

Repetition Indicating Form and Function

A Rhetorical-Critical Case Study in Leviticus 23

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Abstract: It has long been observed that the repetition of literary devices has been used in the Bible and other ancient Near Eastern literature for the purpose of structuring the text and connecting related pericopes. The work done more recently under the *TAPJLA* project, labels the structuring aspect of repetition: “Repetitions as markers of architecture.” Also, the innovative work of Moshe Kline suggests that literary repetition has been used systematically in two-dimensional structuring of the Torah. This paper builds on these insights, together with elements of my own thesis on the rhetoric of Leviticus. It models an inductive, synchronic case study of a literary unit (Leviticus 23), to show how repetitions have been used both in the form and in the function of the unit, for composition and for suasion.

Keywords: Repetition, Leviticus, Rhetorical Criticism, Literary Composition

Context

It has long been observed that the repetition of literary devices has been used in the Bible and other ancient Near Eastern (ANE) literature for the purpose of structuring the text and connecting related pericopes (see argument in Boys, 1824; Forbes, 1868; Jebb, 1820; Lowth et al., 1829, 1978; Lund, 1942; Muilenberg, 1953; Watson, 2004). The work done more recently under the *Typology of Anonymous and Pseudepigraphic Jewish Literature in Antiquity* project, captures the structuring aspect of repetition well, labelling it (9.4.3): “Repetitions as markers of architecture” (Samely et al., 2012). Also, the innovative work of Moshe Kline suggests that literary repetition has been used systematically in two-dimensional structuring of the Torah (Kline, 2015), and exemplified in detail in his paper on Leviticus 19 (Kline, 2008). This paper builds on these insights, together with elements of my own thesis on the rhetoric of Leviticus (Hocking, forthcoming). It models an inductive, synchronic case study of another literary unit of Leviticus (Lev 23), to show how repetitions have been used both in the form and in the function of the unit.

Leviticus 23

There is a scholarly consensus that Leviticus 23 forms a discrete literary unit within the extant text¹ and comprises a key unit in the so-called “Holiness Code” (H), though some consider there may be material from the Priestly source (P), and indeed, various strata from H, before the final redaction by the Holiness School (Hartley, 1992, 363–94; Knohl, 1995, 8–45; Milgrom, 2001, 2054–56; Nihan, 2007, 496–511). The various disjunctures and some of the repetitions in the chapter have been used by many as indication of various sources underpinning the extant text (see Nihan, 2007, 498 and references). Certainly the repetition of the title about the *moadim* (מוֹעֲדִים, appointed times) in verses 2 and 4, and the repetition of the festival of booths in verses 33–36 and in 39–43, give strong suggestion of various hands in the unit’s composition.

¹ This paper is based on the Masoretic Text of BHS4, but the argument is not substantially changed if one used the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Septuagint or the DSS fragments (where text is available).

Whatever the compositional history of the unit, this paper takes a synchronic approach to the final form of the text. It argues inductively, on the basis of the surface-level literary devices, and from other examples in TAPJLA, the Mishnah, and in Kline's work, that repetitions have been systematically used by the final redactor to establish both a discrete form, and through this, the suasive function of the literary unit regarding "the appointed times of the LORD." The Hebrew term is *mô'ēd* (מוֹעֵד) meaning "a fixed time" and the construct phrase with YHWH is used to mean both that the fixed time has been set *by* YHWH, and that the fixed time is *for* YHWH, that is for the nation to worship him (Milgrom, 2001, 1955).

However, initially, I will set out some principles I have used for this synchronic composition analysis, based on an extensive literature review of the compositions proposed for Leviticus (for the full list of eight principles, see (Hocking, forthcoming)).

Some Principles for Synchronic Composition Analysis

A first principle is more an initial warning, to *beware of cognitive bias*. This warning is based on the advice of Welch who "emphasises the need for objective data for delimiting individual units" (Welch, 1981, 13) and others who recognize the danger of "confirmation bias" in identifying literary structures (Boda, 1996; Butterworth, 1992, 18–61; Kugel, 1981, 2012).

A second principle for literary analysis is to *read the work as literature*. Following nearly two centuries of diachronic studies on the book of Leviticus, there has been more recent acceptance that the final form of the book shows evidence of significant compositional art, expressed in the form of rhetorical devices and synchronic coherence. This principle is therefore to assume that there is coherence in the book as a whole, at least from the viewpoint of the final redactor. This may not obviate views of putative sources or fragments, but it does respect the literary competence of the final redactor.

A third principle is to *appreciate that literary structure conveys meaning*. One could express this as: "The plausible articulation of form can lead to a plausible articulation of meaning," nuancing the wording of Tribble (1994, 91). Morales concurs: "Increasingly, scholars have come to appreciate the significance of literary structure for determining the meaning of a work: that the form conveys meaning" (Morales, 2016, 23). Muilenberg argued that the form and the content are inextricably related and the embellishment of a text serves its *communicative* purpose (Muilenberg, 1969). Patrick and Scult go further in arguing that a rhetorical perspective on biblical texts must recognise the artful form—the rhetorical shape—of the text as the essential vehicle through which its truth claims are communicated, and the key to fathoming the spiritual or religious argument being made (Patrick & Scult, 1990, 15-19).

A fourth principle is to *tend towards "Sola Terminologia,"* using Warning's phrase. I accept the guidance given from decades of biblical rhetorical analysis by scholars since Muilenberg (1969) that judgments made about key divisions within such books should be based on significant terminological formulations, rather than alignment of concepts or assumptions of "regularity." Warning makes the distinction between this approach and that of others: "the *conditio sine qua non* could be expressed as *sola terminologia*, whereas for [others] conceptual considerations seem to be of equal importance" (Warning, 1999, 18). This principle could be expressed as its corollary—*Content is secondary to literary indicators*. This has been my method also, basing my analysis on literary indicators on the surface-level of the text, rather than descriptions of patterned "content," using self-created labels.

