

# A POETICAL APPROACH TO “EVENING” AND “MORNING” IN EXODUS 16:6-12

EPHRAIM LANDAU

In the story of God’s provision of food to Israel in Exodus 16, the words “evening” and “morning” appear close together three times: in the last half of v. 6 and the first part of the first half of v. 7 (vv. 6b-7a1), the first part of the first half of v. 8 (v. 8a1) and the second part of the first half of v. 12 (v. 12a2). In each instance, they appear in a prediction that a specific thing will occur in the evening, and a second specific thing will occur in the morning. Commentators both medieval and modern have found it difficult to present a consistent and convincing explanation of the chronology implied by a literal understanding of these words. In this article, I will summarize the chronology problems in vv. 6-12, review several prior attempts to resolve them and show why those attempts are unsuccessful, and finally present a solution of my own. This solution will be based on a consistent poetical understanding of the verses in which the evening/morning word-pair appears.

## THE CHRONOLOGY PROBLEMS

Traditional Jewish commentators assume, of course, that vv. 6-12 were all written by the same author. Most of the modern commentators similarly assign all of these verses to the author of P, one of the four documents described by the Documentary Hypothesis. In addition, most commentators understand the words “evening” and “morning” literally in these verses. If we assume that these verses were all written by one author, are in their original and correct order and are to be understood literally, at least two chronology problems emerge.

In vv. 6-7, Moses and Aaron tell the people that in the evening the people will realize that the Lord was the One who took them out of Egypt, and in the morning they will see the “*kavod* of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> Presumably, the “evening” and “morning” of vv. 6-7 refer to the evening of the day that Moses and Aaron deliver their message (Day 1), and the morning of the following day, Day

*Ephraim Landau has a B.S. in Biochemistry from UCLA. While earning an M.S. in Accountancy from Cal State Northridge, he studied Bible at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, and has continued studying Bible ever since. He worked for 30 years as a financial auditor and controller in the Los Angeles area before making aliyah in 2013. He now lives in Pardes Hanna, Israel.*

2. Immediately thereafter, in v. 8, Moses' speech to the people indicates that in the evening the Lord will give them meat to eat, and in the morning He will give them bread. Which days the "evening" and "morning" mentioned in v. 8 refer to are not specified, but it is easiest to assume that they too refer to the evening of Day 1 and the morning of Day 2. In v. 9, Moses has Aaron tell the people to assemble because the Lord has heard their complaints; immediately upon their assembling, in v. 10 the "*kavod* of the Lord" (which in this verse apparently means the Lord's Presence, i.e. a theophany) appears to the people. If this appearance in v. 10 is what was predicted by the same phrase in v. 7, then we must already have reached the morning of Day 2; however, vv. 9-10 give no indication that any time has passed, and we seem to still be in Day 1. If we nevertheless assume that we are in Day 2, the Lord then speaks to Moses in vv. 11-12, telling him to let the people know that in the evening they will eat meat, and in the morning they will eat bread. If the theophany occurred on Day 2, as v. 7 seems to predict, then the "evening" and "morning" of v. 12 must refer to the evening of Day 2 and the morning of Day 3. If this is true, then meat must have arrived on the evening of Day 1 and bread the following morning, but those occurrences are completely ignored by the text.

To summarize, our problems can be formulated as follows:

1. To which days do "evening" and "morning" in vv. 6b-7a1, 8a1 and 12a2 refer?
2. Why does v. 7 seem to predict the appearance of the "*kavod* of the Lord" for the next morning (Day 2), while in vv. 9-10 there is no indication that the morning of Day 2 has arrived and it thus seems that we are still in Day 1? On which day does the theophany occur?

#### PRIOR ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THESE PROBLEMS

Prior attempts to explain these chronology problems all rest on the commentators' different understandings of vv. 6b-7a1, the first instance of the use of the words "evening" and "morning." Abraham Ibn Ezra and George Coats<sup>2</sup> argue that these words *both* refer only to the *first* of the two verb clauses. The use of the words "evening" and "morning," and the prediction in v. 6b that the people will realize that the Lord took them out of Egypt, imply that two events will occur at those times which will result in that realization. As v. 8

