh* to the first colon (it also serves the second: This is my God . . . / This is my father's God . . .) does not completely redress the imbalance. It would have been a simple matter to switch the verbs of the two cola and produce an exact syllabic balance (9:9); but presumably the poet preferred to overbalance the bicolon as in the preserved text, thus producing a sequence with 2a as follows: 7:7 / 7:11. Since this stanza is outside the body of the poem, and no other material conforms to it in content, it is impossible to say whether this is a deliberate pattern or not, or whether some corruption has occurred. Since the text makes good sense, and poetic parallelism is maintained, we should assume that the pattern is deliberate, and that the poet (presumably for melodic or rhythmic reasons) chose a 7:11 pattern against the normal or expected 9:9. That an unbalanced bicolon is a legitimate variation of the normal balanced variety can be established without difficulty from the corpus of early Israelite poetry. For example, in the Lament of David over Saul and Jonathan, 2 Sam 1: 20, we read:

20a	'l tgydw bgt (w)'l tbsrw bhwst 'sqlwn	Do not announce it in Gath Do not proclaim in the streets of Ashkelon
20b	pn-tšmnhn bnwt plšty pn-t'lnh bnwt ()'rlym	Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice Lest the daughters of the uncircum- cised exult

The balance between the cola of 20b is clear and regular. It would normally be taken as 3:3; by syllable counting, we have 9:10 for MT, and if we drop the definite article before *'rlym* as a prosaic addition, we would have an exact equivalence at 9:9. In 20a, we have good parallelism in content but a serious imbalance in meter. It could be construed as 2:3 or 3:4, but hardly as 3:3, which would be expected on the basis of 20b. Syllable counting only serves to emphasize the imbalance. Following MT, we have 6:11 (or if we read the *waw* before *'l-lbšrw*, following the versions and some Hebrew MSS, the second colon would be 12). The ratio is approximately 1:2, though the poet could easily have achieved a more balanced bicolon by switching words or supplying a parallel term for *hwst* in the first colon.¹¹ Presumably he preferred to overbalance the line. The point we wish to make is that the total of the two cola of 20a, 6 + 11 (12) = 17 (18), is roughly the same as 20b, 9 + 9 (10) = 18 (19). Therefore we can say that an unbalanced bicolon, 6:11 (12), can legitimately be paired with a balanced one, 9:9 (10), or, more simply, that the unbalanced or overbalanced bicolon is a legitimate tool in the Israelite poet's arsenal.

Returning to Ex 15: 2b, if we use the vocable system of counting, we come out with 15 + 5 = 20 (or syllabically: 3 / 3 + 3 / 2 + 3 + 3 + 3 = 20) for the first colon, and 23 + 5 = 28 (or 2 + 3 + 3 / 2 + 3 / 2 + 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 + 3 = 28) for the second.

OPENING

Verse 3

This verse establishes the theme of the poem: Yahweh the invincible warrior. Throughout the poem, emphasis is placed on Yahweh's warlike prowess, his overwhelming power in nature and battle, and his enduring total sovereignty. With vs 18, it forms an *inclusio*, or envelope, within which the action of the poem develops. It may be noted that the form and order of the words are very similar to the Shema in Deut 6: 4, which is also deceptively simple and resists adequate analysis and interpretation:

Deut 6: 4	yhwh 'hynw / yhwh 'hd	6:4
Ex 15: 3	yhwh 'yš mlh̄mh / yhwh šmw	6:4

They share the same metrical structure, which is 2:2 (or 3:2), or 6:4 by syllable count. The vocable count is 18:11, apparently an unbalanced bicolon, but it is difficult to establish the pattern, since the expected parallelism is lacking. The balancing bicolon in vs 18 is also 2:2 (syllable count 4:5, vocable count 13:14) but without parallelism; it is a single continuous sentence.

Verse 4

There is widespread agreement among scholars that this verse is metrically unbalanced; and on the basis of metrical considerations, it is generally suggested that *whylw* be dropped from the first colon of 4a, since as it stands, the metrical pattern appears to be 3:2 / 2:2, which is not consistent with the prevailing 2:2 meter of the poem. The following considerations may be urged against such a conclusion, apart from the total lack of textual evidence for such an emendation: Assuming that the analysis is correct, would a variation in the prevailing pattern be automatic proof of later editorial tampering? Has the poet no freedom to vary his style deliberately? But in fact, the analysis is less than convincing. Thus it is to be noted that what parallelism in content there is in the verse is between the bicola 4a and 4b and not within them. Within the bicola, we have at most a caesura, the placement of which may vary somewhat from line to line. When the larger groupings are compared, there would still appear to be a discrepancy according to a stress system of analysis: 5/4. But in actuality, there is a very good formal balance as well as in content between the half-verses. Thus each has 5 content words and, perhaps more to the point, each consists of 12 syllables. The count by cola is as follows: 4a: 8/4; 4b: 6/6. In other words, the 8/4 division in the first bicolon is a perfectly legitimate variant of the "normal" 6/6 arrangement in the second bicolon. The conclusion therefore would be that *whylw*, far from being otiose, is necessary to the metrical balance. There would be a major imbalance if it were omitted. It should be added that the phrase at the beginning of 4 should be taken as hendiadys: Pharaoh's military chariots, or chariot force, rather than as a reference to both chariots and the rest of the army. The prose description in 14:7, 17, 28 sufficiently explains the situation. The vocable count is 19 + 4 = 23 (or: 3 + 2 + 4 / 3 + 3 / 2 + 3 + 3 = 23) for the first colon of 4a, and 9 + 2 = 11 (or: 2 + 3 / 2 + 4 = 11) for the second colon. For 4b, the count is as follows: 15 + 2 = 17 (or: 2 + 3 + 3 / 2 + 3 + 4 = 17) for the first colon, and 15 + 2 = 17 (or: 3 + 2 + 3 / 2 + 3 / 4 = 17) for the second colon. The total for 4a is 34, and for 4b is also 34. It may be said with some confidence that the verse as it has been transmitted divides into two half-verses of exactly equal length.

Verse 5

This verse also appears to be unbalanced, the metrical pattern being apparently 2:3, though 5a could be construed as 3 and 5b as 4. In any case, the second half-line is perceptibly longer than the first. Following MT, we have a syllable count of 3 + 4 or 5 (depending upon whether the *shewa* with *samek* is regarded as vocal or not) for 5a; 5b has 10 syllables in MT; a syl-

lable has been elided in *bmšwll*, and so one syllable could be added to the total; on the other hand, the final word, *'āben*, was originally monosyllabic, so that one could be subtracted. The range could have been between 9 and 11; thus 10 is a satisfactory average. Our provisional conclusion is that we have an unbalanced bicolon of 18 syllables divided 8/10. It is to be compared with the bicolon 8bc, which also has 18 syllables, divided 9/9, or with vs 16cd, which in MT is a bicolon of 18 syllables, divided 9/9. It could also be compared with 2b, which totals 18 syllables, divided 7/11. The vocable count follows: 5a: $18 + 4 = 22$ ($2 + 3 + 4 / 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 + 3 = 22$); 5b: $23 + 5 = 28$ ($2 + 2 + 3 / 2 + 2 + 3 + 4 / 2 + 3 / 5 = 28$).

REFRAIN (A)

Verse 6

The metrical pattern is 2:2 / 2:2. From the syllabic point of view, there is some question about the proper count for *ymynk*, which may be considered 3 or 4 depending on whether the vowel after *nun* was elided or not. It is barely possible that the extra syllable was counted in one bicolon and not in the other, for metrical reasons. The preservation of the archaic infinitive form *ne'dōrī* may also have a metrical basis among other reasons. The syllable count would then be: 6a: 5:5, 5:4. The vocable count is: 6a: $12 + 2 = 14$ ($2 + 4 + 2 / 3 + 3 = 14$) for the first colon, and $12 + 3 = 15$ ($3 + 3 + 3 / 2 + 4 = 15$) for the second; 6b: $12 + 2 = 14$ for the first colon, and $11 + 2 = 13$ ($3 + 3 / 3 + 4 = 13$) for the second. The apparent discrepancy between 6a² and 6b² could be corrected, if desired, by reading the plural *'ōyēbīm* with LXX against MT *'ōyēb*. This would produce 5 syllables and 15 vocables in exact parallel with 6a; the inclusion of the archaic *ī* ending on *n'dr* seems to suggest that the poet required a fifth syllable in that colon. Other emendations in 6b² are possible, such as adding the modal ending to the verb or the case ending to the noun. It must also be recognized that there may have been a slight shift in the rhythm corresponding to the shift in content from the first colon of each half-line to the second.