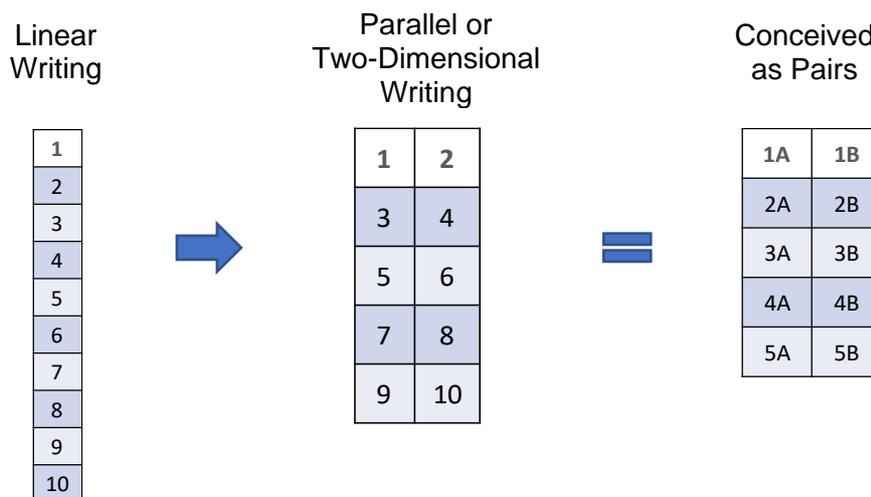
All three of the above principles require not only repeated close reading of the literary unit, but also detailed literary analysis of the flow of the text, definitely in the Hebrew, to identify the form of the unit from the syntactical level up.

A fifth principle for these texts is to *recognise that parallelism was a habit of mind*. In the Hebrew Bible, parallelism is not just a principle for the writing, reading and understanding of poetry at the verse level, but also in prose at the pericope level, the unit level and even the whole book level. Kugel describes it as a “habit of mind” (Kugel, 1998, 31), and this was no doubt shaped by the essentially aural nature of ancient culture, in which repetition was a primary way to structure rhetoric. Douglas adds: “Recall that parallelism is not just a way of writing, not just a stylistic device. It is only possible to write in parallels because it is a way of thinking . . .” (Douglas, 2001, 251). However, Kline is rare, to my knowledge, in pointing to systematic parallelisms of whole pericopes within units of prose up to the book level². The same two-dimensional parallelism or alternation has been observed by other scholars in certain literary units (for example, in the creation text in Gen 1:3–31, viewed as a 3 x 2 parallelism (Cassuto, 1978, 48; Collins, 2006, 73; Fishbane, 1998, 10–11; Hamilton, 1990, 125; Kass, 2003, 31; Parunak, 1982, 10; Ryle, 1914, 12; Sacks, 1980, 39; Strauss & Green, 1997; Wenham, 1987, 7), the nine “plagues” in Ex 7:14–10:29, viewed as a 3 x 3 parallelism, by Rabbi Judah and Rashbam (see Fredman, 1982) and more recently, by modern scholars (Cassuto, 1959, 61; Childs, 1974; Greenberg & Tigay, 2013), and also the offerings in Lev 1–3, analysed as a 3 x 3 parallelism (Luciani, 2008, 324). However, only Kline argues that such literary structures are intentionally two-dimensional and systemic across the five books of the Torah and within each literary unit (Kline, 2015).

Pericopes in Parallel

Kline proposes that pericopes “in parallel” were indicated to the reader/listener by literary correspondents (not by content or regularity). Visually, the parallel or two-dimensional way of conceiving this form of writing and reading can be represented in Figure 1, where 10 pericopes are written as five pairs, and intended to be read and conceived in this way, based on their repeating literary correspondents.

Much more could be said about the significance of this literary form, but in this context, I am simply illustrating the two-dimensional form of the rhetoric. We can now move to the literary structure in Leviticus 23.



² Others, such as Gooding and Lennox, have also discerned similar book-wide structures, but have come from a different paradigm in their patterns and representations (Gooding, 1981, 1982, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c; Lennox, 2015). However, I see their observations producing similar conclusions in other books of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, and certainly as adding plausibility and comparators to this argument.

The Composition: Structural Repetitions

The dominant structural repetition in the literary unit is the presence of the full divine speech report and commission formula: “The LORD spoke to Moses, speak to the sons of Israel . . .” (וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל).

This repetition divides the unit into four sections: vv. 1–8; 9–22; 23–32; 33–44 (Table 1).

Table 1: Four Pericopes in Lev 23

	Repetition as Indication of Architecture
v. 1–8	The LORD spoke to Moses, speak to the sons of Israel . . .
v. 9–22	The LORD spoke to Moses, speak to the sons of Israel . . .
v. 23–32	The LORD spoke to Moses, speak to the sons of Israel . . .
v. 33–44	The LORD spoke to Moses, speak to the sons of Israel . . .

The next literary indicator that the careful reader notices is the repetition of a titular sentence in v. 2 and v. 4, that has the effect of dividing the first pericope (vv. 1–8) into two subordinate parts (vv. 2b–3 and 4–8). I have set the two sentences in parallel in Table 2, to indicate the inverted parallelism both within the verses and across verse 2 and 4 (in Hebrew then in literalistic English).

Table 2: Repetition of Title

v. 4	v. 2b
אֱלֹהִים מוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה	מוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה
מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ	אֲשֶׁר-תִּקְרְאוּ
אֲתֵם	מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ
אֲשֶׁר-תִּקְרְאוּ	אֵלֶּה
אֲתֵם	הֵם מוֹעֲדֵי:
מוֹעֲדֵם	בְּ-
v. 2b:	v. 4:
The appointed times of the LORD	These (are) the appointed times of the LORD,
that you shall proclaim them	sacred occasions,
sacred occasions ³ (are) these,	that you shall proclaim them
they (are) the appointed times of me.	at the appointed times of them.