then explains, those two events will be the Lord’s sending of meat in the evening and bread in the morning. Since this explanation holds that “morning” does not refer to seeing the “*kavod* of the Lord,” that phrase refers to the theophany which does in fact occur on Day 1, and the meat and bread predicted by vv. 8a1 and 12a2 appear on the evening of Day 1 and the morning of Day 2, respectively.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast, Bruce Malina<sup>4</sup> maintains that “evening” and “morning” in vv. 6b-7a1 *both* refer only to the *second* of the two verb clauses. Because he believes that the calendar used by the editor of P was the same calendar that is used in the Book of Jubilees, he says that Day 1 (per v. 1, the fifteenth day of the second month) was a Friday. Thus, Malina explains that this text predicts that the appearance of the “*kavod* of the Lord,” which he understands as the theophany, will begin on the evening of Day 1 and continue through the morning of Day 2 (and, indeed, through the entire Sabbath). The Lord’s prediction in v. 12 occurs on the Sabbath during the day (i.e., Day 2), and therefore the meat arrives on the evening of Day 2 and the bread on the morning of Day 3.

Ramban sees vv. 6b-7a1 as two independent statements of two independent facts. Furthermore, for him “the *kavod* of the Lord” in v. 7a1 means “the awesome power of the Lord,” something completely different than is meant by the same phrase in v. 10, where it refers specifically to a theophany. Like Ibn Ezra and Coats, Ramban understands “evening” and “morning” to be hinting that two events will occur at those times and will result in the two realizations/experiences that the people will have; v. 8 explains that these two events will be the Lord’s sending of meat and bread at those times. Per Ramban, Moses and Aaron are actually saying something like this: the arrival of the meat (in the form of quail) at the Israelite camp in the evening, which is something that can occur as a normal part of the natural order, will show that the Lord was the One Who took you out of Egypt in that He continues to provide for your needs; as soon as you become conscious of a need for meat, it shows up because He sends it through normal natural processes. However, the appearance in the morning of a unique and supernatural bread (in the form of manna), which does not occur in nature but which *only* He could provide, will demonstrate to you the awesome power of the Lord. Like Ibn Ezra and Coats, Ramban feels that, since v. 7a1 is not predicting the appear-

ance of the Presence of the Lord in v. 10, that appearance can occur on Day 1, with the meat and bread arriving on the evening of Day 1 and the morning of Day 2, respectively.

A. S. Hartom<sup>5</sup> argues that the two verb clauses in vv. 6b-7a1 are parallel to one another; “knowing the Lord took them out of Egypt” and “seeing the awesome power of the Lord” (he agrees with Ramban’s explanation of the phrase) are actually two ways of referring to the same thing. This one thing that Israel will experience is the awesome nature of the Lord’s actions, which will confirm that He is behind *both* the miracles of the Exodus *and* the miracles providing for Israel’s needs in the wilderness. Again, “evening” and “morning” allude to two events that will occur at those times, both of which will be evidence for the Lord’s awesome power. Verse 8 explains that these events will be the Lord’s provision of meat in the coming evening and bread in the coming morning. This explanation results in the same chronology as Ramban’s.

Finally, Brevard Childs<sup>6</sup> maintains that the two short sentences in vv. 6b-7a1 have a parallel structure: *evening* is parallel to *morning*, and *you will know that the Lord took you out of the land of Egypt* is parallel to *you will see the power of the Lord* (he too explains this phrase as do Ramban and Hartom). He states that the evening/morning word-pair is an idiom meaning “shortly” and that the two predictions refer to the same thing: you will experience the power of the Lord. In short, the text means “soon you will experience the power of the Lord.” Verse 8 then explains how this one thing, which will occur shortly, will in fact consist of *two* signs, the appearance of meat and bread, which will occur at *two* different times, *literally* in the evening and in the morning. Thus, Moses’ and Aaron’s statement in vv. 6b-7a1 occurs on Day 1, as does the appearance of the Presence; the meat arrives on the evening of Day 1 and the bread on the morning of Day 2.

I see three major difficulties with the solutions presented above. First, Ibn Ezra, Coats and Malina break up the structure of vv. 6b-7a1. This text seems to clearly state that one thing will occur in the evening and a second thing in the morning, but these commentators maintain that *both* evening and morning refer to only *one* of the two things that will occur, leaving the other thing isolated; in my view, this does not appear correct.<sup>7</sup> Second, Ramban, Hartom and Childs understand “the *kavod* of the Lord” in v. 7a1 as referring to “the