STROPHE I

Verse 7

The structure of vs 7 is fairly intricate, and deserves extended comment. The initial impression is that the second bicolon (7b) interprets and elaborates on the central element in the first—namely, the destruction of the foes. Further to be noted is the close parallel between 7a¹ and b¹ in which the terms *g'wnk* and *ħrnk* not only complement each other but rhyme; the means

of destruction is the majestic anger of Yahweh. We must in fact combine these cola to get at the intention of the poet. The term *rb* applies as well to *ħrn* as to *g'wn*; so also *lšlh* must extend to *g'wn*, since it governs *ħrn*. These are symbolically the weapons or armed messengers whom Yahweh sends out to perform the act of punishment. The presentation here reflects two important themes of Canaanite myth: the messenger gods who perform the will of the sovereign deity, and the personified weapons of the god in his battle against the foe. The term *g'wn* may be the symbol of sovereignty of the king of the gods, the royal mace which is used to smash (cf Ps 58: 7, "Knock their teeth out of their mouths"); while *ħrn* represents the sword which devours the foe as flames consume stubble. The association of anger with fire, and of both with the sword, is so standardized that the poet needs only to hint at the combination in his allusive statement to evoke all three images. It may be added that the verse is highly figurative in the context, since so far as we are aware there was no battle, no fire, no sword—only watery death. But these phrases point to the unique majesty of the king of the gods and his special prerogatives.

The meter of vs 7 is 2:2 / 2:2. The syllable count is as follows: 7a: 6 or 7 (depending on whether the original vowel after *n* in *g'wnk* was still pronounced or elided at the time of the poet; presumably he could have chosen either pronunciation. The initial *waw* is probably emphatic rather than conjunctive. / 6 (I suggest that we read **taharris* → *t'ḥārēs* [Piel instead of Qal; cf Ex 23: 24], to match the emphatic *t'šallah* of the next bicolon. So far as MT is concerned, it does not affect the syllable count, which remains 3, though we may question whether the *ḥatef-pataḥ* was pronounced in forms such as *tah^arōs* in classical Hebrew.) 7b: 6 or 7 (*ħrnk* presumably had the same vocalization as *g'wnk*, and could be taken as 3 or 4 syllables) / 6. We may conclude that the syllable count for this couplet was normalized at 12:12, as in vs 4. The vocable count is as follows: 7a: $14 + 2 = 16$ (or: $2 + 2 + 4 / 2 + 4 + 2 = 16$) for the first colon; $14 + 2 = 16$ ($2 + 3 + 3 / 3 + 3 + 2 = 16$) for the second colon. 7b: $15 + 1 = 16$ ($2 + 3 + 3 / 2 + 4 + 2 = 16$) for the first colon; $13 + 3 = 16$ ($3 + 2 + 3 + 3 / 2 + 3 = 16$) for the second colon.

Verse 8

As already mentioned, 8a seems to belong structurally with vs 7: 8a is to be scanned as 2:2 or 4, like 7ab, while 8b and c are 3:3. At the same time, its content clearly connects with 8bc. The first colon of 8a, *wbrwḥ 'pyk*, while structurally similar to the first colon of 7, actually governs the whole of 8, thus serving a triple function. Clearly too, *n'rmw mym* is parallel to *nšbw . . . nzlym* and *qp'w thmt*. Furthermore, 8a has 10 or, at the

most, 11 syllables (depending on the count for *mym*), while 7 is consistently 12 in both parts, and 8b and c are 9. Thus we may say that 8a serves as a transition from 7 to 8bc sharing features with both preceding and succeeding couplets.

As indicated, the meter of 8a is 2:2; syllabically, the count is 6 (we do not count the *pataḥ* furtive in *rūāḥ*; it was either not pronounced or not considered significant) / 4 or 5 (we vocalize the verb *ne'ramū*, but this does not affect the count; with respect to *mym*, it is much more likely that the diphthong was preserved (*maym*) or contracted (*mēm*) rather than resolved, as in MT (*mayim*). The pattern is to be compared with vs 3. The vocable count is as follows: 8a¹: 14 + 2 = 16 (2 + 2 + 4 / 3 + 3 + 2 = 16); 8a²: 10 + 2 = 12 (3 + 2 + 3 / 4 = 12); note that MT here has 12 + 1 = 13 (3 + 2 + 3 / 2 + 3 = 13). It will be observed that 8a¹ conforms exactly to the pattern of the cola in 7 in all three systems, but that 8a² does not. We may note a limited example of chiasm in 8bc. In 8b, we have after the verb a prepositional phrase followed by the subject; in 8c, the order of prepositional phrase and subject is reversed. Since this device became very popular in Hebrew poetry, it is interesting to observe its relatively modest role in this early poem.

The meter of 8bc is apparently 3:3, in contrast with the more common 2:2 / 2:2. The syllable count is 9:9; and the vocable count is 21 + 5 = 26 (or: 3 + 2 + 3 / 2 + 3 + 4 / 3 + 2 + 4 = 26) for 8b; and 21 + 4 = 25 (or: 2 + 2 + 3 / 2 + 3 + 4 / 2 + 3 + 4 = 25) for 8c.

STROPHE I B

Verse 9

Various poetic devices are employed in this verse. Notice should be taken of the alliterative pattern at the beginning of the verse (the first five words begin with *aleph*, perhaps as an onomatopoeic way of evoking the clatter of horses and chariots). Connected with this is the repetition of first person forms throughout the triad: four imperfect 1 s. forms of the verb, and three 1 s. pronominal suffixes attached to nouns, making 7 in all (cf Ps 74: 13 ff, in which the pronoun 't is repeated 7 times to symbolize the divine assault on the seven heads of the sea dragon).¹² In the balancing triad vss 12-13, 2 m.s. forms are used for God, by contrast with the enemy. There are four perfect forms of the verb, and four pronominal suffixes of the 2 m.s. attached to nouns, making 8 in all. Perhaps the sequence 7:8 familiar in Ugaritic and Hebrew poetry is deliberate in this case. The metrical scheme in vs 9 is 2:2 / 2:2 / 2:2. The syllable count produces 4/4 = 8; 5/6 = 11; and 4/6 = 10. With this should be compared the similar triad, vs 15: 9/ 9/ 9. The

vocable count produces the following results: 9a: 10 + 2 = 12 (or: 2 + 3 / 3 + 4 = 12) for the first colon; 12 + 2 = 14 (3 + 4 / 3 + 4 = 14) for the second colon; 9b: 13 + 2 = 15 (2 + 3 + 4 / 2 + 4 = 15) for the first colon; 14 + 3 = 17 (3 + 2 + 3 + 3 / 3 + 3 = 17) for the second colon; 9c: 10 + 2 = 12 (2 + 4 / 3 + 3 = 12) for the first colon, and 12 + 5 = 17 (3 + 3 + 3 + 3 / 2 + 3 = 17) for the second colon.

In defense of MT, *tml'mw* and *twryšmw* with 3 m.pl. suffix, against LXX which apparently does not read them, it may be pointed out that the poet had a special interest in using the archaic form of the suffix. Including the cases under discussion, it occurs exactly seven times with imperfect forms of the verb, and in patterns which can hardly be the result of accident:

7 yō'k'elēmō	15 yō'ḥ'azēmō
9 timlā'ēmō	17 t'ḥī'ēmō
9 tōrīšēmō	17 tiṭṭā'ēmō
12 tiblā'ēmō	

The single occurrences in vss 7, 12, and 15 all refer to actions against the Egyptians (7, 12) and the other nations (15). The forms in 7 and 15 match (Qal imperfect 3 m.s.) even with respect to vocalization (*pe aleph* verbs with initial *ō*). The subject in each case is an abstract noun; whereas the object varies from the Egyptians in the first case to the Moabites in the second: Yahweh's anger devours the former, while trembling seizes the latter.

