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Literary Stylistic Analysis of Selected New Testament Parables: A Russian Formalist Perspective

Babatunde Dele Adetunji[1]; Sophia Chiemerie Udechukwu[2]; & Chinedum Ugonwa Nwafo[3]

[1]General Studies Department, Southwestern University, Okun Owa, Ogun State, Nigeria. [2]English and Literary Studies Department, Coal City University, Enugu, Enugu State. [3]Federal Polytechnic Oko, Anambra State.

Corresponding Author: adetunji.babatunde@mysun.edu.ng

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Abstract

This research presents an exploration of selected biblical parables, focusing on literary stylistics and thematic elements. The research employs a descriptive research design to identify literary devices and thematic methods used in the parables, emphasizing non-quantitative data. This research work is hinged on Russian Formalism because it offers a unique perspective on the study of literature in that, it focuses on the formal aspect of texts. The population of this study encompasses approximately 40 parables from the New Testament, with a sample size of eight selected parables, including the Parable of the Sower, Wheat and Tares, Rich Fool, Prodigal Son, Talents, Good Samaritan, Ten Virgins, and Two Sons. The section on data presentation and analysis delves into literary stylistic analysis, answering research questions such as figures of speech employed in biblical parables and themes as elements of literature. Figures of speech discussed include simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, etc. Themes explored in individual parables include spiritual growth, the word of God, etc. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of biblical parables by exploring their literary aspects and thematic richness, offering insights into spiritual and moral teachings. The findings provide valuable resources for scholars, theologians, and individuals seeking a profound comprehension of these timeless narratives.

Keywords: Russian Formalism, Biblical Stylistics, Rhetorical Devices, Narrative Analysis, Biblical Literature, Literary Criticism.

Introduction

The Bible is a foundational text in Western civilization and central to Christianity, comprising two main sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament, with 39 books with the New Testament, containing 27 books. These texts were authored by prophets, priests, scribes, apostles, and their followers, and they are written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek languages. Significant English translations of the Holy Bible include the King James Version and the New International Version among other versions. The Old Testament features various literary forms, such as historical narratives, poetry, wisdom literature, and prophecy, with the Pentateuch, attributed to Moses.. Key texts include Psalms, Proverbs, and the Prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The New Testament includes the Gospels, which narrate Jesus Christ's life and teachings, the Acts of the Apostles documenting the early church, the Epistles, which are letters from early Christian leaders, and the Book of Revelation, a prophetic work. Central themes in the Bible encompass creation, covenant, redemption, salvation, love, justice, hope, forgiveness, and unity. Parables, used extensively by Jesus, present moral or spiritual lessons through figurative language and are an essential component of biblical teachings.

A parable is a short, fictional story that illustrates a moral or spiritual lesson. They are often used to convey complex ideas or concepts in a simple and relatable way. Parables are typically allegorical, which means that the characters and events in the story represent abstract ideas or principles. For example, in the parable of the prodigal son, the father represents God, the younger son represents sinners who repent and return to God, and the elder son represents the self-righteous who do not recognize their need for forgiveness. Parables thus operate on both literal and metaphorical levels (Hardin, 2024).

The significance of parables in the Bible can be seen in their ability to convey profound truths in a way that is accessible to a wide range of audiences. Parables can be understood on both literal and metaphorical level, allowing them to speak to people on different levels of spiritual maturity. For example, in the parable of the Sower, Jesus uses the image of seeds falling on different types of soil to illustrate the different ways that people respond to the message of God's kingdom. The parable can be understood on a literal level as a lesson about agriculture, but it also contains a deeper spiritual meaning about the importance of cultivating a receptive heart to receive God's word. The function of such parables includes inviting people to turn (i.e. repent) from previous understanding towards a more fully realized vision of God's kingdom (Hardin, 2024).

Literature has been a tool for language expression and style is the beauty and the uniqueness of a written work (Susiati, 2020). Style differs from text to text or from writer to writer (Ríos-Toledo, 2022). Over the years, different suggestions and opinions have been made and researches being conducted about stylistics, style and its correlation with literature. Stylistics deals with the study of different styles of individual authors (Zhu & Jurgens, 2021). The proper

study of stylistics began in the 20th century. Stylistics would not have fully come to the limelight without the works of European and American formalists, linguists and new critics, I. A. Richards, T. S. Eliot, and Roman Jakobson. Stylistics as a study is concerned with an author's use of linguistic resources during language use be it oral, written or otherwise (Alshamiri, & Murshed, 2025). According to recent studies, stylistic analysis remains a powerful tool for interpretation, paying attention to vocabulary, rhetoric, syntax, and other formal features to uncover meaning in literary texts (Fu, 2023; Ayaz, Ali, & Nazish, 2022).
Style is referred to as the individualised use of language (Domashevich, 2022). Style is simply how a person uses language to best communicate his ideas (Qizi & Ogli, 2025). Style is the language features of a person that is considered to be peculiar to that particular person. Style is the way a writer structures his work and how he decides to communicate in writing. Style is used in different ways to achieve different purposes by capturing meaning in different ways. Stylistic analysis is referred to as a deep look into the stylistic features of an individual's style in any form of the individual's literary work of art (Kumar, 2022). Stylistic analysis is the separation and identification of the features of style in a particular author's work (Deng, et al, 2025). According to Onwukwe (2012) "Stylistic analysis aims at identifying the linguistic features of a particular style (language use) and their effects." Stylistic analysis is intended to help determine interpretation through examination of what a text contains, by describing the usage of linguistic devices, and the effect provided in such devices. Such analysis is predominantly containing thoughts which a reader has to unearth (Alderson & Short, 1988).