awesome power of the Lord” which will be revealed when the Lord sends bread in the morning (per Ramban) or both meat in the evening *and* bread in the morning (per Hartom and Childs) as is related in v. 8; this is something completely different than is meant by the same phrase in v. 10 where it refers to the appearance of the Presence of the Lord. I don’t believe that one author would use the same expression in virtually adjacent verses in two completely different ways, unless he were doing so as a literary device of some sort. Since it doesn’t appear to me that this is the case here, I maintain that the “*kavod* of the Lord” must mean the same thing in both v. 7 and v. 10, namely the appearance of the Presence of the Lord. Only a solution that posits different authors for vv. 6-7 and vv. 9-10 can support a double meaning of this phrase. Third, Ibn Ezra, Ramban, Coats and Hartom all explain that vv. 6b-7a1 use “evening” and “morning” to cryptically allude to two events which will occur at those times, and which will teach something important to the people; those two events are then named in v. 8. But if the text is written by one author,<sup>8</sup> why would the text use such an awkward method of getting its point across? Why the vague allusion, followed by a second explanatory sentence – a sentence which modern commentators believe had to be added by a later clarifying hand?

#### THE EVENING/MORNING PAIRS ALL ARE PART OF POETIC BICOLA

I believe that in order to explain this text, we must first recognize that the three appearances of the words “evening” and “morning” in Exodus 16 all occur in small pieces of poetry embedded within the prose narrative. None of the commentators reviewed above recognize this except Childs, whose recognition is limited to vv. 6b-7a1.<sup>9</sup>

In his classic study, Gray<sup>10</sup> defines the biblical Hebrew poetic unit as a couplet of two independent clauses (short sentences); each clause later came to be referred to as a colon, and the poetic unit of two cola as a bicolon. According to Gray, such bicola possess two main characteristics to a greater or lesser degree: parallelism and rhythm. True parallelism is found when each (or almost each) “term” (word or small word group) in one colon has a term parallel to it in thought in the other colon; the terms can be synonymous, contrasting, or corresponding in thought in some other way. The parallel terms can be signified by letters; for example, “A” indicates the first term in the

first colon, and “A” indicates the term parallel to it in the second colon. However, both poetry and narrative can include couplets of short independent clauses with similar structures, even though portions of each line are not strictly parallel in term or thought; Gray calls this style “parallelistic.” As to rhythm, Gray shows that poetic bicola often exhibit a rhythm based on the number of stressed syllables in each colon. While in many specific cases it is difficult to know precisely which rhythm is exhibited because we cannot be sure if the Masoretic vocalization and other markings reflect how the text was read when it was composed, clear evidence exists for rhythms of three stresses in each colon (“3:3 rhythm”), as well as 4:3, 3:2, and 2:2 rhythms.

Verses 6b-7a1 read as follows: (*In the evening* [erev], you will realize [vi-yeda'tem] that the Lord took you out of the land of Egypt // *And (in the morning* [uvoker], you will see [ur'item] the “kavod” of the Lord... These verses consist of two independent clauses with AB // A'B' parallelism. A/A' consists of the evening/morning word-pair, a word-pair used in many places in biblical Hebrew poetry as parallel terms.<sup>11</sup> B/B' consists of two verbs, both in the perfect second person plural with vav conversive, followed by object clauses that explain what “you” (the people) will do. It is true that the object clauses are longer than “terms” normally are in biblical poetry; whether or not they are parallel in thought is open to interpretation; and no evidence of a poetic rhythm exists in this couplet. Nevertheless, the structure and function of the verbs and their following clauses show that they are to be understood as occupying parallel positions. Thus this text seems to lie somewhere between Gray's description of a bicolon and “parallelistic style.” My decision to refer to this couplet as a poetic bicolon embedded in the text is based on the presence of the evening/morning word-pair and my argument (to be presented later) that the verbs and their clauses are in fact parallel in thought.<sup>12</sup>

Verse 12a2 reads as follows: *In the evening* [ben ha'arbayim] you shall eat [to'chlu] meat [basar] // *And in the morning* [uvaboker] you shall be filled with [tisbe'u-] bread [lahem]. These two independent clauses have the parallel structure ABC // A'B'C'. A/A' consists of the parallel word-pair *ben ha'arbayim* (a P term often used for *erev*)<sup>13</sup> and *boker*, B/B' consists of the synonymous parallel between the verbs “you shall eat” [to'chlu] and “you shall be filled with” [tisbe'u] and C/C' is a parallel between two foods, meat [basar] and bread [lahem]. Furthermore, although the exact nature of the

couplet’s rhythm is open to debate, it clearly possesses such rhythm.<sup>14</sup> For these reasons, it constitutes a poetic bicolon.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, let us look at v. 8a1, in which Moses tells the people that when the Lord gives them *in the evening* [ba’erev] *meat* [basar] *to eat* [le’echol] // *and bread* [v’lehem] *in the morning* [baboker] *to satisfy/fill [you]* [lisbo’a]... Since this text consists of a dangling dependent clause, one might question whether it should also be considered a poetic bicolon. Whatever the history of the structure of v. 8 as a whole might be, there are three reasons why I believe that v. 8a1 should be understood to have been intended as (and perhaps was, in its original form) a poetic bicolon.