The paired verbs in vss 9 and 17 have the Israelites as the object. In the former, it is the enemy who threatens them with conquest and annihilation: "my gullet will be filled with them, my hand will conquer them." In the latter, it is Yahweh who brings them into the land and plants them there. The first pair have 3 f.s. verbal prefixes, whereas the latter have 2 m.s. prefixes (the poet has taken advantage of the fact that these are homonymous forms—both represented by *t*). In each pair there is a Qal form and a Hiphil form, balanced chiasmically.

9 (Q) tml'mw	tb'mw (H) 17
9 (H) twryšmw	tṭ'mw (Q) 17

Verse 10

In content, vs 10 is very similar to vs 5; in form and meter, 10a closely resembles 8a and 3, while 10b corresponds to the pattern of vss 4 and 7. The basic meter is 4:4 (or 2:2 / 2:2), but 10a is measurably shorter than 10b. Thus the syllable count in 10a is: 6 (reading *brwḥk* as three syllables): 4 (note that in *ksmw* the final *yōd* of the root has been elided, contrary to the practice in vs 5, where it has been preserved, *yksymw*; in our judgment,

metrical considerations figure in the choice of the poet). In 10b, the count is: 6 (reading *k'prt* as three syllables against MT, since the ending was originally monosyllabic—*part* or *pirt*): 5 (reading *mym* as *maym* or *mēm* instead of MT *mayim*). The syllable count is thus 10:11. The vocable count is 10a:14 + 1 = 15 (or: 2 + 3 + 2 / 2 + 4 + 2 = 15) for the first colon, and 10 + 2 = 12 (or: 3 + 2 + 3 / 4 = 12) for the second; 10b: 14 + 2 = 16 / (or: 2 + 2 + 3 / 2 + 3 + 4 = 16) for the first colon and 13 + 3 = 16 (or: 2 + 4 / 3 + 3 + 4 = 16) for the second.

REFRAIN (B)

Verse 11

Another instance of partial chiasm is to be noted (cf vs 8). After the initial interrogative expression, we have a prepositional phrase followed by the vocative form Yahweh in the first colon. In the second colon, however, the corresponding vocative, *n'dr*, is followed by the prepositional phrase. With regard to the prepositional phrases, we may point to the m.pl. form *'lym* in the first colon, which is balanced by an abstract (or collective) singular form *qdš* in the second, a poetic device which occurs frequently in the Psalter. It may be added that in prose the two words would naturally be combined: "the holy gods," as in the Phoenician inscription of *Yhymlk* from Byblus.¹³ In similar fashion, *n'dr* (here the Niphal participle m.s.) is linked to *yhwh*—that is, "Yahweh, the resplendent."

From the metrical point of view, the structure seems to be 4:4:4 (or 2:2 / 2:2 / 2:2) as was the case in vs 6. However, in each bicola a case can be made for 3 stresses (depending on how we analyze *my-kmkh*, or whether we take *'sh pl'* as a single unit in 11c), as is true presumably of vs 16cd, which also serves as a divider. The syllable count is somewhat easier to manage, though some variation is possible. Vs 11a: 4/5; 11b: 4/4 or 5 (depending on whether we read *bqdš* as 3 with MT, or 2 on the basis of an earlier monosyllabic pronunciation *qudš*-); 11c: 5/3 or 4 (if we read *pl'* with MT we have 4 syllables for this colon, but 3 if we revert to an earlier monosyllabic form. In the latter case, however, it seems likely that the case ending would have been retained if the final *aleph* of the root was to be pronounced at all—that is, *pil'i* or *pil'a*). Our judgment is that the triad consisted of bicola of 9, 8, and 8 or 9 syllables. The vocable count is as follows: 11a: 8 + 2 = 10 (3 + 2 + 3 + 2 = 10) for the first colon, and 12 + 3 = 15 (or: 2 + 3 + 4 / 3 + 3 = 15) for the second; 11b: 10 for the first colon, and 12 + 2 = 14 (3 + 4 / 2 + 5 = 14) for the second; 11c: 12 + 3 (omitting the *aleph* at the end of *nwr'* from the count) = 15 (or: 3 + 3 / 2 + 3 + 4 = 15) for the first colon, and 8 + 2 (counting either the final *segol* or the final *aleph* of *pl'* but not both) = 10 (or: 3 + 3 / 4 = 10).

As has been pointed out, the refrain in vs 11 is longer and more elaborate than the ones in vss 6 and 16 which follow a similar pattern. In the present case, the third bicola picks up the participle in 11b (*n'dr*); and expands on the theme of the fear-inspiring, wonder-working Deity. Thus *nwr'* is parallel to *n'dr*, and *'sh pl'* partakes of the same numinous quality. By thus concentrating on the unique splendor of Yahweh, in contrast with other divine beings, and his mighty works, the poet here reaches the climactic point in his composition. Standing at the center and apex of the poem, it relates equally to both strophes: the God described in vs 11 is equally responsible for the victory at the sea and for the triumphant march to the Holy Land. By being less specific than the other refrains, which relate directly to the theme of their respective strophes (i.e., vs 6 focuses on the powerful right hand of Yahweh by which he wreaked destruction on the enemy; vs 16 speaks of the passage of the people of Yahweh into the promised land), vs 11 serves them both as center and fulcrum.

STROPHE II

Verses 12–14

Vss 12–13 form a triad of bicola, in which the first (vs 12) recapitulates the content of the first half of the poem, while the latter two carry the story from that point. The destruction of the Egyptian host is the necessary condition and presupposition of the march through the wilderness, so that the association of these ideas in a single unit is entirely in order. If that were insufficient to convince, then the word patterns in the three bicola provide additional evidence of their purposeful combination in the plan of the poet: thus each bicola begins with a perfect form of the verb (2 m.s.); the verbs form an alliterative sequence—*naḥita*, *naḥita*, *nēhanta*—and each verb is followed by a noun with the 2 m.s. suffix: *ymynk*, *bḥsdk*, *b'zk*. While 13ab are more closely related in content, 12 clearly belongs to the same scheme.

The structure of Strophe II is essentially the same as that of Strophe I, though there are some minor variations. That structure has already been discussed and defended. At the same time, there is a contrasting movement in the two strophes, toward and away from the central point in vs 11. Thus we may expect to find certain points of contact between Part A of Strophe I and Part B of Strophe II, and similarly between Part B of Strophe I and Part A of Strophe II, reflecting a certain chiasm in the whole pattern of the poem and cutting across the purely structural lines.

Vs 12 serves as a connecting link between the two strophes, and constitutes an admirable parallel to 10a, providing a sequence of synonymous terms in the same order:

10a	nšpt brwḥk ksmw ym	You blew with your breath The sea covered them
12	nṯyt ymynk tbl'mw 'rṣ	You stretched out your hand The netherworld swallowed them

Vs 13, however, correlates well with the opening couplet of Strophe I, vs 7. Just as the theme of vs 7 is the destructive violence of Yahweh against his enemies, so in vs 13 emphasis is placed on the constructive care and guidance of his own people. The twin instruments of military punishment in vs 7, *g'wnk* and *ḥrnk*, are balanced by Yahweh's protective agents in vs 13, *ḥsdk* and *'zk*. The imperfect verbs *ṯrs* and *ṯlḥ* are matched by the perfect forms *nḥyt* and *nḥlt*, while in the subordinate clauses we have *y'klmw* balanced by *zw g'll*. It is not yet clear what distinction, if any, is to be drawn between perfect and imperfect forms in early Hebrew poetry; it is clear that they are interchangeable so far as tense is concerned, and it may be that the poet's choice is purely stylistic. (Note the alternations between perfect and imperfect, or vice versa, in vss 5, 12, 14, 15, 17.) From the point of view of the poet, it can be argued that all the action of the poem (vss 4–17) is in the past, or at least that there is no warrant for supposing that any of the verbs are necessarily in the future tense.