Statements of the Problem

Biblical parables, though widely recognized as essential vehicles for conveying moral and spiritual lessons, remain relatively underexplored from a stylistic perspective. While these narratives have been extensively studied for their theological, ethical, and cultural significance, there exists a significant gap in research that examines the various stylistic elements employed within the parables. For example, recent researches have begun to look at cohesion (including repetition, reference, and subordination) in a parable like *The Prodigal Son*, but this focuses on coherence and narrative flow rather than a full set of stylistic features (Adepoju, 2024). In another work, intertextuality and pragmatic analysis show how metaphorical qualities and cryptic expressions in Jesus's parables require interpretive work, pointing to the need for stylistic tools to clarify ambiguity (Olaleye & Dahunsi, 2024). Also, a grapho-syntactic analysis of selected parables underscores sentence structure and its role in meaning-making, but the scope still leaves out features like irony and imagery (Eze, Adetunji, & Oluchi, 2020). The problem at hand is the absence of an in-depth exploration of the literary stylistic features, such as metaphor, simile, imagery, repetition, and irony, used in the biblical parables to convey their intended messages. The paucity of such stylistic analyses hinders a holistic understanding of the parables' literary artistry, linguistic nuances, and their impact on the audience.

Furthermore, the interpretative challenges posed by the parables' brevity and ambiguity remain unresolved, leaving room for multiple, sometimes conflicting interpretations. Therefore, this study aims to address the deficiency in comprehensive stylistic analysis and provide a deeper insight into the stylistic dimensions of biblical parables, offering a richer appreciation of their narrative and rhetorical qualities.

Research Objectives

The study seeks to achieve a literary stylistic analysis of biblical parables. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. identify the various figures of speech as stylistic devices employed in the biblical parables.
2. explicate the themes of the parables.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the figures of speech as stylistic devices employed in the biblical parables?
2. What are the themes of the parables?

Scope

The study analyzes the stylistics features in biblical parables of the new testaments. There are approximately forty parables in the New Testament according to New King James Version. However, this study focuses on the selected the parables, namely:

1. The Parable of the Sower -Matthew (PS) 13:1–23 (NIV)
2. The Parable of the Wheat and Tares (PWT)- Matthew 13:24–30, (KJV)
3. The Parable of the Rich Fool (PRF) - Luke 12:13–21 (NIV)
4. The Parable of the Prodigal Son (PPS)-Luke 15:11–32
5. The Parable of the Talents (PT)- Matthew 25:14–30
6. The Parables of the Good Samaritan (PGS)- Luke 10:25–37
7. The Parables of the Ten Virgins (PTV)- Matthew 25:1–13, NIV
8. The Parable of the Two Sons (PTS)- Matthew 21:28–32, NIV

The choice of these parables is linked to their literary values and the stylistic features inherent in the parables.

Literature Review

Concept of Stylistics

Stylistics is a multifaceted field that examines language style, encompassing spoken and written forms across various contexts (Qizi, 2025). Defined broadly, it investigates the consistent patterns, structures, and elements present in language use, focusing on how these features enhance comprehension and enjoyment of texts (Britannica Editors, 2025). Stylistics utilizes traditional linguistic levels (such as phonology, syntax, and semantics) to analyze

varieties of language and formal features that characterize different styles (Mortaza, 2023). It is particularly concerned with the interplay between language and meaning, demonstrating that a single idea can be expressed through multiple linguistic forms (Giovanelli, 2022).

Scholarly interpretations of stylistics highlight its critical role in understanding both literary and non-literary texts. "Scholars like I. R. Gal Penn and Arnold emphasize stylistics as a study of the choices of lexical, grammatical, and phonetic elements aimed at effectively conveying ideas and emotions in diverse communication environments" (Alshamiri & Murshed, 2025). Furthermore, stylistics investigates the language of literature, exploring the habits and patterns of individual writers. It focuses on the pragmatic aspects of communication, categorizing language use into different functional styles (Duignan, 2025).

Notably, figures such as Leech (2014) and Widdowson (2014) reinforce the concept that stylistics connects linguistic choices to artistic expression, exploring how certain language styles serve artistic and communicative functions. Overall, stylistics serves as a vital analytical tool for unveiling the underlying mechanics of language use across varying contexts, providing insights into the intent and effectiveness of communication in its myriad forms (Alaghbary, 2023).

