In his *Prolegomenon* to George Buchanan Gray’s newly reissued *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (New York, 1972), Professor David Noel Freedman proposes that a unit of poetry in Hos. viii 9-13 be isolated on the basis of an inclusio (pp. xxxvi-xxxvii). According to Freedman, the single colon in v. 9:

For behold they have gone up to Assyria

balances the single colon in v. 13:

Behold they will return to Egypt

Together the two constitute a normal bicolon which the poet has broken up in order to give this unit of poetry a frame. When the two cola are juxtaposed key terms balance each other nicely: hêmmâ is repeated, the perfect ʿālū and imperfect yâšûbû correspond to each other, while “Assyria” and “Egypt” constitute what may very well be a fixed pair1). Hosea elsewhere uses “Assyria” and “Egypt” in parallel constructions (vii 11, ix 3, xi 5, 11, xii 2). We note too that ʿālū ʿaṣṣûr and miṣrayim yâšûbû form a chiasmus. Freedman says “the two cola complement each other impressively”, and so they do.

The recognition that these cola could fit together in parallelism is not new. Duhm, for example, transposed the single colon of v. 13 so that it immediately followed the single colon of v. 9.2) Freedman’s suggestion has the advantage, however, in that it explains the text as it stands. And, if correct, it provides us with important new insights into Hebrew poetry and Hebrew rhetoric.

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1) Freedman translates ʿālū as a future: “they will go up”. I take this verb however to be a simple past which is how it would normally be translated.


3) Bernhard Duhm, *Die Zwölf Propheten* (Tübingen, 1910), p. 34.
The inclusio is a structural device by which one returns at the end to the point at which he began. It is widely used in both oral and written discourse of today—including poetry—and we find it in ancient discourse as well. In the Old Testament it appears frequently in Deuteronomic sermons, prophetic speeches, and in psalms.

Structures in Deut. i-xxviii are of particular interest to us since they reflect the same general period as Hosea, i.e., ca. 750-700 B.C.). We see, for example, the preacher of ch. xii framing his sermon with an injunction to obedience:

These are the statutes and ordinances which you shall be careful to do in the land...

(xii 1)

Every word that I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to it or take from it.

(xiii 1)

In his sermon on clean and unclean foods (xiv 1-21) he provides a frame by listing miscellaneous regulations at the extremities in the midst of which occur these words:

For you are a people holy to Yahweh your God

(v. 2)

For you are a people holy to Yahweh your God

(v. 21)

The inclusio can also be used to frame a sub-unit of discourse that is much longer. The superscription to the book of Deuteronomy contains such an inclusio which is of the inverted type:

These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan...

(i 1)

4) Although she does not call it by this name, Barbara H. Smith recognizes this phenomenon in modern poetry; see her book Poetic Closure (Chicago, 1968), pp. 27, 53-54, 66-7.