Whatever one believes about prior putative sources, this demonstrates the careful literary composition of the final text, *contra* Milgrom, who describes v. 2 as “both awkward stylistically and incorrect grammatically” (Milgrom, 2001, 1954). Milgrom’s concern is overcome if one reads this pericope as parallelism, and the initial sentence as a nominal clause, “the appointed times of the LORD . . . (are) these,” confirmed by the inverted parallel in v. 4.

³ Following Milgrom’s argument for the translation of this priestly idiom (Milgrom, 2001, 1957-8).

Then the phrase “sacred occasions” is to be read as a sub-ordinate parallel with “the appointed times.” So, the full sentence could be read literalistically: “The appointed times of the LORD (holy convocations), that you shall proclaim them, are these.”

Its function is similar to the repetition in the 3 x 2 creation unit, “Let there be light” and “Let there be lights” (Gen 1.3, 14), which, as mentioned in principle 5 above, many have argued indicates that day one and four are to be read in parallel. In Lev 23, the writer appears to be prompting the reader to conceive these two sub-pericopes in parallel, via repetition of the title. The significance of such indicators is often missed, as, paradigmatically, we read the text in our ‘codex’ in a linear manner. To aid our parallel conception, the titles can be presented in parallel columns, as in Table 3, so dividing the first divine speech into two sub-pericopes, the first focused on the Sabbath and the second focused on Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (*matzot*).

From this layout of the paired titles, and the recognition that the first divine speech is divided into a pair of sub-pericopes (Sabbath vis-à-vis Passover-Matzot), one readily recognises that the other three divine speeches also contain two sub-pericopes: the second speech is focused on grain harvest—the bringing of the “elevation sheaf” on the day after the sabbath (2A), and the “elevation bread” (2B) on the day after the seventh sabbath (the fiftieth day, now called *Shavuot* or Pentecost); the third speech is focused on a day memorial with the blowing of trumpets (3A, now called Rosh Hashannah or New Year), and followed later in the month with the Day of Atonement (3B); and finally, the fourth speech is strangely a repetition of the same Festival (4A and B), the Festival of Booths (Succoth).

Table 3: Other Structural Repetitions

	Repetition as Indication of Architecture	
	A	B
1. v. 1–8 A= v. 1–3 B= v. 4–8	The LORD spoke to Moses, speak to the sons of Israel . . . <i>These are the appointed times of the LORD. . .</i> Sabbath	<i>These are the appointed times of the LORD . . .</i> Passover and Festival of Matzot
2. v. 9–22 A= v. 9–14 B= v. 15–22	The LORD spoke to Moses, speak to the sons of Israel . . . Day after the Sabbath— The Elevation Sheaf	Day after the 7th Sabbath— The Elevation Bread
3. v. 23–32 A= v. 23–25 B= v. 26–32	The LORD spoke to Moses, speak to the sons of Israel . . . A Sabbaton and Memorial by Blowing (Trumpets)	Day of Atonement
4. v. 33–44 A= v. 33–38 B= v. 39–44	The LORD spoke to Moses, speak to the sons of Israel . . . Festival of Booths <i>These are the appointed times of the LORD . . .</i>	Festival of Booths <i>So, Moses spoke the appointed times of the LORD to the sons of Israel.</i>

This four-paired structure, based on literary indicators rather than a linear list of “festivals,” as in most commentaries, shows a different perspective emerging.

Finally, at the close of the literary unit, there is also a summary formulaic repetition of the “appointed times of the LORD,” in vv. 37–38 and 44, not concluding the Festival of Booths pericopes but the whole chapter/literary unit. This repetition of the Festival and the closing formula is seen as strange when read in the usual linear reading, and so judged as strong evidence of multiple sources. However, when presented as if conceived in parallel, then the repetition of the Festival and the closing formula appears to have literary purpose. It is analogous to the repetition of the final pair of commands in the Decalogue: “You shall not covet . . .” (Kline, 2008, 41–45).

The closing formulae, when put in place in the two-dimensional structure, give the effect of closing both columns. Not only that, but when seen together with the title formulae in vv. 2 and 4, it has the effect of creating a tight “appointed times” *inclusio* in both columns. Fishbane points out that this phenomenon of a title-line matched with a colophon is found throughout cuneiform and other ANE literature (Fishbane, 1980, 438), but the unique aspect here is that the strange *repetition* of titles and colophons about appointed times makes strong literary sense if the pericopes are presented in parallel columns, as on two “tablets.” Read in a linear manner, the repetitions suggest redaction and strata. Read in this parallel manner, the repetitions appear to be indicating literary architecture, appearing in the four “corners” of the two-dimensional structure. Such a conception is difficult to recognise in the linear reading, but when the pairs of sacred occasions are set out as if “side by side” on a pair of tablets, *vis-à-vis* each other, then it seems likely that the various surface-level, literary repetitions were composed to indicate this relationship. This analysis appears to signify the overall framework of the literary unit, with the four divine speeches set in four rows and the paired *moadim* forming two columns. The columns are signified by the repeating titles and closing formulae.