Concept of Style

The word *style* originally meant "writing implement" (Mohammad 2018). It means different things to different people. Style is the method a writer structures his work and how he decides to communicate in writing. Leech (2014) mentions that style is the manner in which something is written or spoken. Style is regarded to be an identification of the person speaking or writing. It can refer to the figure of speech, word use, or sentence structure (Onwukwe, 2012).

According to Short (2009), the word "style" has a definite meaning: it refers to the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose, and so on. He felt that it is better to think of style as "the linguistic characteristics of a particular text" (Short, 2009). Style can be referred to as both spoken and written, both literary and non-literary varieties of language, but by origin, it specifically refers to written texts. Short (2009) further mentions that style is as the "dress of thought," adding that although this metaphor of style as some kind of "adornment" or "covering" of the thought is no longer available.

Style is the characteristic manner of expression in prose or verse; how a particular writer says things. The investigation and analysis of style include the writer's choice concerning words, paragraphs, rhetorical devices, and the way he uses them. Abrams (2012) states that traditionally, "style can be defined as the mode of linguistic expression in verse or prose concerning writers or speakers who speak or lay the language." The analysis of a specific style for a specific writer can be done in terms of aims, kinds of sentence patterns, word choice, and types of figurative language. Lehman (2006) states that the idea of style can be ascribed to genres, to individuals, to periods, or to languages.

In contemporary research on writing and linguistic analysis, scholars often operationalise style through measurable linguistic features such as lexical richness, syntactic complexity, and

cohesion (Berriche, 2024). These features help capture how style manifests in actual texts, showing that style is not merely aesthetic but can be systematically studied. The unique combination of linguistic choices by each author thus distinguishes one style from another (Zanotto & Aroyehun, 2024).

Thus, style is a kind of art both inherent and acquired which is often associated with creative imagination. It distinguishes a pattern of writing or behaviour from another. Everybody has a particular style or manner of expression. It is not a beautification that exists in abstraction, separated from language or self-manifestation; rather, it is shown through linguistic features used and expressed.

Concept of Parable

The word parable is a transliteration into English of the Greek word parabolē, which means literally "placing side by side" (Foster, 2008). This etymological composition captures the essence of what a parable is an illustrative story thrown alongside a point, often with the intent of teaching a moral or conveying a deeper meaning. The concept of parables has deep roots in ancient civilizations, particularly in religious context. In the Bible, for instance, parables are employed as powerful teaching tools by Jesus Christ to convey moral and spiritual lessons to his followers. A parable is typically a brief, succinct story that features relatable characters and situations. These stories are designed to convey a deeper message or lesson that is not explicitly stated but must be inferred by the audience. They serve as a means of teaching, inviting listeners or readers to reflect on the story and extract its moral or philosophical meaning. Recent literary analyses reaffirm that parables continue to shape contemporary theological and cultural narratives, revealing enduring interpretive flexibility.

In conclusion, studying parables offers valuable insights into Christian theology, history, and literary analysis. By exploring the aesthetic qualities, theological implications, historical context, and exegetical methods of parables, scholars can gain a deeper understanding of the religious and cultural significance of these texts.

Theoretical Framework

Russian Formalism

Russian Formalism, a theoretical framework originating in Russia in the early 20th century, exerted a significant influence on the field of literary criticism and stylistics (Steiner,1995). "The main proponents this Russian Formalism were scholars such as Victor Shklovsky, Boris Tomashevsky, and Boris Eichenbaum, who emphasized the autonomy of literature and focused on the formal aspects of texts rather than external factors like authorial intent or reader response" (Lemon, Reis & Morson,1968). This approach offers a unique perspective on the study of literature and language, focusing on the formal aspects of texts and highlighting the role of literary devices and structures in the creation of meaning. According to Maloku & Avdyli (2023) the principles of Russian Formalism can be applied to this study as a theoretical framework in the analysis of a literary text and a Biblical parable:

1. **Focus on Form**: Russian Formalism places a primary emphasis on the formal features of a literary text, including rhyme, metre, plot structure, and narrative techniques. Analyzing a text, form the perspective of this framework, involves scrutinizing how these formal elements contribute to the overall aesthetic and artistic qualities of the work (Maloku & Avdyli, 2023; Steiner, 2020)
2. **Defamiliarization**: Russian Formalists introduced the concept of "defamiliarization" (or "estrangement"), which refers to the technique of presenting common or familiar things in a new and unfamiliar way to draw the reader's attention to the language itself. Stylistic analysis using this concept aims to identify instances of defamiliarization in the text and explores how they enhance the text's meaning and impact (Reynolds, 2019).
3. **Literariness**: Russian Formalists proposed that literature is distinguished by its "literariness" the unique use of language that sets it apart from everyday discourse. When applying this concept, a stylistic analysis looks for linguistic features that mark a text as literary and explores their significance in conveying the author's artistic intentions (Steiner, 2020).
4. **Plot Structure and Narratology**: Russian Formalism is one of the early proponents of analyzing plot structure and narrative techniques. When using this framework, a stylistic analysis delves into the organisation of the narrative, examining how events are presented, time shifts, and other structural elements that contribute to the text's artistic effect (Liveley, 2019).
5. **Foregrounding and Parallelism**: Russian Formalism introduced the idea of "parallelism," which is the repetition or patterning of elements in a text. Stylistic analysis within this framework involves identifying instances of parallelism and foregrounding, which call attention to particular elements within the text, and explores their significance (Dzhusupov, 2024)
6. **Poetic Language**: When applied to poetry, Russian Formalism places a strong emphasis on the poetic language itself. A stylistic analysis closely examines the choice of words, the use of sound patterns, and the interplay between form and content (Baldi & Savoia, 2016)
7. **Comparative Analysis**: Russian Formalism encourages the comparative study of different texts, seeking to identify shared stylistic features and differences. Stylistic analysis may involve comparing a literary text to other texts within the same genre or period to uncover common stylistic conventions or innovations (Zheltukhina & Moskalev, 2022).
8. **Emphasis on Literariness over Content**: Russian Formalism suggests that literary analysis should prioritize the form and style of a text over its thematic content. A stylistic analysis, therefore, avoids delving too deeply into the text's themes or authorial intentions and instead focuses on the structural and linguistic features that