There is also a correlation between vss 12–13 and vs 9. In vs 9, the enemy boasted, and his boasting was made emphatic by the repetition of the first person singular forms no fewer than seven times. Now in vss 12–13, we have the counter to man's boasting—namely, God's action. In this triad, the second person singular used of Yahweh is repeated eight times, thus confirming the old adage that man proposes but God disposes.

Metrically, the structure of vss 12–13 is 4:4:4 (or 2:2 / 2:2 / 2:2). The syllable count has some slight uncertainties but is fairly regular: 12: 6 or 7 (depending on whether we vocalize the shewa after *n* in *ymynk*; originally there was a connecting vowel here, but it ultimately was elided) / 5 or 6 (if we follow MT in the pronunciation of *'rṣ*, then the count is 6; if we read it as a monosyllable, it is 5). The minimum total for the verse is 11. The count in 13 is as follows: 13a: 7 (in this case we cannot avoid reading some vowel after *d* in *bḥsdk*) / 5; 13b: 7 (we also need a vowel after *'z* in *b'zk*) / 6. The vocable count is as follows: 12: $13 + 2 = 15$ (or: $2 + 3 + 2 / 2 + 4 + 2 = 15$) for the first colon, and $13 + 3 = 16$ (or: $3 + 2 + 3 + 3 / 5 = 16$) for the second. Vs 13a: $15 + 1 = 16$ (or: $2 + 3 + 2 / 2 + 3 + 2 + 2 = 16$) for the first colon, and $12 + 2 = 14$ (or: $3 + 3 / 2 + 4 + 2 = 14$) for the second. Vs 13b: $16 + 1 = 17$ (or: $3 + 3 + 2 / 2 + 3 + 2 + 2 = 17$) for the first colon, and $14 + 1 = 15$ (or: $3 / 2 + 3 / 3 + 2 + 2 = 15$) for the second. On this method of reckoning, the triad of bicola balances out

satisfactorily, with the total for 13a and b ($30 + 32$) coming out exactly double that of 12 (31).

With regard to the two bicola of vs 13, we wish to point to an interesting example of combination or enjambment. To begin with, we have closely parallel first cola: *nḥyt bḥsdk / nḥlt b'zk*, though, strictly speaking, *ḥsd* and *'z* complement rather than duplicate each other. A form of hendiadys is indicated here: “your mighty *ḥesed*” or “your merciful strength.” For the rest, we have two separate objects—one direct, the other indirect—which are not parallel at all but are in sequence. They are meant to be taken together as the objects of the verbs, which are themselves synonymous. If we were to write the verse as prose, we could bring out the intended sense as follows: “You led / guided in your powerful kindness the people whom you redeemed, to your holy habitation.” Thus we have in vs 13 three types of material distributed between the cola: synonyms, *nḥyt // nḥlt*; complements or combinations which belong together but are often divided between cola in poetry: *bḥsdk—b'zk*, cf *b'lym—bqdš* in vs 11; supplements or sequences, *'m-zw g'll* and *'l-nwh qdšk*. Vs 14 concludes Part A of Strophe II. Part B is then an elaboration of this verse; in a similar way, Part B of Strophe I is an elaboration of vs 7 in Part A. The metrical pattern is presumably 3:3, though 4 is a possibility for the second colon (it depends on how the first two words, *ḥyl 'ḥz*, are treated). The syllable count is 8/8 (counting *plšt* as 2 syllables rather than 3 with MT). The vocable count is as follows: 14a: $20 + 3 = 23$ (or: $2 + 2 + 3 / 3 + 4 / 3 + 2 + 4 = 23$), and 14b: $20 + 4 = 24$ (or: $4 / 2 + 3 / 3 + 2 + 3 / 2 + 5 = 24$).

STROPHE II B

Verse 15–16ab

While structurally parallel to vss 9–10 (Part B of Strophe I), which also consist of a triad and couplet in that order, this stanza has very interesting affinities with Part A of Strophe I, thus reflecting the contrasting movement toward and away from the central point of the poem. In this case, in a chiasmic arrangement, vs 15 corresponds to the triad 8abc, while 16ab corresponds to vs 7, thus providing a closing sequence to match the opening sequence in vss 7–8. While the subject matter of vs 15 corresponds more closely to that of vs 9 (i.e., the enemy or foreign nations) and there is a striking contrast between the boastful words of the “enemy” in 9 and the horror-struck silence of the “foreigners” in vs 15 as a result of the intervening action of Yahweh, there are other factors which link 15 and 8. Thus we have three synonymous nouns, the subject of the action in each triad: *myṃ*, *nzlym*, *ṯmṯ* in 8, and the compounds *'lwpṯ 'dwm*, *'yly mw'b*, *yšby kn'n* in 15. Then there are two Niphal perfect forms of the verb in each triad, along

with one *Qal* form. There are partial chiasms in both triads: *kmw-nd nzlym // thmt blb-ym* in 8 and *nbhlw 'lwp'y 'dwm // 'yly mw'b y'kzmw . . . nmgw . . . yšby kn'n* in 15. Both triads express Yahweh's complete control over nature (8) and nations (15), which serve as instruments in the achievement of his purpose.

Vs 16ab is structurally parallel to vs 10, and there is a certain similarity of content. Both describe the completion of Yahweh's work with respect to the "enemy" (10) and the "nations" (16). There are also resemblances to vs 7, but this is not surprising in view of the similarity in content and form of 7 and 10. Thus the reference to *'ymth wphd* reminds us of *g'wn* and *hrrn* in vs 7 as well as the *mym 'dyrym* of vs 10, while in 16b *bgdl zrw'k* evokes *brb g'wnk* of 7 as well as *brwhk* of 10; *ydmw k'bn* is reminiscent of *y'klmw kqš* structurally if not strictly according to content, and *šllw k'prt* of vs 10; cf also *yrdw . . . k'bn* in vs 5.

Metrically the stanza scans as a triad (vs 15) 4:4:4 (or 2:2 / 2:2 / 2:2) and a couplet (16ab) 4:4 (or 2:2 / 2:2). The problem of 15c has been discussed; in all likelihood we should read *kl* as an adverb modifying *nmgw* rather than as a pronoun in the construct chain with *yšby kn'n* (note the parallels *'lwp'y 'dwm* and *'yly mw'b* with two words each). The syllable count is as follows: 4:5 / 4:5 vocalizing *r'd* as monosyllabic (rather than as bisyllabic as in MT) / 4:5 counting *kn'n* as two syllables against three in MT. The parallel triad, vs 9, does not offer much help in deciding the question, since its bicola range from 8 to 11. Presumably the normal figure would be 27 for the triad and 9 for each member. The vocable count follows: 15a: 10 + 2 = 12 (or: 4 / 3 + 2 + 3 = 12) for the first colon, and 12 + 3 = 15 (or: 3 + 3 + 3 / 2 + 4 = 15) for the second; 15b: 9 + 4 = 13 (or: 3 + 3 / 3 + 4 = 13) for the first colon, and 12 + 4 = 16 (or: 3 + 2 + 3 + 3 / 5 = 16) for the second colon (MT would be 13 + 4 = 17); 15c: 9 + 3 = 12 (or: 2 + 3 + 3 / 4 = 12) for the first colon, and 12 + 3 = 15 (or: 3 + 2 + 3 / 2 + 5 = 15) for the second (MT would be 13 + 3 = 16).

The syllable count in 16ab is as follows: 16ab: 5/6 (depending upon how we read *phd*; if we follow MT or read *paħda*, with the accusative case ending to match *'ymth*, then the total would be 6; if we reduce *phd* to its monosyllabic state, the figure would be 5); 16b: 6/5 (with regard to the first colon, the figure can be as low as 5 or as high as 7, giving an adequate mean of 6). MT *bigdōl* reflects the elision of a syllable in the phrase which more originally read *bəgadōl*; on the other hand we should elide the *ħatef pataħ* after *'ayin* in *zrw'k*. Eliminating both vowels, we would have 5 syllables; counting both, we would have 7. In the second colon, we vocalize *'bn* as a monosyllable in accordance with the older pronunciation. We parse *ydmw* as Niphal imperfect of *dmm* reading *yiddammū*.