First, v. 8 in its entirety is structured very closely to vv. 6-7. Thus, literary characteristics that appear in vv. 6-7 might be considered to be (or to have been) present in v. 8 as well. Since as I have shown, Moses’ and Aaron’s opening words in vv. 6b-7a1 can be considered a poetic bicolon, the author of v. 8 may well have intended Moses’ opening words to be understood in the same way.

Second, the parallel structure ABC // B’A’C’ is apparent, with A/A’ being the word-pair evening/morning, B/B’ being the pair of foods “meat” and “bread,” and C/C’ being the parallel infinitives “to eat” and “to satisfy/fill.” Furthermore, a 3:3 rhythm is also evident. This parallel structure and rhythm show that we are dealing with a poetic bicolon.

Lastly, two other poetic bicola in this chapter exhibit a characteristic which also appears in v. 8a1: the bicola embedded in vv. 3 and 12. The middle of verse 3 reads: *When we sat* [beshivtenu] *by the pot of meat* [‘al-sir habasar] // *When we ate* [be’ochlenu] *bread to the full* [lehem lasova]. This couplet exhibits AB // A’B’ parallelism: the A/A’ pair consists of the two verbs in identical grammatical form, and the B/B’ pair uses “meat” and “bread” in two-stress combinations that both paint an image of abundance. When we consider that in addition, a 3:3 rhythm exists, it is clear that this text too is a poetic bicolon. As is true of the three appearances of the evening/morning word-pair, none of the commentators I reviewed note that these words constitute a poetic bicolon embedded in the verse.

Notice that in v. 3, as well as in v. 12a2 (as we have already seen), the root *s.b. ‘.* is associated with the bread which is eaten. The fact that the same thing

occurs in v. 8a1 is additional evidence that Moses' opening words in v. 8 originally constituted or were intended to be understood as a poetic bicolon.<sup>16</sup>

#### “EVENING/MORNING” AS A PARALLEL WORD-PAIR IN BIBLICAL POETRY

Given that the words “evening” and “morning” in Exodus 16:6-12 all occur as parallel word-pairs in poetic bicola, it is only natural that we should see if and how these words are used elsewhere as a parallel word-pair in biblical poetry before we consider their meaning here.

When two words are used repeatedly as a parallel word-pair in biblical poetry, we are justified in considering this word-pair to be a poetic convention, a traditional usage of ancient Israelite prosody. Many word-pairs were already standard in the Ugaritic poetry which preceded ancient Israel;<sup>17</sup> others, not evidenced in that poetry, may well have been created by the Israelite poets who shared and developed this poetic tradition. Although I do not believe the word-pair “evening/morning” (or “morning/evening”) has been found in Ugaritic poetry, it appears four times as a parallel word-pair in biblical poetry, as well as once in a poetic bicolon embedded in a prose text.<sup>18</sup> Because of the number of examples that exist, we can confidently say that Israelite poets used this word-pair as one of their accepted tools in constructing parallel bicola.

The words *erev* and *boker* are of course used with their literal meanings “evening” and “morning,” respectively, throughout the *prose* sections of the Bible; they may even appear close together when the prose is describing two consecutive things that happen at those times.<sup>19</sup> However, in a recent article I argued that when these words are used as a parallel word-pair in *poetry*, they are never used primarily for their individual literal meanings; instead, they are used as a combined unit to express abstract ideas.<sup>20</sup> I will briefly review the evidence for this in the four places where the word-pair is used in poetic sections of the Bible.