create the text's aesthetic impact; a stance often revisited in modern reflections on formalism's legacy and limitations (Flack, 2023).

Empirical Studies

Eze, K. O., Adetunji, B. D. & Oluchi, Chris Okeugo (2020) studied Grapho-Syntactic Analysis of the Biblical Parables. This research work surveys the stylistic analysis of the language of the Biblical parables using the parable of the Sower, parable of the Weeds and the parable of the Mustard seed. This invariably involves a linguistic description of the language of religion with particular reference to the parables. Emphasis in this study is not on the parables but the impact of linguistic elements in actualizing the message the parables are set to achieve. This work is also designed to investigate how stylistic analysis can enhance the interpretation and understanding of the texts (parables). The linguistic elements in the parables are analyzed stylistically using the Quirk et al's model of sentence units. The aim of stylistic analysis is not simply to identify and describe formal linguistic features in a text for their own sake, but to show their functional significance in the interpretation and organization of the texts under study. It is therefore the concern of this work to analyze the stylistic peculiarities of the parables with the intention of bringing out the style of the writer and also to have fuller understanding of the parables.

Riyadh Tariq Kadhim Al-Ameedi and Adawiaya Sattar Abood (2021) conducted research on the Stylistic Analysis of Parables in The New Testament. This paper attempts to investigate the stylistic aspects of the language utilized in parables in the New Testament. Seven extracts in a form of parables are selected from the New Testament, particularly Matthew and Luke Gospel, to be the data of analysis.

The study aims at presenting a survey of parables, their characteristics, principles, and types and applying a stylistic model of analysis to the religious discourse to detect the most prevalent stylistic devices utilized in parables to convey the intended message. The analysis shows that the stylistic devices with their aesthetic effects play a vital role for analyzing religious discourse which is represented in parables as well as reveals that the parables, as a form of religious discourse, with their principles and characteristics have an important role in conveying the real teachings of Jesus Christ.

Summary of Literature Review

The research elaborates on the concept of stylistics, defined as the study of style in language, particularly focusing on the distinctive attribute of individual use to communicate effectively. It examines styles found in spoken language, written texts, and documents, which highlight how writers organize their thoughts and make linguistic choices to convey meaning. Style is portrayed as a customizable tool for achieving specific goals in communication, resulting in varied expressions of meaning.

The research also investigates the theoretical frameworks applied to the analysis of parables, focusing particularly on Russian Formalism. Russian Formalism emphasizes the formal

attributes of literature, such as rhyme, structure, and literary devices, proposing a focus on 'defamiliarization', the idea of re-presenting the familiar in novel ways to highlight the language itself. This framework champions the concept of literariness, positioning it as a distinguishing factor that sets literary texts apart from quotidian language, thereby fostering a comparative understanding of the formal and stylistic dimensions that enhance the aesthetic quality of literature.

The empirical studies within the research specifically delve into the stylistic analysis of biblical parables, concentrating on the linguistic elements essential for conveying their messages. Notable contributions include the work of Eze, Adetunji, and Oluchi, who investigate the grapho-syntactic elements of parables and their stylistic details. Riyadh Tariq Kadhim Al-Ameedi and Adawiaya Sattar Abood focus on the stylistic features of New Testament parables, particularly regarding their instructional roles regarding divine doctrines. The studies collectively affirm the universal significance of parables, demonstrating their adaptability across cultural contexts while maintaining their inherent stylistic elements and moral clarity.

Research Design

The study employs a descriptive research design, characterized by its focus on identifying literary devices and presentation methods used in the parables of the New Testament. This approach outlines the investigative strategy, data collection methodology, and analysis process. The choice of a descriptive research design is befitting for this study as it deals with non-quantitative data and involves a non-statistical data analysis process.

Area of the Study

This study exclusively conducts a literary analysis of the selected parables in the New Testament. It delves into the interpretation of texts, examining elements such as style, figures of speech, tropes, and other rhetorical strategies which contribute to a distinctive and expressive literary quality.