However, this is not the end of the structural indicators in the unit (Table 4). There are three other indicators that divide the unit in half. First, the literary indicators opening each speech actually show variation in the formula (Nihan, 2007, 496–7 and note 387): the first two speeches end with an indicative verb, literally, “and you shall say to them,” but the third and fourth end with the simple infinitive/participle, “saying,” underlined in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Division into Two Blocks

Repetition as Indication of Architecture		
	A	B
<p>1. v. 1–8</p> <p>A= v. 1–3 B= v. 4–8</p>	<p>The LORD spoke to Moses, speak to the sons of Israel, <u>and say to them</u> . . .</p> <p>These are the appointed times of the LORD. . .</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Sabbath</p>	<p>These are the appointed times of the LORD . . .</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Passover and Festival of Matzot</p>
<p>2. v. 9–22</p> <p>A= v. 9–14 B= v. 15–22</p>	<p>The LORD spoke to Moses, speak to the sons of Israel, <u>and say to them</u> . . .</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Day after the Sabbath— The Elevation Sheaf</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Day after the 7th Sabbath— The Elevation Bread</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>v. 22: I am the LORD your God</i></p>
<p>3. v. 23–32</p> <p>A= v. 23–25 B= v. 26–32</p>	<p>The LORD spoke to Moses, speak to the sons of Israel <u>saying</u> . . .</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A Sabbaton and Memorial by Blowing (Trumpets)</p>	<p>The LORD spoke to Moses, saying . . .</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Day of Atonement</p>
<p>4. v. 33–44</p> <p>A= v. 33–38 B= v. 39–44</p>	<p>The LORD spoke to Moses, speak to the sons of Israel <u>saying</u> . . .</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Festival of Booths</p> <p>These are the appointed times of the LORD . . .</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Festival of Booths</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>v. 43: I am the LORD your God</i></p> <p>So, Moses spoke the appointed times of the LORD to the sons of Israel.</p>

This may be considered too fine a nuance to be taken seriously as a literary indication of architecture. However, there are two further indicators that add weight to this structuring. Second, there is an important repetition that closes the two halves—the divine self-revelation formula: “I am the YHWH your God” (אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם) at the end of verses 22 and 43 (Milgrom, 2001, 1950, 1964; Wenham, 1995, 300), indicated in italics. These are the only two places in the unit where this formula occurs. Assuming this use of the formula is indicating a literary colophon for both blocks, one questions that it is necessarily or simply proof of a source distinction (as Knohl, 1995, 9).

Third, highlighted at the opening of sub-pericope 3B about the Day of Atonement, there is a unique divine speech formula, a shortened form, just addressed to Moses: “The LORD spoke to Moses, saying . . .,” with no commission to speak to the sons of Israel. This means YHWH introduces 3A and 3B, making it a unique row, and specifically setting the Day of Atonement apart from the other *moadim* in the right hand column.

Given the strength of these indications that rows 1 and 2 should be separated from rows 3 and 4, I have shown this in the table with a heavy line dividing the two blocks.

We have now seen ample evidence in this unit that there are literary repetitions being used structurally, at the *beginning* and *ending* of pericopes, that seem designed to indicate the literary architecture of the pericopes and unit (two tablet-columns with four rows, and divided into two blocks). We can now move to the repetitions being used *within* pericopes to indicate the *function* or *suasive intent* of the rows and columns.

The Suasive Intent: Functional Repetitions

The most obvious functional repetitions are the frequent notifications of time and date, given this genre as a ritual calendar (Hartley, 1992, 370). A dominant concern is the establishment of the calendrical “fixed times” for the people of Israel to meet with YHWH. The calendar generally assumes knowledge of the ritual details as documented in Exodus 12 and Numbers 28–29, except where the writer is making additions not included there (Milgrom, 2001, 1982, 2054). However, our work here is rhetorical-critical not redaction-critical, and so the aim is to understand the literary purpose for this unit. The primary purpose of the list in Numbers appears to be ritual for the priesthood, whereas the primary purpose of this list is calendrical for the holy nation—“the appointed times of the LORD” (Knohl, 1995, 8–11). The main functional repetitions in the four pericope pairs are set out in Table 5 below. I will firstly examine each row, to understand the function of the pairs of *moadim*, as indicated by the functional repetitions, and then secondly and briefly, examine the two columns and their function. The key principle in this, to quote Warning as above, is “*sola terminologia*,” identifying the literary function of the row or column by intrinsic terminology alone, rather than importing contrasting material and concepts from other passages.

Table 5: Repetitions Indicating Function

	Repetition as Indication of Architecture	
	A	B
1. v. 1–8 A= v. 1–3 B= v. 4–8	<u>The appointed times of the LORD. . . are these Sacred Occasions</u> Sabbath <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 days, work may be done • 7th day, no work to be done • A Sabbath of Sabbaton 	<u>These are the appointed times of the LORD Sacred Occasions</u> Passover and Festival of Matzot <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning month • 14th day, between evenings, Passover • 15th day, the Lord’s Festival of Matzot • 7 days—eat matzot, bring near offerings • Beginning day—no laborious work • 7th day—no laborious work done
2. v. 9–22 A= v. 9–14 B= v. 15–22	Day after the Sabbath The Elevation Sheaf <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you enter the land & reap its harvest • Bring the Beginning Sheaf • The day after the Sabbath • The priest shall elevate the Sheaf • With the Upward offering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A perpetual statute 	Day after the 7th Sabbath The Elevation Bread <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From the day you bring the Elevation Sheaf • The day after the Sabbath • Count till the day after the 7th Sabbath • Bring the Elevation Bread • The priest shall elevate them • With the Upward, Purification and Peace Offerings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A perpetual statute • When you harvest leave for poor/alien
3. v. 23–32 A= v. 23–25 B= v. 26–32	A Sabbaton and Memorial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7th month • 1st day of month <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Sabbaton • A reminder with trumpet-blowing 	The Day of Atonement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moreover, on 10th day of this 7th month <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humble your souls • No work on this particular/entire day • A Sabbath of Sabbaton • On 9th evening to evening, sabbath your Sabbath
4. v. 33–44 A= v. 33–38 B= v. 39–44	Festival of Booths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15th day of this 7th month • Festival of Booths—7 days • Beginning day—no laborious work • 7 days bring near offerings • 8th day bring near offerings, a sacred assembly, no laborious work <p><u>These are the appointed times of the LORD Sacred occasions</u></p>	Festival of/to the LORD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moreover, on 15th day of 7th month • When you gather the produce of land • Festival the festival of the LORD 7 days • Beginning day a Sabbaton • 8th day a Sabbaton • Beginning day take beautiful branches • Rejoice...7 days, festival...7 days • Dwell in booths 7 days • So the generations may know...I brought them out from the land of Egypt <p><u>Moses spoke the appointed times of the LORD to the sons of Israel.</u></p>