Psalm 30:6 consists of two bicola: *For a moment with [or “in”] His anger - / A lifetime with [or “in”] His favor; // In the evening, [one] lies down to sleep [with] crying / But in the morning - [one arises with] shouting for joy!* It does make sense that a person lies down to sleep literally “in the evening” and arises literally “in the morning.” However, there is no reason for the poet to introduce these images of going to sleep in the evening and arising in the



morning at all unless he intended them to be understood in some figurative sense.<sup>21</sup> Malbim (Rabbi Meir Loeb ben Yehiel Michael) addresses this point. He explains that according to the second bicolon, although the person with whom God is angry goes to sleep with crying because he is suffering God’s punishment for his sins, that punishment lasts only a brief time (evening to morning), and by morning the crying is replaced by shouting for joy because God has forgiven him. Malbim’s explanation focuses on the period of time *bracketed* by the time-opposites “evening” and “morning;” the poet is using this word-pair to convey the image of a *brief* period of time. This explanation shows how the images in the second bicolon build on what is stated in the first bicolon, which contrasts *a moment* in God’s anger with *a lifetime* in His favor. God’s anger (and a person’s corresponding sadness), lasts only a brief period of time, after which it is replaced by His longer-lasting favor (and the person’s corresponding joy).

We should notice that the parallelism in the second bicolon is what I refer to as *sequential*; since one cannot weep and shout for joy at the same time, the two cola describe events that occur sequentially. The parallelism manifests itself in one thing in the first colon (the crying) being replaced by or changed into a different (opposite) thing (the shouting for joy) in the second colon.

Psalms 90:1-12 focuses on how God’s anger towards human sinfulness limits the human lifespan. Verse 4 describes how, in God’s eyes, what humans consider a long period of time is extremely brief; vv. 8-10 focus on human sinfulness and the difficulties and briefness of human life. In between these verses, we find vv. 6-7: (6) *In the morning it [the fresh grass] flourishes anew; / towards evening it withers and dries up.* (7) *So we are consumed by Your anger, / terror-struck by Your fury.* As with Psalms 30:6, the bicolon in Psalms 90:6 describes events that occur sequentially and is thus an example of sequential parallelism; the grass *changes* from fresh to withered. Although the heat of God’s anger might conceivably cause fresh grass to wither literally in the time from morning to evening, there is (as in Psalm 30:6) no reason for the poet to introduce this image at all unless he is using it in some figurative sense. Both Ibn Ezra and Radak (Rabbi David Kimhi) explain that the poet uses the grass that flourishes and then dries up as a metaphor for people, whose lives are limited by God’s anger at their sinfulness; furthermore, the

word-pair “morning/evening” is used to compare the human *lifespan* to the time between morning and evening. But what is the poet implying by the use of this word-pair to represent the human *lifespan*? I believe that Malbim’s explanation in Psalm 30:6 is also the best explanation in this case. We have here a second instance where we can see that the standardized word-pair “morning/evening” from the Israelite poetic tradition is being used in a sequentially parallel bicolon to convey an image of a *brief, swiftly passing* period of time. This interpretation also fits well with the theme of human life’s brevity presented in the verses that surround this one.

Isaiah 17:12-14 describes God’s destruction of enemies who threaten Israel. Verse 14 is composed of two bicola: *At eventide, lo, terror! / By morning, it [or: he] is no more. // Such is the lot of our despoilers, / The portion of them that plunder us* (New JPS Translation, second edition, 1999). Once again, in the first bicolon, the parallelism is sequential: first comes the feeling of terror (whether that be Israel’s terror or the terror experienced by Israel’s enemies who perceive God to be fighting against them), which passes and is replaced by the enemy’s elimination. Both Ibn Ezra and Radak see this bicolon as a literal reference to the overnight breaking of the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem as related in II Kings 19:35. However, neither the bicolon nor the section of which it is a part explicitly refer to any specific event. Why else might the poet use this standard word-pair in this situation? I believe that the best explanation, once again, is that the word-pair functions to convey the idea of a brief period of time. The time it takes Israel’s God to destroy her enemies is as brief as that between evening and morning. This explanation not only makes sense, but is consistent with the way we have seen that Israelite poets use this word-pair in the two bicola we have examined previously.