Sample Size

The sample size for this study is eight selected parables; The Parable of the Sower, the Parable of the Wheat and Tares, the Parable of the Rich Fool, the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the Parable of the Talents, the Parables of the Good Samaritan, the Parables of the Ten Virgins and the Parable of the Two Sons.

Data Presentation and Data Analysis

Research Question 1

What are the figures of speech employed in the biblical parables?

Figures of Speech: A figure of speech is an expression used to make a greater effect. It includes making comparisons, contrasts, associations, exaggerations and constructions. It also

gives a much clearer picture of what we try to convey. A selection of figures of speech found in the parables is illustrated below:

A. **Simile:** Seredina & Dekhnich (2025) define simile as a fundamental figure of speech that creates a vivid, explicit comparison between two different things using words like "like" or "as," enhancing expression and understanding in language and literature. The following examples are:

1. The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. (Matt. 13:24 NKJV) (PWT)
2. And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of the hired servants. (Luke. 15:19 KJV) (PPS)
3. At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. (Matt. 25:1 NIV) (PTV)
4. For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country... (Matt. 25:14 NKJV) (PT)
5. The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field… (PWT)

From the example (1) above, it is obvious that simile is used stylistically to introduce comparison between the kingdom of heaven to a man sowing good seed. This style has created situation that is both vivid and relatable. Also, example (3) emphasis the need for readiness and watchful using wedding scenario; this is achieved using vivid comparison. This stylistic approach enhanced understanding of the situation.

B. **Metaphor:** Csatár (2020) sees metaphor as a way of understanding or describing one thing in terms of another, often by transferring meaning based on similarity or analogy between two different concepts or domains. The following are examples:

1. But God said to him, you *fool*!... (Luke 12:20 NIV) (PRF)
2. And five of them were *wise* and five were *foolish*. (Matt 25:2 KJV) (PTV)
3. The *ground* of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. (PRF)
4. This son of mine was *dead* and is *alive* again; he was *lost* and is *found* (PPS)

Metaphor is another stylistic strategy used to teach, instruct or educate through parables. For instance, example (4) above, the son was not dead physically but it refers to the spiritual death while lost and found symbolizes repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. Therefore, is used stylistically to express spiritual transformation. Also, the wise and foolish virgins in example (2) above are stylistically used to demonstrate preparedness and lack of it. Therefore, it is both instructive and educative about preparation in life.

C. **Personification:** Personification according to Solovyeva (2022) involves attributing human characteristics—such as feelings, speech, intentions, or physical actions—to things that are not human. The following are examples:

1. At midnight a cry was heard. (Matt 25: 6 NKJV) (PTV)
2. The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. (Luke 12:16 NKJV) (PRF)
3. …our lamps are going out... our oil is running out…(PTV)
4. The ground… yielded an abundant harvest… (PRF)

Personification as a stylistic device used in the parable helps to enhance the vividness of the parable. For instance, the lamps and oil are given human-like significance in example (3) above. Also, nature (ground) is personified as a giver in example (4). This is stylistically used as a subtle reminder that wealth and prosperity come from God.

D. **Hyperbole:** Hyperbole is defined by Carston & Wearing (2015) as a rhetorical device where a speaker or writer intentionally exaggerates a feature, quality, or quantity to create a strong impression, evoke emotion, or emphasize a point. These exaggerations are not meant to be taken literally, but rather to highlight the intensity or importance of what is being described. The following are examples:

1. And I am no longer worthy to be called your son. (Luke 15:19 NKJV) (PPS)
2. Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years… (Luke 12:19 NKJV) (PRF)
3. …there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want (Luke 15:14 NKJV) (PPS)
4. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones …(PRF)
5. I have plenty of grain laid up for many years …(PRF)

In the Parable of the Rich Fool, the personae exaggerates his security, wealth and unattainable state of mind; for instance, he remarks, "I have plenty of grain laid up for many years" in example (5) above. Also, in example (4), hyperbole is stylistically used to express the boastful, obsession with hoarding and proud nature of the personae. This strategy is used to highlight irrational thinking, absurd and extreme nature of man (example 2 above). Therefore, hyperbole as a stylistic strategy is used to depict this nature of man in a subtle manner.

E. **Irony**: Zhang (2025) sees irony is a powerful rhetorical device that enhances language expression and literary creation by providing diverse ways of expression and thinking through its contrast between literal and extended meanings, humor, satirical effect and context dependence. Examples can be found from the parables:

1. The foolish virgins believed they were ready — they had lamps — yet they lacked the essential oil (Parable of the Virgin)
2. The son who refuses at first actually does the will of the father (The disobedient son ends up obeying) (PTS)
3. He "thinks*"* he is being prudent and safe by hiding the money, but his inaction leads to loss and condemnation (PT)
4. The younger son, who disrespects his father, ends up experiencing mercy; while the older son, who seems obedient, becomes resentful and estranged (PPS)

5. The rich man calls himself "fortunate" and plans to "eat, drink and be merry," believing he controls his future. The irony is that he dies that very night—showing how powerless humans are over their lives (PRF)

The contrast in example (1) is a situational irony where the virgins thought they were ready but their outward readiness did not match their inward preparation. So, the message of total (whole) preparation is passed through the use of irony. Also, in example (2) above, the use of irony exposes the hypocrisy of outwardly religious people who say one thing and do another. The use is a subtle way to criticize dissents followers of Christ.