Row 1: Sabbath and Passover-Feast of Matzot

The first row puts together *Sabbath* and *Passover-Feast of Matzot*. This is a strange pairing, as Sabbath is weekly, whereas Passover-Matzot is annual. This again, has convinced many that Sabbath was an interpolation here (Milgrom, 2001, 1954, with references). Diachronically speaking, Milgrom sees “the only logical answer” to the question about the interpolation here, is that the H redactor lived among the exiles and so introduced the Sabbath as a moed because the Temple and sacrificially-bound moadim were no longer operative. However, there are other possible “logical” answers: firstly, as reckoned by the Qumran community, the weekly Sabbath was counted as a moed, and so, the seventh-day Sabbath, if considered in calendrical order, is logically presented in such a calendar list *before* the Passover and Matzot, which do not take place until the 14th and 15th of the first month (Milgrom, 2001, 1956); and secondly, read synchronically, there may be another answer—both sub-pericopes address seven-day matters, and repeat the phrase “the seventh day.” The week as presented in the priestly creation story was made up of seven days, and similarly, Matzot is a seven day festival. This seven-day characteristic in the first row is matched again by the closing/ fourth row, with booths also being a seven-day festival. We will consider this again when we reach the festival of booths. However, either way, the inclusion of Sabbath up front in this calendar rhetorically indicates that the sabbatical principle is to be understood as primary throughout this calendar (and indeed, this section of Leviticus).

Considered suasively, what is the function of such a pairing? Reading closely in the Hebrew and also being aware of the intertextualities in the Torah, the statement in verse 3 seems to be set out in a chiasmic form (Milgrom, 2001, 1953). Not only is there the parallel of six days to do work, and the seventh day not to do any work, but the emphasis on sabbath is shown by the central position in the chiasmus of the phrase *sabbath of sabbaton*. The wording is virtually a citation of Ex 31:15 and close to Ex 35:2 (Milgrom, 2001, 1953) (but excluding their reference to capital punishment for those who work on the sabbath.) The Sabbath in Ex 31:15–17 is given as “a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”

The citation in Lev 23.3 apparently takes this context as read, the LORD working for six days and resting on the seventh, and makes clear that sabbath has been set as a fixed time by YHWH for his people “in all their dwellings.” And even without this citation from Exodus, the wording of Lev 23:3 is a close allusion to Gen 2:2–3 with the expressions “all that he did/made” and “the seventh day” being repeated three times there, and the statement about Sabbath, “he sanctified it” (וַיְקַדְּשׁ אֹתוֹ), being picked up here with the label for Sabbath as “a sacred convocation/ occasion” (מִקְרָא־קִדְּשׁ). So, sabbath is a creation principle blessed and sanctified by YHWH “in the beginning” (בְּרֵאשִׁית Gen 1:1), and so his people are to keep this appointment with him.

This Sabbath sub-pericope then resonates with the reading of its paired sub-pericope: “In the *beginning* month (בְּהַדְּשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן), in the 14th day of the month . . .” Passover was to be a new beginning according to Israel’s foundation story in Ex 12, and, according to Milgrom, the author presumes this knowledge here (2001, 1971). YHWH tells the nation in Egypt to sacrifice the Passover lamb, to daub its blood on their door lintels, and to eat the roasted animal that night with unleavened bread, and to be prepared for their immediate journey out of Egypt following his guidance. The annual moed was to be a reminder of redemption, from the judgment of YHWH and the slavery of Egypt (Ex 6:6) (Milgrom, 2001, 1976). YHWH states clearly in Ex 12:2, literally, “this month for you is the head (*rōsh*) of the months, it is the beginning (*rishôn*) for you of the months of the year” (הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֹאשׁ הַחֳדָשִׁים רִאשׁוֹן הוּא לָכֶם (לְחֹדֶשׁ הַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׂנֵי הַשְּׁנֵי) and here, v. 5 alludes to this “in the beginning month” of their annual calendar of moadim, where *rishôn* is being used in a temporal sense (beginning) rather than simply in a

numerical sense (first). Their beginning month had previously been at the autumnal equinox, six months later, but YHWH turns the calendar on its head and makes the beginning month of their religious calendar the vernal equinox, the head or the beginning of months from this point on (Milgrom, 2001, 1965). So, it seems the repetitions in this initial pair of Moadim emphasise *beginnings*, rhetorically reminding the people of the beginning principles of creation and exodus, of sabbath and redemption.

Another shared functional repetition in this row is that of “work not being done,” and indeed, this is repeated throughout the unit in keeping with the primary Sabbath theme. Clearly, from the beginning, modelled by YHWH in creation, the weekly rhythm was to be six days working and one day ceasing from work, a complete rest. The phrase, used first in Ex 31:15 and 35:2, is cited here, calling the seventh day “a sabbath of sabbaton.” A double rest, a complete rest, where no work is to be done at all. This is then picked up in the parallel “redemption beginning.” Every new year, they would commence with the Pesach on the 14th (hinting of 2 x 7, a *sabbath of sabbaton*), rolling immediately into the week-long, 7-day festival of Matzot. This combination of fixed times—Passover as an annual reminder of redemption, and the week-long Matzot Festival as a metaphor for the whole of life following. The people were to eat unleavened bread and worship YHWH with burnt and peace offerings (אֲשָׁה לַיהוָה), as an expression of the whole of life lived “upward” (עֹלָה *olah*) to YHWH and feeding on his provision. As if to emphasise this, the first of the seven days (literally: the beginning day) and the seventh day were to be without occupational work (כָּל־מְלָאכָת עֲבֹדָה), as if to indicate the new life with YHWH is dependent on YHWH’s goodness, beginning and end, not “blemished or desecrated by human labour” (see argument in Milgrom, 2001, 1978).