Finally, in Genesis 49:27 the tribe of Benjamin is described: *Benjamin is a ravenous wolf;/ In the morning he consumes the foe [or: booty],/ And in the evening he divides the spoil* (New JPS Translation, second edition, 1999). The translation of the Hebrew word ‘*ad*, according to NPJS, may be “foe” or it may be “booty.”<sup>22</sup> If we adopt the translation “foe,” then the last two cola of this tricolon exhibit sequential parallelism, giving the beginning (defeating the foe) and end-points (dividing the spoil) of a military victory. In that case, the word-pair “morning/evening” is probably not intended to be understood literally, namely that Benjamin’s standard procedure is to *always* engage and

defeat their enemies only in the morning and divide up the spoil only in the evening. We can explain the reason for the poet’s use of this word-pair consistently with the way we explained it in the three bicola we have already examined: conveying the image of a short period of time. The poet is emphasizing the swiftness with which Benjamin achieves victory over his enemies. But what if the correct translation of *‘ad* is “booty,” not “foe?” In that case, *consumes the booty* and *divides the spoil* constitute a *synonymous* parallelism. It wouldn’t make sense for the poet to use the word-pair literally to say that Benjamin does the same thing in both the morning (literally) and the evening (literally). I suggest that in a synonymously parallel bicolon, the poet may be using this word-pair to indicate “morning *or* evening,” i.e. “whenever,” (as in the English saying, “You can call me day or night”). Because of Benjamin’s prowess in battle, he is always/constantly/invariably to be found consuming/dividing the booty/spoil of his enemies.<sup>23</sup>

Thus we have seen that when Israelite poets choose to use evening/morning (or morning/evening) as a parallel word-pair in biblical poetry, they do not seem to do so in order to make use of the literal meaning of the individual words. With regard to sequentially parallel bicola, although four instances (including the possible one in Genesis) are not enough to allow us to be certain, nevertheless the appearance of this many instances of this word-pair in the same sort of parallelism with the same use argues that this may be the traditional way in which Israelite poets use this word-pair in such bicola: namely, to convey the image of a *brief, quickly passing* period of time. In contrast, in the case of a synonymously parallel bicolon, we have an indication that the word-pair may be used to convey the meaning “at any time,” “whenever” or “always.”

#### CONCLUSION: A COMPREHENSIVE POETIC SOLUTION

In Exodus 16:6-12, we have uncovered three additional examples of Israelite poetic use of the evening/morning word-pair. Given the evidence presented above which shows that this word-pair seems to have been used figuratively, it does not seem likely that all three of *these* examples (or some of them but not others) were meant to be understood in a solely literal fashion.<sup>24</sup> It is only fair to ask whether in these three instances the use of the word-pair is, as in the other cases we have examined, not primarily literal but figurative.

If the bicola in vv. 6b-7a1, 8a1 and 12a2 are all sequentially parallel, the simplest course would be to explain *all* of these evening/morning word-pairs as being used to convey the idea “in a short period of time.”

Verses 6b-7a1 contain the phrases *you will know that the Lord took you out of the land of Egypt* and *you will see the ‘kavod of the Lord’* in parallel positions. My argument that “the *kavod* of the Lord” should be seen in both v. 7 and v. 10 as referring to the theophany would suggest that these parallel phrases in vv. 6b-7a1 both refer to the coming theophany. The parallelism, however, is not synonymous. The bicolon can be understood to mean that in a short period of time, the people will realize that the Lord was behind the Exodus *as a result of* their seeing the Presence of the Lord. Thus, while the parallel clauses in this bicolon speak of one event, they speak of two *aspects* of that event which *will* occur sequentially: the seeing of the Presence, and the subsequent realization of the people. The other two bicola, vv. 8a1 and 12a2, have “meat” and “bread” in parallel positions; these are clearly not synonymous, and as the text subsequently relates, these foods appear one after the other. Thus the parallelism in these two bicola is sequential as well.

I therefore maintain that the three uses of the evening/morning word-pair in Exodus 16:6-12 may well mean that something will occur “quickly” or “soon,” just as this word-pair seems to be used in other sequentially parallel bicola in biblical poetry. Verses 6b-7a1 refer only to the coming theophany, which will occur “soon;” as a result of it, the people will realize that it was the Lord who took them out of Egypt. In v. 8a1, Moses hints to the people that “soon” the Lord will send meat and bread. Finally, in the Lord’s divine oracle in vv. 11-12, He personally explains that He will be providing meat and bread “soon.”

Since this understanding obviates the need to see any particular event occurring literally either in the evening or in the morning, such an understanding eliminates the chronological problems in this section of the chapter. Verses 6-12 all occur on Day 1. The arrival of meat/quails in v. 13 occurs on the evening of Day 1, and the arrival of bread/manna occurs on the morning of Day 2.

To be sure, a number of other problems exist in Exodus 16:6-12, and in this chapter as a whole. One of them is: if the evening/morning word-pair consistently means “very soon,” then why do vv. 13-14 take “evening” and

“morning” literally, narrating the arrival of quails and manna at those times, respectively? I hope to address this issue in a future article.

