

Proverbs 30's most obvious structural device is the various number motifs employed by Agur, son of Jakeh. In amongst a scattered list of proverbs drawn together to illustrate a need for humility in the face of mystery, there are several instances of internal numeric structure in the lists of disturbing ideas.

The most memorable is the three/four formulation:

There are three things...

Four indeed, ...

There are simpler lists of two or four things but the three/four formulation acts to introduce things of wonder: insatiable things (v15), incomprehensible processes (v18-19), that which the earth cannot endure (v21-23), and examples of stately bearing (v 29-31). The formulation adds a suggestion of spontaneity and life to the ideas as if he has just thought of more and greater wonders and highlights the last to be mentioned as the sudden inspiration. Verses 18-19, for example, progress through the eagles and snakes to the vagaries of a ship at sea until such unknowables are applied to human relationships: "the way of a man with a girl."

Repetition is used to structure other pieces in the chapter. The introduction repeats several "who" and "what" questions in a Readers Digest version of Yahweh's replay to Job in Job 38.

Verses 11-14 are structured around repetitions of "a breed" which spits out the criticisms of the evil ones in lancinating fashion.