Row 2: The Day after the Sabbath and the Day after the Seventh Sabbath

There is much of relevance in this row, as it is the row with the most detail, as much of it not covered elsewhere in the Torah. The pair of moadim is not focussed on week-long matters as in row 1, but single days—“the day after the sabbath” (מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת v. 11) and “the day after the seventh sabbath” (מִמָּחֳרַת הַשְּׁבִיעִת v. 16). They are traditionally labelled Omer or Firstfruits and Shavuot or Pentecost, and there is an emphasis on the 49-day counting period (סְפִירָה Sefirah/ Counting), from the day of the bringing of the Omer of barley to the day of bringing the two wheat loaves. The row is delimited structurally by an inclusio, starting, “When you enter the land that I am giving you and you reap its harvest” and closing, “And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field” (vv. 9 and 22), and at the end of each sub-pericope by the formula, “It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your settlements” (v. 14 and v. 21, with the last two phrases reversed in order). When the text is laid out in the two-dimensional form, this latter repetition has the effect of closing each half-column.

The row is rhetorically rich, built around the repetition “the day after the sabbath” in both sub-pericopes (the inference in 2A being the next sabbath after Passover, one day during the Matzot “week”). As the sabbath is the close of a week, the implication of “the day after the sabbath” suggests a new week, and so metaphorically a new season. This is supported by other literary emphases in the row, such as entering the land and reaping the harvest, and entering and drawing near in the sanctuary. Also, key indicators are the distinctive labels given to the offering on each day: “the beginning Omer-sheaf” (עֹמֶר רֵאשִׁית v. 10; also referred to as “the elevation sheaf,” עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה v. 15) and “the elevation bread” (לֶחֶם תְּנוּפָה v. 17, also “firstfruits to the LORD,” בִּכּוּרִים לַיהוָה v. 17, and “bread of the firstfruits,” לֶחֶם הַבִּכּוּרִים v. 20). The newness for each is emphasised with the label “beginning sheaf,” the first barley sheaf actually harvested, and the description of the bread as a “new wheat-grain offering” or *minchah* (מִנְחָה תְּדָשָׁה v. 16) (Milgrom, 2001, 1982–84). The requirement for the priest to wave or elevate (הִגִּירָה) (Milgrom, 1991, 461–73) the sheaf and bread in the ceremonies (vv. 11, 20) is rhetorically important.

These are the only references to priestly ministry in the unit, though assumed in other moadim. This impression is strengthened by the extended description of the offering that is to be included on the days, the *olah*, not just the passing reference to “a fire-offering to the LORD,” as on other days. The focus on beginning and new in the context of harvest, and an upward focus of elevation and *olah* in the context of the sanctuary is suggestive of YHWH’s expectation for his redeemed people to be living in the good of his harvest bounty and devoted wholly to him.

As mentioned, both days include detailed description of the associated offerings. With the lone, beginning-of-harvest sheaf in 2A, there is a lone lamb to be offered as an *Olah*, together with its associated minchah (grain) and wine. In contrast, on the day of the elevation bread in 2B, “firstfruits to the LORD,” there are three types of offerings, involving multiple animals, not only the *olah*, as with the Sheaf, but multiple *olot*, and also a single purification-offering and two peace-offerings. The inclusion of the range of offerings in 2B, including the purification-offering, and with the unique reference to the bread being baked with leaven, is suggestive of the need for cleansing in this particular moed, alongside concepts of devotion and shalom.

In this discussion on functional repetition, the clear reference to purpose in the paired moadim is important. With the elevation of the Omer before the LORD it states the purpose as, “for your acceptance” (לְרִצְוֹנְךָ v. 11), and with the Bread it states, “for the priest” (לְלֵוִי v. 20). The Elevation Omer brought to the sanctuary by the individual in 2A ensures ritual acceptance and so YHWH’s ongoing favour, and the Shavuot Moed, with the bread being waved in 2B, not only celebrates the sustenance of the nation but also maintains its priesthood.

Row 3: Memorial by Blowing Trumpets and Day of Atonement

As argued above, there is a literary “hard-break” between rows 2 and 3, created by: the change in divine speech and commission formula, the divine self-revelation formula (“I am YHWH your God”) at the end of cell 2B, and the unique short speech-formula opening cell 3B. The reason for the break is obvious, when considering the key functional change. Both rows 1 and 2 are related to the *first* month, or better, “the beginning of months.” Even cell 2B about Shavuot, which lands in the third month, is described as the day after the seventh sabbath, counting fifty days *from* the first month, so Shavuot/Elevation Bread is tied to the Elevation Sheaf in the first month. In contrast, rows 3 and 4 are both focused on moadim in the *seventh* month, with all four pericopes commencing with reference to it. In literary-architectural terms, the moadim are aligned around the first month and the seventh month, and in agricultural terms, around the grain harvest and the fruit harvest.

Row 3, like Row 2, also refers to single-day moadim (on the first and tenth of the month). Sub-pericope 3A commences with a staccato-like statement, literally: “in the month, the seventh, in the first of the month,” using the numerical form of “first” here (אָחַד), and not as in the above context, where the temporal word “beginning” (רֵאשִׁית) was the choice. The label for this day appears to reflect that of the first moed, the Sabbath in the parallel pericope 1A. The moed is labelled uniquely as “a Sabbaton” (שַׁבְּתוֹן) and “a Memorial” (זִכְרוֹן), with assonance in the Hebrew. No other moed is labelled with the isolated term Sabbaton (but first and last days of Tabernacles are, in v. 39). The phrase “Sabbath of Sabbaton” is used of the Sabbath day in 1A (v. 3) and of the Day of Atonement in 3B (v. 32), but in that phrase, Sabbaton appears to be used as an adjective along with its related noun Sabbath, so expressing a superlative, such as “the most restful rest” (Milgrom, 2001, 1959). However, that does not work in this context, where it appears to be used as a proper noun, Sabbaton. This suggests a translation here something like “a complete-sabbath.” This makes this moed distinctive in this literary context. Whereas the weekly Sabbath is labelled in the parallel pericope (1A) as “a Sabbath of complete-sabbath,” this first day of the seventh month (the previous “civil” new year) is labelled as a Sabbaton/ a complete Sabbath, whatever day of the week it lands on.