*This article is dedicated to the memory of my father, Hugo Landau z”l*

#### NOTES

1. All translations of biblical verses are mine unless otherwise indicated. Since, as we shall see, the term *kavod* in v. 7a1 is seen in two different ways by past commentators, I will not translate it so as not to exhibit preference for any particular understanding of the term.
2. Coats, George W., *Rebellion in the Wilderness*, Nashville: Abington Press, 1968 pp. 83-96.
3. The major thrust of Coats’ ground-breaking study was to characterize a “murmuring tradition pattern” that occurs in many of the P sections of the wilderness traditions in Exodus and Numbers. The pattern, as summarized by Childs (see Note 6 below), consists of the people’s murmuring statement (in Exodus 16, this is found in vv. 2-3), followed by Moses’ (and Aaron’s) response disputing the specifics contained in the murmuring statement (Exodus 16:6-8), followed in turn by the appearance of “the *kavod* of the Lord” (i.e., a theophany, Exodus 16:9-10) and concluding with a “divine oracle” (Exodus 16:11-12). The appearance of this pattern in Exodus 16 is strong evidence that the order of the verses in the text is correct, and that the text is the product of one author or editor.
4. Malina, Bruce J., *The Palestinian Manna Tradition*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968 pp. 1-20.
5. Hartom, A. S., *Exodus*, Tel Aviv: Yavneh Ltd., Revised Edition, Fifth Printing, 1977 pp. 58-59 (Hebrew). Hartom is a modern Italian-Jewish commentator who was M.D. Cassuto’s brother-in-law and whose name in Italian was Elia Samuele Artom. See Rabello, Alfredo Mordechai, “Artom, Elia Samuele,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd, 1972, vol. 3, col. 663.
6. Childs, Brevard S., *Exodus: A Commentary*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1974 pp. 271-292.
7. Malina’s explanation, which posits that vv. 11-12 were written by a different author than vv. 6-10, has several other weaknesses. One is that it breaks off the divine oracle in vv. 11-12 from Coats’ “murmuring tradition pattern” and ascribes it to a second author (see Note 3 above). Additionally, it is not at all evident in the text that the theophany lasted the entire Sabbath. It apparently began during Day 1 immediately after Moses’ and Aaron’s communication to the people in vv. 6-7, and not in the evening of that day; furthermore, it seems to have lasted, as it usually does, for a brief period of time only.
8. Furthermore, if v. 8 is a later gloss (as many modern commentators believe), the original explanatory verse would have to have been v. 12a2, which is quite far away from vv. 6b-7a1.
9. While he does not explicitly refer to this text as poetry, Childs does recognize that each term or clause in one sentence has a parallel term or clause in the other sentence.
10. Gray, George Buchanan, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry*, first published in 1915, republished as part of The Library of Biblical Studies, edited by Harry M. Orlinsky, KTAV Publishing House, 1972, especially pp. 52-59 and 123-150.
11. Landau, Ephraim, “The Word-Pair Morning/Evening as a Parallel Word-Pair in Biblical Poetry,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* Vol. 45:4 (2017) pp. 260-268.

12. In a more recent work, David Frankel analyzed Exodus 16 in his book on the stories of Israel's murmurings against the Lord, Moses and Aaron in the desert. See Frankel, David, *The Murmuring Stories of the Priestly School: A Retrieval of Ancient Sacerdotal Lore*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum Vol. LXXXIX, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002 pp. 63-117. He divides Exodus 16:1-3, 6-14 into an original P source, a P editor's additions, and an even later "supplementer" (like most other modern commentators, he believes that vv. 4-5 belong to a non-P source). His explanation breaks up vv. 6b-7a1, arguing that the P editor added v. 6 and the supplementer added v. 7a1. This would mean that the poetic bicolon was created completely by chance. Furthermore, he argues that the supplementer predicted that the "kavod of the Lord" would appear in the morning because "the *Kavod* appears in the cloud, which was only present during the day" (p. 72). If the supplementer had meant "during the day," he would surely have used that phrase (or no time designation at all) instead of "morning" in v. 7a1. Although Frankel does not address the chronological problems in vv. 6-12, it follows from his analysis that it was the supplementer who created them. Frankel does not address why the supplementer did not see (or did not care about) the problems his additions were creating.

13. F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. Briggs (eds.), *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, reprinted from the 1906 edition), p. 788.