The vocable count is as follows: 16a: 13 + 2 = 15 (or: 3 + 4 / 2 + 3 + 3 = 15) for the first colon, and 13 + 2 = 15 (or: 3 + 3 + 2 / 2 + 2 + 3 = 15) for the second; 16b: 14 + 2 = 16 (or: 2 + 2 + 4 / 2 + 4 + 2 = 16) for the first colon (MT would be 17); and 14 + 2 = 16 (or: 3 + 3 + 3 / 2 + 5 = 16) for the second (MT would be 17).

REFRAIN (C)

Vs 16cd is the third refrain or divider, and closes off the main part of the poem with an explicit reference to the passage of Israel into the Holy Land, thus recapitulating the second strophe (cf vs 13 especially).

The meter is apparently 3:3. The syllable count is as follows: 16c: 8, since we do not read the *ħatef pataħ* in *y'br*, against MT 16d: 8. The vocable count is as follows: 16c: 21 + 2 = 23 (or: 3 / 3 + 4 / 3 + 2 + 2 / 3 + 3 = 23; MT would be 24); and 16d: 20 + 3 = 23 (or: 3 / 3 + 4 / 3 / 3 / 2 + 3 + 2 = 23; MT would be 24). These totals may be compared with those for vss 14, 11, 8bc, and 5.

THE CLOSING

Vss 17–18 constitute the closing section, comparable in structure with vss 3–5, which constitute the opening. The two together form a strophe comparable to the regular strophes in the body of the poem, and thus enclose the main part of the poem. Each consists of five units. For the opening, vs 3 is the initial unit, while the corresponding unit in the closing is the final bicola, vs 18. In similar fashion, vs 4 constitutes the "long" couplet following the initial unit (4:4 or 2:2 / 2:2); and vs 17bc in the closing, following in reverse order, corresponds to this unit in the opening. It also is 4:4 (or 2:2 / 2:2). That leaves vs 5 to match 17a. Since 5 is somewhat irregular, it should not surprise us to find 17a also a bit abnormal. The latter appears to be 2:2 (though unbalanced), while 5 seems to be 2:3 (though 3:3 or 3:4 is also possible). The syllable count for 17a would be 9/6 (counting *nħllk* as 4 syllables in place of MT *naħ^alāt^ekā* which has 5, or a possible *naħlatka* with 3). Vs 5, on the other hand, was unbalanced in the other direction, and is now counted 8/10. It is possible to reduce each colon by one and produce 7/9, which would counterbalance approximately vs 17a 9/6. The vocable count for 17a is as follows: 19 + 5 = 24 (or 2 + 3 + 3 + 3 / 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 + 3 = 24) for the first colon, and 14 + 1 = 15 (or: 2 + 3 / 3 + 3 + 2 + 2 = 15) for the second colon. At the same time, the minimum count for vs 5 would be 20 and 26, showing that there is still a considerable discrepancy.

The real question is whether we are entitled to divide 17a after *wṭṭ'mw*, thus placing the two verbs in the first colon and the prepositional phrase in the second. There is no other division like it elsewhere in the poem (9a hardly qualifies), and normally we would read the colon as follows:

wṭṭ'mw bhr nḥlṭk Indeed you have planted them in the mountain
you possess

This would provide us with the 3-stress colon indicated by comparison with 5b, while the syllable count of approximately 11 corresponds well with the 10 or 11 of 5b. That leaves the first colon somewhat short with only *tb'mw*, and we must suppose then that something has fallen out. If 5a is to serve as a guide, then only one word (plus preposition) is to be supplied (e.g., 'el 'ereṣ or the like). However, if we disregard such precise indications, we may be helped by having recourse to Ps 78: 54, where the same verb is used in a closely parallel context:

wyby'm 'l-gbwł qdšw And he brought them into his holy territory
hr-zh qnth ymynw The mountain which his right arm created.

We would therefore be inclined to add 'el *gabūl qōdšeka* to the first colon of 17a, thus balancing the bicolon and producing a 3:3 meter to correspond to the strophic structure of the poem as a whole, and the opening stanza in particular. The syllable count would be 10 for the first colon, and 11 for the second. The vocable count would be $23 + 4 = 27$ ($2 + 3 + 3 + 3 / 3 / 2 + 4 / 3 + 2 + 2 = 27$) for the first colon, and $25 + 3 = 28$ ($2 + 3 + 2 + 3 + 3 / 2 + 3 / 3 + 3 + 2 + 2 = 28$) for the second. The second colon of 17a corresponds exactly to 5b (also 28), while the first is somewhat longer than 5a.

However we deal with vs 17a, there can be no question that the "mount of inheritance"—that is, Yahweh's own portion—is the promised land of Canaan, which is the earthly counterpart of the heavenly mountain on which Yahweh dwells. Whether any particular mountain or range is meant is dubious though doubtless after the establishment of the temple in Jerusalem, Mount Zion was understood to be the point of reference. In the light of 17a, the meaning of 17b and c can be clarified: the "dais of your throne" (17b) and "your sanctuary" (17c) refer to the same "mount of inheritance," and specify the divine palace and throne which Yahweh himself has fashioned. These are, in the first place, the heavenly prototypes in which Yahweh dwells, and, second, describe the sacred territory which Yahweh has claimed for himself. The language is mythopoeic and therefore inexact, but it cannot refer to any existing earthly sanctuary, since all these have been made by

human hands not God's. Both tabernacle and temple were regarded as human achievements, albeit based on plans provided by God and in imitation of the heavenly abode of the Deity. But what is described here is a work of God, his heavenly palace-sanctuary. His corresponding earthly abode is the Holy Land, into which he has now brought his people. There, as in heaven, he shall reign eternally.

The metrical pattern of 17bc is 4:4 (or: 2:2 / 2:2), while the syllable count is for 17b: 6/5, and for 17c: 4 or 5 (the reading *yhwḥ* has strong textual support, and is most likely more original than 'dny) / 6. The vocable count is as follows: 17b: $14 + 1 = 15$ (or $2 + 4 / 2 + 3 + 2 + 2 = 15$) for the first colon, and $12 + 1 = 13$ (or: $2 + 3 + 2 / 3 + 3 = 13$) for the second; 17c: $13 + 2 = 15$ (or: $3 + 4 / 2 + 3 + 3 = 15$) for the first colon (if we read *yhwḥ* instead of 'dny, then the count is reduced to 13); and $12 + 3 = 15$ (or: $3 + 2 + 3 / 2 + 3 + 2 = 15$) for the second.

Vs 18 closes the poem, forming an *inclusio* with vs 3 as already mentioned. It is a single bicolon of 4 beats or 2:2 meter. The syllable count is 4/5, and the vocable count is as follows: 18a: $11 + 2 = 13$ (or: $3 + 3 / 3 + 4 = 13$) for the first colon, and $12 + 2 = 14$ (or: $2 + 3 + 4 / 2 + 3 = 14$) for the second.

On the basis of the transmitted text, we believe that a strong case can be made for the essential unity of the poem in Exodus 15. A repeated pattern of strophes and stanzas, marked off by refrains, in a determinate metrical structure has been demonstrated for the main part of the poem vss 3–18. The Exordium, vs 2, may have been attached in order to provide the proper liturgical framework for presentation of the poem in public worship (by a prophetic or royal representative). Concerning vss 1 and 21, we suggest that they constituted an opening and closing refrain similar to the other dividers which set off the major sections of the poem. Structurally vss 1 and 21 are very much like vs 6 (2:2 / 2:2; syllable count 10:9, which is the same as vs 21); and they share the practice of the dividers in using the name Yahweh.