It is also labelled as “a Memorial” or “a Remembering” and specifically “a memorial by blowing” (זָכְרוֹן תְּרוּעָה), that is, the blowing of trumpets. There is no indication here of what the memorial is about or for, but it is described as another day of holy convocation, on which there is to be no occupational work but a coming near to YHWH with a fire-offering, as on other days. In the context of the row and the whole block, it is probable that the trumpet blowing is pointing *forwards*, after the long season of work in the first six months of the year, it reminds the nation to become alert and to reflect on the importance, seriousness and joyfulness represented by this month’s moadim.

This brings us to consider its paired moēd in this row, the Day of Atonement (3B). The connection is strengthened by its opening word in v. 27 (אָדָּא) used in its asseverative sense, “indeed” (Clines et al., 2009, 17) or “moreover” (Hartley, 1992, 366), particularly given the parallel use below in v. 39 (contra Milgrom, who translates it as *however*, “with its function to exclude, following Targums” (Milgrom, 2001, 2021)). It seems the writer wants to bind this sub-pericope to the previous one, about Sabbaton and Memorial, and indicate that the Day of Atonement is a vital expression of these themes. The emphasis is also on the fact that it is to take place “on the tenth of this seventh month” (בְּעֶשְׂרִית לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַזֶּה) which may be an allusion to the Passover in the parallel pericope (1A). Although not referred to in this text, the readers would know that the Passover also included the selection and preparation of the lamb on the tenth of the month, before the Passover on the 14th of the first month, flowing immediately into the Feast of Matzot on the 15th (Ex 12:1–20). So, there may be an intimation here that the Day of Atonement on the tenth day is also a kind of preparation day for the Festival of Booths on the fifteenth day. Be that as it may (and there is no literary evidence for this, only likely intertextual awareness in the assumed readers), the literary flow appears to lead the reader from the first day of alert remembering as individuals, to this tenth day of humbling, with a view to atonement, as a nation. The repetitions indicate the focus of the rhetoric: “you shall humble your souls . . . if any soul is not humbled in this same day . . . you shall humble your souls . . .”; and the expression of judgment on those who refuse to humble themselves or to rest, “he shall be cut off from the people,” and even, “I will cause them to perish from among the people” (vv. 29–30). Of course, the Hebrew word *nephesh* is usually translated “person,” and it is used in this sense three times in verses 29–30, but the emphasis on the sense of *inner being* for the word is certainly intimated in the repetition of the clause in v. 27 and v. 32, “you shall humble your souls” (וְעִנִּיתֶם אֶת-נַפְשֵׁיכֶם).

As mentioned above, this is the only day in the calendar, beside the weekly Sabbath, that is given the superlative label, “Sabbath of Sabbaton,” driving home the seriousness of this day of national humbling in the context of refusal to engage in human effort or competence. The timetable for the soul-humbling is uniquely and specifically defined for this day: “on the ninth of the month in the evening, from evening until evening, you shall sabbath your sabbath” (בַּתְּשַׁעָּה לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּעָרֶב מֵעָרֶב עַד-לְעָרֶב תִּשְׁבַּתוּ אֶת־שַׁבְּתֵיכֶם). This emphasis on evening resonates with the parallel pericope 1B, regarding Passover, “between the evenings” (בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים v. 5). The command to “sabbath your sabbath” here is also unique in this unit, and further adds to the significance of this day. All this literary context leads clearly to the stated purpose for the moed: “for it is a day of atonement, to atone upon you before YHWH your God” (כִּי יוֹם כִּפּוּרִים הוּא לְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם). The use of the plural for “atonement” here is a further example of a superlative plural: “a day of full and complete expiation” (Hartley, 1992, 388).

This row therefore calls everyone in the nation to awaken to the serious business of atonement. If YHWH is to continue to dwell in the midst of the nation and if the nation is to live out holiness, as YHWH calls them to in this second part of Leviticus, then their annual rhythm must include humble reflection, examination, and repentance, and acceptance of divine atonement not based on their own work or skill.

Row 4: Festival of Booths and Festival to the LORD

Like row 1, row 4 has suggested a complex composition history. Surprisingly, it presents the same festival of booths in the two sub-pericopes (vv. 34b–36 and vv. 39–43). So, this row is not a pair of different moadim but a doublet of the same festival. The redaction critical argument is strengthened by the fact that the first sub-pericope (4A) has a strong colophon in vv. 37–38, apparently closing off the whole unit, or at least vv. 4–36. What then is the purpose of the “moreover” in v. 39, with the repetition of the same calendrical reference from v. 33, and giving an additional description of the festival, including its associated “eighth day,” unless the first version is the work of an earlier source and the second the work of a later/final redactor (for example, Knohl, 1995, 10)?

As for Row 1, whatever one’s view of the putative sources, there is evidence here in row 4, not only of repetition being used as indication of architecture, as we have demonstrated, but also of repetition being used as indication of function and suasion. By way of comparator, we are reminded of the repetition in the closing pair of the Decalogue (commands 9 and 10), “you shall not covet . . . you shall not covet . . .” (DeRouchie, 2013, 103-10; Kline, 2008, 41–45) and so have a comparable literary basis to consider this repetition in the closing pair of the moadim, synchronically and functionally, within the rhetoric of the unit.