14. The bicolon has either a 4:3, a 3:3, a 4:2 or a 3:2 rhythm, depending on whether one treats the word *ben* as stressed and whether one relies on the Masoretic *makkeph* [hyphen] following *tisbe'u* as indicating only one stress on two words. See Gray's discussion of rhythm, especially pp. 123-150. The very fact that we can identify such possible rhythms, even though we cannot decide between them, constitutes additional evidence that this is a poetic bicolon. The clause that follows, *And you shall know that I the Lord am your God*, may constitute a third line of the poetic grouping and thus v. 12a2b may in fact be a tricolon with only the first two cola exhibiting parallelism. A discussion of whether that is true is not relevant to the point being made here.

15. Kselman does identify vv. 8a1 and 12a2 as poetic bicola, and discusses the word-pairs which comprise them. See Kselman, John S., "The Recovery of Poetic Fragments From the Pentateuchal Priestly Source," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 97 No. 2, 1978 pp. 169-170. Interestingly, he does not mention vv. 6b-7a1; perhaps he considers this text to be closer to "parallelistic style" due to the considerations I have noted.

16. Kselman discusses the word-pair '*achal // sava*' [eat // be filled] at some length; he shows that *sava*' is a synonym and parallel term to '*achal*'. In addition, however, I want to emphasize that in Exodus 16:3, 8 and 12 (as in the prose text Leviticus 26:5), the word *sava*' is not only parallel to '*achal*' (in the Exodus verses) but is consistently associated with *lehem* [bread]. See Kselman, Note 15 above.

17. See for example Cassuto, M.D., *The Goddess Anat*, Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1951 pp. 24-28 (Hebrew).

18. See Note 11. The word-pair appears in bicola in Psalms 30:6 and 90:6, Isaiah 17:14, and Genesis 49:27. Although the words also appear in consecutive cola in Zephaniah 3:3, it is not clear there whether the words are actually functioning as a parallel word-pair; thus I believe it unwise to try to learn anything from this verse about the words' normal use as a parallel word-pair. The word-pair also appears in Ecclesiastes 11:6, a bicolon embedded in a prose text (see Note 23 below).

19. See, for example, Genesis 29:23-25, Numbers 28:4, and Esther 2:14.

20. See Note 11 above.

21. David Kimhi (Radak) offers the explanation that the “crying” is tied to the evening because the latter is an image of darkness and sadness, whereas the “shouting for joy” is tied to the morning because that is an image of light and hope. However, this explanation does not relate the second bicolon to the first.

22. In my previously-referenced article (Note 11, page 265), I mistakenly stated that the New JPS translation of Genesis 49:27 notes that the Hebrew word *shalal*, translated as “foe,” may possibly mean “booty” instead. In fact, the word in question is *ad*, not *shalal*.

23. This understanding of the use of the evening/morning word-pair in a synonymously parallel bicolon is supported by Ecclesiastes 11:6, a bicolon followed by a prose explanation. This bicolon is synonymously parallel; “sow your seed” and “don’t hold back your hand” refer to the same thing, albeit first in a positive way and then in a negative. Although a complete discussion of this verse is beyond our scope here, I will note that the author is not talking *only* about farming; he is using “sowing” as an example for “work” or “purposeful activity” in general. The author’s point is that it doesn’t *matter* when one undertakes a purposeful activity; any time is just as good as any other time. Instead of saying this in prose, the author makes his point by using a traditional parallel word-pair in a synonymously parallel bicolon. Both Ibn Ezra and Metzudat David make this point: “in the morning” and “in the evening” are used by the author to convey the figurative meaning “always,” “at any time,” or “whenever.” See Fox, Michael V., “Qohelet and His Contradictions,” *Bible and Literature Series 18*, Sheffield: Almond, 1989 pp. 276-277, who also follows this approach.

24. As we have seen, Childs argues that vv. 6b-7a1 use the evening/morning word-pair figuratively to mean “shortly,” although he presents no evidence for this view. However, he also maintains that v. 12, which also belongs to the P narrative and was *not* added later as he believes v. 8 was, uses that same word-pair literally. Given that these texts are both poetic bicola and thus may well be subject to the traditional poetic conventions of Israelite poetry, I think it is at least questionable whether the same P author would create two bicola with the parallel word-pair evening/morning in his composition, and expect the first one to be understood figuratively as is apparently traditional in Israelite poetry, but expect the second one to be understood literally. Even if the P author were making use of two previously-existing bicola, I don’t believe that he would insert them into his text intending one to be understood figuratively and the other literally.