The main body of the poem falls into two parts (vss 3–10, and vss 12–18). The principal theme of the first part is the victory of Yahweh over the Egyptians at the Reed Sea. The principal theme of the second part is Israel's march through the wilderness and passage into the promised land under the guidance of the same Yahweh. Thus Yahweh the warrior, who annihilates his foes, is identified with Yahweh the redeemer, who saves his people and establishes them in their new homeland. The themes are linked causally. It is the victory at the sea which permits the people of God to escape from bondage; and it is through his devastating display of power that Yahweh

overawes the other nations who might otherwise block the passage of the Israelites. Thus the one mighty action produces two notable results: the destruction of the enemy; and the intimidation of the other nations, who are paralyzed by fear and cannot obstruct the victorious march of the Israelites or their successful entry into the Holy Land. At one stroke therefore the Egyptians "went down into the depths *like a stone*" and the other nations "were struck dumb *like a stone*." Neither could interfere with the realization of the divine plan—to release the slaves and establish them in a new land.

The refrains carry the same content as the opening and closing. The first of these (vs 6) emphasizes the mighty hand of Yahweh in dealing death to the enemy, while the third (vs 16) speaks of the passage of Yahweh's people into the Holy Land. The victory at the sea is Yahweh's alone, and it makes possible the passage of the people. The second refrain stands at the center of the poem, and is an elaborate apostrophe on the incomparability of Yahweh. It serves to link not only the two major parts of the poem but also the thematic statements at the beginning and end: vs 3, Yahweh the warrior, and vs 18, Yahweh the king who will reign over his people.

The strophes develop in detail the thematic statements concerning the victory at the sea and the passage of the people. Thus Strophe I deals with specific aspects of the victory over the Egyptians. Part I (vss 7–8) treats of Yahweh's overwhelming rage and the violent storm with which he stirs up the sea. The stage is set for the appearance of the antagonist. Part II (vss 9–10) shows the enemy in all his boastful folly (vs 9). He is already gloating over the spoils, gorging himself on his prey, when the raging sea breaks over his head, and he sinks like lead in the dreadful waters (vs 10). Act one has ended.

The second strophe presents the aftermath, Israel's march through the wilderness and entry into the promised land. The theme is mentioned in the first part (vs 13), to be repeated and expanded in the closing section of the poem. This part closes with a reference to the effect of the victory at the sea on the other nations: When they heard, they trembled; terror seized them (vs 14). The second part of the strophe (vss 15–16) develops this interest in detail: Overwhelmed by divine fear and dread, they are benumbed, and watch helplessly as the people cross over into the promised land, Yahweh's own possession.

While we do not expect a poem, especially in the mythopoeic tradition, to record historical experience soberly and in sequence, we can use it, with caution, to recover a historical tradition. Since the poem comes from the twelfth century in all likelihood, its relative proximity to the events which it celebrates makes it a prime witness, if not to the events themselves, then

at least to the effect produced on the people of Israel by them. In this connection, both what is said and what is omitted (in contrast with the prose traditions concerning the victory at the sea and the entry into the land) are of special interest. With regard to the episode at the Reed Sea, the poet focuses on the storm at sea and the drowning of the Egyptian chariot force. By contrast, nothing is said of the passage of Israel on dry ground, or in fact of Israel at all in connection with the event. The only passage of which the poet is conscious or that he mentions is the crossing into Canaan (vs 16cd).

With regard to the entry into the promised land, the poet speaks of Yahweh's guidance and protection and at some length of the total paralysis of the nations, which enabled Israel to enter without opposition. Nothing at all is said of the battles with those peoples or of the victories by Moses and Joshua over them which are described in detail in the prose narratives.

According to the poet, only one battle counted, and one victory, at the sea; that was enough to permanently disable Egypt and at the same time terrify the other nations into complete passivity. The victory was total—and totally Yahweh's. Israel contributed nothing then or later, except to march under divine guidance. While the poet's view is essentially the same as that of the bulk of biblical writers, historians, and prophets, it is radically stated, and suggests a certain background or orientation on the part of the poet, to which the views of Isaiah or Hosea may be compared. But perhaps we should not press a poet too far in any particular direction.

One fairly certain result of the analysis of this poem is the establishment of a strophic structure. The poem has been organized into a regular pattern of strophes and stanzas, with divisions marked by refrains. Opening and closing stanzas form an envelope in which the body of the poem is encased. An Exordium or Proem introduces the whole. We have also suggested a role for vss 1 and 21.

Within this larger framework, an attempt has been made to describe the internal metrical pattern of the stanzas and strophes. Following the commonly accepted stress- or accent-counting system, we arrive at the following scheme:

Introduction (vs 1b):	2:2	2:2
Exordium (vs 2):	3:3	3:3
Opening (vss 3–5):		
3	2:2	
4	3:2	2:2
5		3:3
Refrain (A) (vs 6):	2:2	2:2

Strophe I (vss 7-10):			
A (7-8)			
7	2:2	2:2	
8		2:2	
		3:3	
B (9-10)			
9	2:2	2:2	2:2
10		2:2	2:2
Refrain (B) (vs 11):			
Strophe II (vss 12-16ab):			
A (12-14)			
12		2:2	
13	2:2	2:2	
14		3:3	
B (15-16ab)			
15	2:2	2:2	2:2
16ab		2:2	2:2
Refrain (C) (vs 16cd):			
Closing (vss 17-18):			
17		2:2 (or 3:3)	
	2:2	2:2	
18		2:2	
Conclusion (vs 21b):			
	2:2	2:2	

According to this scheme, the prevailing metrical pattern is a bicolon 2:2 (or simply a colon of 4). It occurs separately as a unit, as well as in couplets and triads: Units: vss 3, 8a, 12, 17a, 18; Couplets: 1b, 4, 6, 7, 10, 13, 16ab, 17bc; Triads: 9, 11, 15. A variant pattern is 3:3, which occurs in vss 5, 8bc, 14, 16cd. We have the apparently anomalous 3:2 in 4a, and a possible 2:3 in 5, as well as a peculiar situation in 17a, but each of these is susceptible of explanation (see Notes).

The Strophes consist of two stanzas each, while the stanzas are made up of several units. IA (7-8) consists of two couplets with a transition link between them: the first couplet has bicola of 2:2, and the link is a bicolon with the same pattern. The closing bicolon is 3:3. The parallel stanza, Strophe IIA (12-14), has the same units in different order: an opening bicolon 2:2, followed by a couple of bicola 2:2, and a closing bicolon 3:3. The B stanzas, on the other hand, have a slightly different structure. They consist of a triad 2:2 / 2:2 / 2:2 followed by a couplet 2:2 / 2:2.

The refrains show some variation: vss 1 and 21, as well as vs 6, are couplets: 2:2 / 2:2; vs 16cd is a bicolon 3:3; vs 11 is a triad 2:2 / 2:2 / 2:2. Each of these types is attested in the Strophes.

The opening and closing stanzas have a structure similar to that of the Strophe stanzas: the opening (vss 3-5) begins with a bicolon, followed by two couplets, the first 2:2 / 2:2, the second 3:3 (similar to IIA). The closing

(vss 17-18) begins with a bicolon 2:2, continues with a couplet 2:2 / 2:2, and ends with another bicolon 2:2. As it stands, it is somewhat anomalous, since it does not conform to any of the patterns so far noted. The difficulties in the analysis of 17a have been discussed, and we have proposed an emendation which results in a 3:3 pattern.

The Exordium (vs 2) consists of a quatrain 3:3 / 3:3, but its structure is by no means symmetrical. This pattern is otherwise unattested in the poem.

On the face of it, the patterns exhibited in this schematic presentation are sufficiently regular to show that some metrical structure is inherent in the poem. Its precise nature remains elusive, however, because the analysis is rather flexible, not to say loose. The categories tend to be broad and indefinite, and the terms rather vague, referring to a number of diverse items. In other words, such a scheme conceals more than it reveals, and the image of symmetry and regularity it presents may be inexact, indicating more consistency than is actually present. At the same time, it may fail to indicate more intricate patterns that may be present.