F. **Parallelism and Repetition:** Repetition is a rhetorical and literary figure of speech in which a word, phrase, or sentence is intentionally repeated for emphasis, clarity, or to create a particular effect. The following are examples:

1. He was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. (Luke 15:19, 21 NKJV) (PPS)
2. The servant with five talents invests them and earns five more… the servant with two talents does the same and gains two more…but the servant with one talent buries it in the ground to keep it safe. (Matthew 25:14–30) (PT)
3. Well-done good and faithful servant… (Matt 25:21, 23 NKJV) (PT)
4. And I am no longer worthy to be called your son. (Luke 15:19, 21 NKJV) (PPS)
5. Some fell along the path... some fell on rocky places... other seed fell among thorns... still other seed fell on good soil Matthew 13:1–23 (NIV) (PS)
6. Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. Luke 15:18, 21 (NKJV) (PPS)
7. Some fell on… (Matt 13:4, 5, 7, 8 NKJV) (PS)

The use of Parallelism in example (1) is to emphasize restoration, a form of departure and return or lost and found which is key to the message of Christ. Also. In (2) above, the parallel structures demonstrate action and result, fairness and consequence and it is used to highlight ability and corresponding results. The use of parallelism in (5) above emphasizes contrast between outcomes, and helps the reader/listener to follow the pattern leading to the final moral in the teaching. It a useful tool for illustration.

G. **Alliteration:** Nizomova (2021) defines alliteration as a literary device characterized by the repetition of the same initial consonant sound in two or more closely positioned words within a phrase, sentence, or verse. The following are examples in the biblical parables:

1. And as he sowed, some seeds feel by the wayside… (Matt 13:4 NKJV) (PS)
2. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! (Matt 13:9 NKJV) (PS)
3. …And those who were ready went in with him to the wedding. (Matt 25:10 NKJV) (PTV)

This literary device is used to draw attention to the key words in the parable, highlight the importance of the message in the parable apart from creating musical qualities to draw

attention of the listener to the message such can be found in example (1) above with the repetition of /s/ sound. Apart from creating s*ound, rhythm, emphasis,* and *emotion* and making writing more vivid the use of alliteration in example (2) with /h/ and example (3) with /w/ make it memorable.

H. **Symbolism:** Symbolism is a literary device that uses objects, places, people, or ideas to represent something beyond their literal meaning. It is the use of a concrete image to represent an abstract idea. Several examples abound in the parables:

1. The seed, path, rocks, thorns and good soil are symbolism. (PS)
2. Seed, tares and harvest are symbolism in the Parable of the Wheat and Tares (PWT)
3. Wheat and Tares symbolize the righteous and the unrighteous. (PWT)
4. Barns, crop or grain, tearing down to build bigger ones are symbolism in the Parable of the Rich Fool (PRF)
5. The talents represent the gifts, abilities, and resources that God entrusts to individuals. (PT)
6. Oil, lamp, sleep, Midnight cry and shut door are symbolism in the Parable of The Wise Virgin. (PTV)
7. Father, younger son, older son, robe, ring and sandals, fattened calf and distance country are symbolism in the Parable of the Lost Son (PLS)
8. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho, the Robbers, the Samaritan's oil and wine and the inn are symbolism in the parable of the Good Samaritan (PGS)

Symbolism is stylistically used in the parables to carry images of moral and theological truths. For instance, in example (1) symbolism of seed, tares, thorns and good soil represent various moral and theological truths such as divine truth; tares and thorns symbolize spiritual obstacle or/and evil while good soil stands receptive and faithful heart respectively. The use of barns and crops or grain in example (4) symbolize worldly security and selfish accumulation while crops or grain stands for earthly wealth that does not amount to anything in the kingdom of God according to the teaching of Christ. The use of symbolism is used to frown at material possessions and human greed.

I. Imagery: According to Khan & Khan (2019) imagery refers to the use of figurative or metaphorical language that activates any of the senses, stimulating readers to respond to what is described in a poem or literary text. It is about forming mental constructs or ideas through words, making abstract concepts concrete and accessible: The following are the examples form the parables:

1. *"The sun came up, the plants were scorched" (PS)*
2. *"Thorns... choked the plants" (PS)*
3. The robe, ring, and feast (PPS)
4. The father running, embracing, and kissing his son. . .(PPS)

5. (a) "They stripped him, beat him, and left him half-dead." (b) "He bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine." (PGS)

It is pertinent to point out here that imageries used in the parable help to create sensory pictures of the teaching for instance, robe, ring and feast create restoration and joy; The father running, embracing, and kissing his son invokes a moving image of tender forgiveness which is the essences of His teaching. Also, "they stripped him, beat him, and left him half-dead…"; these sensory details evoke emotional empathy which helped listeners feel the Samaritan's compassion.