In broad terms, we recognise that the last row matches the first row in a number of ways, forming an *inclusio*. Firstly, its strong emphasis on “seven days,” and on the use of the word for the moadim as “community festival” (גָּת) (Kedar-Kopfstein, 1980), only occurring in these two rows. This forms a very clear architecture for the whole unit—rows 1 and 4 being week-long festivals and rows 2 and 3 being single-day moadim. Secondly, the first row includes the single-day moed of the Passover, followed by the seven-day festival of matzot, whereas the fourth row has the seven-day festival of booths followed by the single-day “eighth day” (v. 36, 39; also called “a solemn assembly” v. 36 עֲצֻרָה). This pattern of 1+7 days in the opening speech and 7+1 days in the closing speech is unlikely to be by chance (Milgrom, 2001, 1965). Thirdly, the fact that Matzot and Booths both commence on the fifteenth of the month. Fourthly, the repeated use of “in the beginning day” (vv. 7 and 35, 39), and fifthly, the extended repetition, “in the beginning day, a sacred occasion, you shall not do any laborious work, seven days you shall bring near a fire offering to the LORD . . . in the seventh/eighth day, a sacred occasion (it will be) to you . . . any laborious work you shall not do,” is in a chiasmic relationship, linking the sub-pericopes 1B and 4A together.

However, the unique nature of rows 1 and 4, as including festival weeks, also reveals a strong contrast. On the one hand, Row 1 is made of a non-identical pair (Sabbath and Passover-Matzot), whereas, on the other hand, Row 4 is made of an identical pair (Feast of Booths-Atzeret twice). One could say there is a progression through the calendar from dissimilar to identical (Table 6).

Table 6: Progression down the Pericope Rows

Row 1	Week-long periods—dissimilar
Row 2	Single-day periods in different months
Row 3	Single-day periods in the same month
Row 4	Week-long periods—identical

Considering the function of the pair of Festivals in this row, the repetition of the noun *Festival* (v. 33, 39, 41) and the use of the matching verb “to festival” twice in v. 41, gives strong indication that this is being seen as a crescendo in the year. It is to be seven days long, and with an added eighth day, it is to be a sacred occasion, with offerings taking place each day and again, with no occupational work being done in the beginning day and the eighth day. The essence of this festival is captured in the words “you shall rejoice before the YHWH your God seven days, and you shall festival it, a festival to the LORD seven days in the year . . . in the seventh month you shall festival it” (v. 40-41). The two sub-pericopes, although about the same festival, clearly have different emphasises. The first expression is focused on the date and structure of the festival for individual fulfilment. The second focuses on the community sense of harvest joy and dancing with “the foliage of beautiful trees,” and on the purpose for the dwelling in booths, so that each new generation will be reminded of, and live in the light of, the exodus redemption (v. 43). In these closing words, there is clear resonance back to the parallel pericope in 1B, with the festival of Passover-Matzot also reminding the nation of the beginning of the journey that took the nation from bondage to joy and liberty, enjoying “the produce of the land” (v. 39).

In conclusion, and in the light of the above analysis, the repetition of the festival of booths in the fourth row seems to have strong rhetorical purpose. Seen from this literary-critical point of view, the closure of the divine programme of appointed times with this repetition of the festival of rejoicing and remembrance of divine redemption, is surely significant in rhetorical terms. The repetition of the extra eighth day at the end of both columns also seems like a literary device of closure, and suggests ideas of new creation as a crescendo in the divine programme for the people.

Columns

In the movement down the rows, observing their literary function, it appears that there is also a function in the columns, assumedly used by the writer/redactor for composing the “two tablets.” Looking superficially, it is clear that the content in column A is more limited than the fuller material in column B. And, although it is fair to say that both columns set out the fixed times for the individual and the nation as a whole, nevertheless, the emphasis in column A appears to be on instructions for individuals and individual families, but in column B on the people as a nation. This is certainly true for 3B and 4B, with the reference to the people as a nation humbling themselves on the Day of Atonement and rejoicing as a community on the Festival of Booths (“all the native-born in Israel” v. 42).

Conclusion

Based on the evidence and argument in this paper, I draw the following stepped inferences for the reader to evaluate: firstly, literary repetition has been used in Leviticus 23 as an indicator of architecture; secondly, repetition has been used as an indicator of parallel architecture (horizontally); thirdly, repetition has been used as an indicator of two-dimensional architecture (vertically and horizontally); fourthly, repetition has been used as an indicator of rhetorical function or suasive intent; fifthly, such repetitions guide the close and/or initiated reader in “parallel reading” and give meaningful rhetorical explanation for the apparent disjunctures observed in “linear reading.”

In conclusion, more generally, Leviticus 23 seems to be a strong example of literary repetitions being used as indicators of both form and function, of structure and purpose, of composition and suasion. The two-dimensional *weave* in this unit suggests high literary art, and a form of rhetorical composition with significant suasive intent. If one stands back and reflects on the literary indicators being used to map out the two-dimensional structure, one cannot but be

impressed with the apparent artistry. Read in a linear form, the unit appears fragmentary, but read in a parallel form, as shown, the fragments seem to fit together like a jig-saw.

Further than this, if one brackets one's natural scepticism, questioning whether such a form of writing was possible in this era, and if one reflects on the many functional repetitions given above, besides the structural ones, one is left with the sense that this literary unit of text has been carefully composed, and with subtle rhetorical purpose. It appears to be an ancient example of *visual rhetoric*, where *denotatively* the pericopes hold the informational or referential meaning (as in linear reading), but when conceived as the warp and woof of a weave, they display meaning in a connotative sense, not visible in the linear reading. To quote Danesi: "The key insight of visual rhetoric is that connotation is anchored in rhetorical structure, that is, in cognitive-associative processes such as metaphor and allusion, which are imprinted not only in verbal expressions, but also in visual images" (Danesi, 2017). I accept that Leviticus 23 is relatively unique, in being calendrical. Nevertheless, I aver this analysis and exposition of the form and function of this bounded unit implies that such literary weaving was an ancient skill, and that applying it more widely in the Torah may indicate rhetorical purpose for repetitions, and literary reasons for apparent disjunctures and fragments.

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