In the search for a more precise method of reflecting the actual meter of Hebrew poems, we have turned to syllable counting and even vocable counting (in order to make allowance for open and closed syllables, as well as the length of vowels). Not that we imagine that the Hebrew poets used such a method or were even aware of numerical ratios and equivalences in their poetic composition, but we are convinced that a strong sense of rhythm permeated poetry that was composed to be sung, and that men and women marched and danced to these songs. In fact, Ex 15 is a victory march, as both the contents and the prevailing 2:2 or 4:4 meter indicate. In marching rhythms especially, unaccented syllables must be reckoned with as well as accented ones. It is in an effort to deal with more of the phenomena and more accurately reflect the actual state of affairs that we have employed these methods alongside the more familiar stress system. It may be that such effort is wasted because of our lack of controls (of vocalization of the words and ignorance of ancient Israelite musical patterns) or because the poetry is simply not amenable to such detailed analysis. But it is worthwhile to set the evidence down and then to draw conclusions, if any. On the whole, the two proposed systems agree with each other very well and generally with the stress system, only adding detail and occasionally clarifying a hazy or erroneous impression of the actual meter before us.

Turning to the material at hand, we find the following in Strophe IA:

	A	S	V
7a	2:2	6:6	16:16
b	2:2	6:6	16:16

8a	2:2	6:4	16:12
b	3	9	26
c	3	9	25

The corresponding stanza in Strophe IIA:

	A	S	V
12	2:2	6:5	15:16
13a	2:2	7:5	16:14
b	2:2	7:6	17:15
14a	3	8	23
b	3	8	24

While the accent scheme shows no variations between the stanzas, both the syllable and vocable count do, and thus reflect the attested differences in the structure of the stanzas as well as their resemblances. The initial couplet of IA (vs 7) is shown to be absolutely symmetrical in both S and V. At the same time, 8a is shown to vary distinctly from the pattern of 7 although also designated 2:2. It is clearly shorter, and in fact close to 8bc with which it belongs, though the latter are 3:3. The balance between 8b and c is strongly attested in S and V.

In IIA, the initial bicolon (vs 12), which differs in content from the couplet in vs 13, is nevertheless structurally very similar. Both S and V bear this out, so that we have a triad in pattern if not in content. The symmetry of the concluding couplet (3:3) is borne out in S and V. Taking the stanzas as a whole, we have: for IA: 12:12 / 10 / 9:9; a total of 52 syllables; for IIA: 11 / 12:13 / 8:8, also a total of 52 syllables, thus demonstrating that the stanzas are of equal length. The V count shows: IA, 32:32 / 28 / 26:25, for a total of 143; IIA, 31 / 30:32 / 23:24, for a total of 140. The discrepancy is well within the margin we must allow for possible variations in vowel length and pronunciation at the option of the poet, to say nothing of our limited knowledge of the state of the language at the time of composition.

The second stanzas of Strophes I and II may be described as follows:

<i>Strophe IB</i>			
9a	A	S	V
	2:2	4:4	12:14
b	2:2	5:6	15:17
c	2:2	4:6	12:17
10a	2:2	6:4	15:13
b	2:2	6:5	16:16
<i>Strophe IIB</i>			
15a	2:2	4:5	12:15
b	2:2	4:5	13:16
c	2:2	4:5	12:15
16a	2:2	5:6	15:15
b	2:2	6:5	16:16

While the A system shows an unbroken line of 2:2 bicolon, both S and V point to a break between the triad (vss 9 and 15) and the following couplet (vss 10 and 16ab). The former are shorter, averaging 9 syllables; the latter are longer, averaging 11 syllables. The pattern for the stanzas as a whole is: IB: 8: 11:10 / 10:11, for a total of 50; IIB: 9:9:9 / 11:11 = 49. The vocable count shows for IB: 26:32:29 / 28:32 = 147; for IIB: 27:29:27 / 30:32 = 145. Taking the Strophes as a whole, we have for I : S = 102, V = 290; for II: S = 101, V = 285.

Turning to the opening and closing stanzas, we find:

Opening	A	S	V
Vs 3	2:2	6:4	18:11
4a	3:2	8:4	23:11
b	2:2	6:6	17:17
5a	3(?)	8	22
b	3	10	28
		<u>52</u>	<u>147</u>
Closing			
Vs 17a	2:2	9:6	24:16
b	2:2	6:5	15:13
c	2:2	5:6	15:15
18	2:2	4:5	13:14
		<u>46</u>	<u>125</u>

The peculiarities and difficulties of both the opening and closing have already been discussed. With regard to the opening, the irregularities in the metrical count under A are resolved in S and V. As a whole, the opening conforms to the pattern of IA and IIA. The syllable count is 10 / 12:12 / 8:10 = 52; the vocable count is 29 / 34:34 / 22:28 = 147.

For the closing, if we accept 17a (2:2) as a legitimate variant of the expected 3:3, we have the following totals: S: 15 / 11:11 / 9 = 46; V: 40 / 28:30 / 27 = 125. If, however, we restore 17a, as suggested above, the totals become:

	A	S	V
Vs 17a ¹	(3)	(10)	(28)
17a ²	3	11	28

The revised count would be: S: 10:11 / 11:11: 9 = 52; V: 28:28 / 28:30 / 27 = 141.

The totals for the group would be:

	S	V
Opening	52	147
Closing	46 (52)	125 (141)
Total	<u>98 (104)</u>	<u>272 (288)</u>

The Refrains present the following pattern:

	A	S	V
(1b)	2:2	6:5	16:13
	2:2	5:4	14:11
A (6a)	2:2	5:5	14:15
(6b)	2:2	5:4	14:13
B (11a)	2:2	4:5	11:15
(11b)	2:2	4:4	11:14
(11c)	2:2	5:4	15:10
C (16c)	3	8	23
(16d)	3	8	23
(21b)	2:2	5:5	14:13
	2:2	5:4	14:11

Taking the Refrains together as a structural unit, we have the following totals:

	S	V
Vs 1b	11:9 = 20	29:25 = 54
6	10:9 = 19	29:27 = 56
11	9:8:9 = 26	26:25:25 = 76
16cd	8:8 = 16	23:23 = 46
21b	10:9 = 19	27:25 = 52
Total	100	284

It is interesting to note that the total is equivalent to that of the other strophes:

	S	V
I	102	290
II	101	285
Opening and closing	98 (104)	272 (288)
Refrains	100	284

The Exordium (vs 2) presents the following pattern:

	A	S	V
Vs 2a	2	7	20
2b	2	7	19
2c	3	7	20
2d	3	11	28
Total		32	87

We may combine vss 1 and 2, as was done at some point in the history of the poem, to form a preliminary stanza: the various counts would be: S:32 +

20 = 52; V:87 + 54 = 141. S is thus approximately the same as S for the opening, Strophes IA, IIA, and our reconstructed closing stanza. The similarity is superficial, however, and the pattern of vss 1-2 remains uncertain. Possibly we should construe it as a couplet 2:2 / 2:2 followed by a transitional line 2:2, which leads into the closing bicolon, 3:3. The pattern would resemble that of Strophe IA, in which we have an opening couplet 2:2 / 2:2 followed by a transitional line, 2:2, which connects with a closing couplet, 3:3. The unbalanced final line of vs 2 (S, 7:11) can be compared with vs 5 (S, 8:10), also read as 3:3.

As a check on our statistical analysis, and to test the view that almost any syllable counting system will produce the same comparative results providing that it is applied consistently, we can substitute the figures derived from rigorous adherence to MT, both text and vocalization. The results show no significant change from the patterns already observed.