J. **Metonymy and Synecdoche:** Metonymy and synecdoche are both figures of speech involving the substitution of one term for another, but they operate through different types of relationships. Ali (2023) sees "metonymy as a figure of speech in which a term is used to refer to something else that is closely associated with it, based on a relationship of contiguity or conceptual proximity rather than similarity", while, "synecdoche is a specific type of metonymy where a part is used to represent the whole, or the whole is used to represent a part" (Ali, 2023). The following examples are attested to in the parables:
    1. "Tax collectors and prostitutes" are used as metonyms for all people considered sinful or morally unclean in society. (PTS)
    2. "Whoever has ears, let them hear." Ears" is an example of Synecdoche and as used here represents the whole person (PS)

So, tax collectors and prostitutes are used to represent all people considered sinful or morally unclean in society, while Ears stand for the whole person. this is synecdoche, where a part represents the whole and it is used stylistically for whoever is willing to listen and understand spiritually.

From the forgoing, the parables are rich in literary devices stylistically crafted to express various aspects of the teaching of Christ; either to present different hearts that receive the word of God or using extended metaphor to showcase a simple story with a deeper spiritual meaning. The use of these devices is apt in that it makes abstract spiritual truths concrete and relatable. Therefore, the listener can picture the scenes and interpret to decipher the spiritual dimension of the parable. For instance, (i) Stylistically, the use of personification enhances the vividness of the parable. (ii) The use of parallelism emphasizes moral contrast and balance. (iii) Stylistically, the use of symbolism carries a layer of meaning that moves the story beyond the literal level to mention but a few.

Research Question 2

What are the themes as elements of literature of the biblical parables?

Themes: Themes in literature are central ideas or concepts that run throughout a work, adding depth and meaning to the narrative. They have universal relevance and are often complex, influencing character development, conflict, and resolution.

Parable of the Sower

Theme of Spiritual Growth and Fruitfulness: The theme of "spiritual growth and fruitfulness" in the Parable of the Sower emphasizes that the reception of God's Word is not a static event but a dynamic process. The parable stylistically uses different types of soil to represent various conditions of the human heart, with the good soil symbolizing a receptive and prepared heart. When the Word of God is received in such a heart, it leads to spiritual growth, resulting in the production of good fruit. This fruit represents positive, transformative effects in a person's life and includes virtues like love, joy, and kindness, as well as acts of kindness and sharing the Gospel. The parable underscores the eternal implications of this growth, with those who bear fruit experiencing spiritual abundance and blessings. In contrast, those who allow external distractions and trials to hinder their growth will not enjoy the same spiritual rewards.

Theme of the Word of God and its impact: The theme of "the word of God and its impact" in the Parable of the Sower focuses on how the Gospel message is received and its resulting effects on people's lives. In the parable, the Word of God is symbolized as seeds, and different types of soil represent the receptivity of human hearts. Some are unreceptive, while others initially accept but do not endure, and some are overshadowed by worldly concerns. However, those with hearts like "good soil" receive, understand, and accept the Word, leading to spiritual growth, transformation, and fruitfulness. This theme emphasizes the importance of cultivating receptive and responsive hearts to allow the Word of God to have a positive impact and bear fruit in one's life.

Theme of Importance of Hearing and Understanding: "The Importance of Hearing and Understanding" in the Parable of the Sower underscores that a person's response to the Gospel message depends on their ability to actively listen, comprehend, and internalize the Word of God. It highlights that comprehension is a critical aspect of a receptive heart and that true discipleship involves not only hearing the Word but also allowing it to take root deeply within one's heart, leading to spiritual growth and transformation. This theme cautions against superficial faith and encourages a deep, abiding understanding of God's truth and a commitment to living it out in daily life.

Literary Implication of the Themes

Parable of the Sower: The Russian Formalist perspective of *Parable of the Sower* reveals that its themes are not merely social or political messages but artistic constructions achieved through narrator’s deliberate use of literary devices. For instance, repetition transforms an ordinary philosophical statement into an artistic device; the recurring expression foregrounds the inevitability of transformation; readers perceive change not simply as an idea but as the novel's formal structure. Thus, the literary significance lies in the narrator’s patterned repetition rather than only in the philosophical content. Through repetition, motif, foregrounding, defamiliarization, symbolism, imagery, characterization, and the careful

arrangement of narrative events, the narrator transforms familiar concerns such as survival, leadership, identity, religion, violence, community, hope, adaptation, and social collapse into aesthetically compelling literary experiences that we can all relate with.

Parable of the Wheat and Tares: From the Russian Formalist perspective, the theme of *Parable of the Wheat and Tares* is conveyed through binary opposition, a key structural device of Russian Formalism. For example, contrast is seeing between, wheat and tares, owner and enemy, growth and destruction and harvest and judgment. This creates a balanced narrative structure that heightens literary tension. The implication is that the artistic contrast between opposing elements, rather than merely the moral lesson, gives the parable its literary force. The coexistence of this binary opposition: good and evil, patience, judgment, divine justice, deception, discernment, growth, conflict, separation, and hope are not presented merely as religious teachings; they are shaped through literary techniques such as symbolism, binary opposition, repetition, motif, foregrounding, defamiliarization, and structured plot development.