Introductory	S	V
Refrain (1b)	6:5	17:15
	5:4	14:13
Exordium (2)	6:7	19:19
	7:11	20:29
Total	51	146
Opening (3-5)		
3	6:4	19:11
4a	8:4	23:13
b	6:6	18:17
5a	7	20
b	10	29
Total	51	150
Refrain (A) (6)	6:5	16:16
	6:4	16:13
Total	21	61
Strophe IA		
Vs 7a	6:6	17:17
b	6:6	17:17
8a	6:5	17:13
b	9	26
c	9	26
Total	53	150
Strophe IB		
9a	4:4	13:14
b	5:6	16:18
c	4:6	13:18
10a	7:4	19:13
b	7:6	18:17
Total	53	159

Refrain (B)		
11a	4:5	12:16
b	4:5	12:16
c	5:4	15:11
Total	<u>27</u>	<u>82</u>
Strophe IIA		
12	6:6	18:18
13a	7:5	19:16
b	7:6	19:16
14a	8	25
b	9	26
Total	<u>54</u>	<u>157</u>
Strophe IIB		
15a	4:5	12:15
b	4:6	13:17
c	4:6	13:16
16a	5:6	15:17
b	6:6	17:17
Total	<u>52</u>	<u>152</u>
Refrain (C)		
16c	4:5	11:14
d	4:5	11:15
Total	<u>18</u>	<u>51</u>
Closing		
17a	9:7 (10)	25:17 (28)
b	(12)	(31)
c	6:5	17:15
18	5:6	16:17
18	4:5	13:15
Total	<u>47 (53)</u>	<u>135 (152)</u>
Concluding Refrain		
21b	5:5	14:15
21b	5:4	14:13
Total	<u>19</u>	<u>56</u>

SUMMARY AND COMPARISON

	S		V	
	MT	Prop.	MT	Prop.
Exordium (1-2)	51	52	146	140
Opening and Closing	98 (104)	98 (104)	285 (302)	272 (288)
Strophe I	106	102	309	290
Strophe II	106	101	309	285
Refrains	105	100	309	284

It is apparent that the variations introduced into MT with respect to pronunciation and vocalization tend to cancel each other out, and that the ratios and proportions tend to remain constant. Thus all the stanzas fall within

the range of 51-54 syllables in MT, which is precisely the theoretical range postulated by the possible sequences of long and short lines: that is, 3 short lines with 27 syllables, and 2 long ones with 24 syllables, making a total of 51; or 3 long lines with 36 syllables, and 2 short ones with 18, making a total of 54. The Strophes total S = 106, and V = 309, while the sum of the opening and closing stanzas is S = 104 and V = 302 (as reconstructed; as the text stands, the totals are S = 98 and V = 285). The Exordium also comes within the limits indicated at S = 51 and V = 146.

To summarize, we suggest that the poem exhibits two basic line lengths: one of approximately 12 syllables (sometimes 11, rarely 13) normally construed as 2:2; the other usually of 8 or 9 syllables (occasionally 10) and construed as 2:2 or 3. These are the basic building blocks used by the poet and ingeniously arranged in pairs or triads to produce a dramatic work of art. Designating the lines S and L, we can diagram the poet's structural pattern for the poem as follows:

Opening Refrain (1b)	S : S
Exordium (2)	S : S
	S : L
Opening (3-5)	S
	L : L
	S : S
Refrain (A) (6)	S : S
Strophe IA (7-8)	L : L
	S
	S : S
IB (9-10)	S : S : S
	L : L
Refrain (B) (11)	S : S : S
Strophe IIA (12-14)	L
	L : L
	S : S
IIB (15-16b)	S : S : S
	L : L
Refrain (C) (16cd)	S : S
Closing (17-18)	(S : S) ?
	L : L
	S
Closing refrain (21b)	S : S

In our opinion, all three systems of analysis (A = accent; S = syllable counting; V = vocables) contribute to an appreciation of the metrical patterns; of the three, S seems to be the most useful and flexible.

A few words about the date of the poem may be in order. The standpoint of the author is some time after the settlement in the Holy Land, when it

would be possible to speak of a general occupation of the country. Hence the earliest date of composition would be the twelfth century B.C. Very likely the period of the United Monarchy would provide us with an adequate *terminus ad quem*. Certain details may help us to fix the date more exactly. The omission of the Ammonites from the list of nations in vss 14–15 (if it is not a happenstance owing to the exigencies of stanza construction) reflects an accurate knowledge of the political situation in the thirteenth and twelfth centuries, when only Moabites and Edomites were in that region. Later traditions, as reflected in the Deuteronomic writings, were confused on this point. Such a datum would tend to support an earlier date for the poem, or at least indicate that the author had access to reliable, presumably early historical traditions. On the other hand, the inclusion of Philistia in the list points in another direction. If the word is part of the original composition, then it reflects the hegemony established by the Philistines in the Holy Land beginning in the twelfth century. The author imagines that the Philistines were already settled in the land and, in fact, in control of much of it at the time of the wilderness wandering. He has apparently telescoped events and reversed the sequence of Israelite and Philistine entry into the land of Canaan. We must place the poem subsequent to the Philistine invasion and conquest. All the data suggest that the poem in its original form was composed in the twelfth century. Its nearest companion in form and style is the Song of Deborah, universally recognized to be a product of the same period.

We may add that the evidence of vocabulary, grammar, usage, poetic structures, and poetic devices is all inconclusive. There are numerous archaic features, correctly used, in the poem; they are certainly not inconsistent with an early date, but they do not prove it. The knowledge of many archaic elements of the language persisted in Israel, and some of them show up even in comparatively late materials. Until more refined methods are developed, and more exact information concerning poetry writing in Israel is acquired, we must rely on impressions and the few historical references and details which appear.

NOTES

¹ This paper is intended as a supplement to and revision of the joint article, "The Song of Miriam," *JNES* 14 (1955), 237–50, by Frank M. Cross, Jr., and me. Among recent articles on the subject, the following may be noted: B. S. Childs, "A Traditio-Historical Study of the Reed Sea Tradition," *VT* 20 (1970), 406–18; G. W. Coats, "The Traditio-Historical Character of the Reed Sea Motif," *VT* 17 (1967), 253–65; and "The Song of the Sea," *CBQ* (1969), 1–17; Cross, "The Song of the Sea and Canaanite Myth," *JTC* 5 (1968), 1–25; N. Lohfink, "Das Siegeslied am Schilfmeer," *Das Siegeslied am Schilf-*

meer (1965), pp. 103–28; J. Mulenburgh, "A Liturgy on the Triumphs of Yahweh," *Studia Biblica et Semitica* (1966), pp. 233–51; D. A. Robertson, *Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry* (University Microfilms, 1970; Yale University dissertation, 1966); P. C. Craigie, "An Egyptian Expression in the Song of the Sea (Exodus XV 4)," *VT* 20 (1970), 83–86; "Psalm XXIX in the Hebrew Poetic Tradition," *VT* 22 (1972), 143–51.

² *Studia Biblica et Semitica*, pp. 237 ff.

³ M. Dahood, *Psalms II, AB* (1968), pp. 335, 337.

⁴ While the verb *tr's* may be interpreted as either a 3 f.s. or 2 m.s. form, I think it preferable to take Yahweh as the subject; *ymyrk* would then be a dative of means.

⁵ D. N. Freedman, "Archaic Forms in Early Hebrew Poetry," *ZAW* 62 (1960), 101–7. See also my "Prolegomenon" in G. B. Gray, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (1972), pp. vii–lvi.

⁶ Cross and Freedman, "A Royal Song of Thanksgiving—II Sam 22 = Psalm 18," *JBL* 72 (1953), 26 and fn. 41 for discussion of the parallel texts, II Sam 22: 16 = Ps 18: 16.

⁷ See the discussion of these and similar forms in Cross and Freedman, *Early Hebrew Orthography* (1952), pp. 65–68.

⁸ The problem is discussed in some detail and a solution proposed at a later point in this paper.

⁹ E. M. Good, "Exodus XV 2," *VT* 20 (1970), 358–59.

¹⁰ Dahood, *Psalms III, AB* (1970), pp. 411–12; examples occur in Pss 28: 8, 68: 20, and 88: 2.

¹¹ Cross and Freedman, *Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry* (1950), pp. 45, 48 fn. a, for the suggested emendation. Since then it has been proposed independently by S. Gevirtz, *Patterns in the Early Poetry of Israel* (1963), pp. 83–84. A similar emendation has also been adopted by W. Holladay, "Form and Word-Play in David's Lament over Saul and Jonathan" *VT* 20 (1970), 157–59.

¹² Dahood, *Psalms II*, p. 205.

¹³ W. F. Albright, "The Phoenician Inscriptions of the Tenth Century B.C. from Byblus," *JAOS* 67 (1947), 156–57.