Parable of the Rich Fool: From the theoretical perspective, greed is emphasized in *Parable of the Rich Fool* through repetition and internal monologue by the Rich Fool. The repeated use of first-person expressions such as "my crops," "my barns," "my grain," and "my goods" foregrounds the character's excessive self-interest. Also, wealth becomes a source of vulnerability rather than security; successful farming becomes a setting for tragedy; prosperity leads unexpectedly to condemnation; abundance culminates not in celebration but in loss. These reversals encourage readers to reconsider conventional assumptions about success and security. This is a deliberately artistic device that reveals the protagonist's obsession with material possessions. These literary techniques distinguish the parable from a simple moral anecdote and give it enduring artistic power and moral commentary that shape the reader's understanding of greed. Russian Formalism therefore demonstrates that the parable's lasting impact arises from the way its formal features transform an ordinary account of wealth into a compelling and memorable literary work.

Parable of the Prodigal Son: The literary implication of *Parable of the Prodigal Son* is that repentance becomes meaningful because of the carefully arranged sequence of events that lead from rebellion to self-awareness and finally to restoration. Symbolism such as, younger son, father, elder brother, inheritance, robe, ring and sandals are interpreted as artistic devices that deepen the narrative's meaning rather than theological teaching alone. And, such themes as repentance, forgiveness, love, redemption, family reconciliation, jealousy, humility, mercy, restoration, and the deliberate use of characterization, symbolism, dialogue, contrast, repetition, foregrounding, defamiliarisation, and carefully organised plot structure. Russian Formalism thus demonstrates that the enduring influence of the parable rests not only on its universal message but also on the sophisticated literary techniques that shape the reader's perception.

Parable of the Talents

Stewardship and Responsibility: The theme of stewardship emphasizes the idea that individuals are entrusted with resources, abilities, and opportunities by God. In the parable, the master gives talents to his servants, and they are responsible for managing and multiplying these talents. This theme underscores the importance of using one's gifts and resources wisely and being accountable for them. It encourages responsible and faithful stewardship.

Reward and Accountability: The parable highlights the theme of reward and accountability. The master rewards the two servants who faithfully multiply their talents, commending them with greater responsibilities and blessings. However, the third servant, who buries his talent and fails to generate any return, faces accountability and is condemned. This theme emphasizes that faithful stewardship is rewarded, and unfaithfulness carries consequences.

Use of God-Given Abilities: The theme of using God-given abilities and opportunities is central to this parable. It encourages individuals to identify and use their unique gifts, talents, and opportunities for the service of God and the betterment of others. The parable emphasizes that the faithful use of one's abilities and resources lead to growth and a positive impact.

Literary Implication of the Themes

Parable of the Talents: The Russian Formalist perspective of *Parable of the Talents*, the parable demonstrates the formal features of the story rather than its historical, religious, or biographical background. The *Parable of the Talent*s (Gospel of Matthew 25:14–30) demonstrates that its themes derive their literary significance from the artistic organisation of the narrative rather than solely from its moral or theological message. For instance, the careful arrangement of characters, actions, and symbols transforms the *Parable of the Talents* which is about servants and money into a compelling literary work. The themes such as responsibility, faithfulness, accountability, reward, judgment, diligence, fear, stewardship, initiative, opportunity, and consequences derive their literary significance from the deliberate use of characterisation, symbolism, repetition, dialogue, contrast, parallelism, foregrounding, defamiliarisation, and structured plot development. This therefore reveals that the enduring power of the parable lies not only in its ethical teaching but also in the literary techniques that shape readers' perception, sustain narrative tension, and unify the work into a coherent artistic whole.

Parable of the Good Samaritan

Compassion and Neighbourly Love: The central theme of the Parable of the Good Samaritan is compassion and neighborly love. The parable tells the story of a man who is robbed, beaten, and left for dead by the side of the road. Several individuals, including a priest and a Levite, pass by the wounded man without offering assistance. However, a Samaritan, who was typically considered an outsider by the Jewish community, stops to help the injured man. He tends to the man's wounds, takes him to an inn, and ensures his care. This theme emphasizes the importance of showing compassion and care for those in need, transcending social and

cultural boundaries. It challenges the listener to consider who one's true neighbor is and underscores the commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself.

Generosity and Sacrifice: The theme of generosity in the Parable of the Good Samaritan is demonstrated through the Samaritan's willingness to give of his time, attention, and resources to help the injured man. His actions exemplify a selfless and open-handed nature. The theme of sacrifice is evident in the Samaritan's willingness to set aside his own comfort, convenience, and financial resources to care for someone in need. These themes underscore the idea that true generosity often involves making personal sacrifices for the well-being of others, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Responsibility and Moral Duty: The theme of responsibility and moral duty is also prominent in this parable. The Samaritan demonstrates a sense of moral duty and personal responsibility for the well-being of the wounded man. His actions exemplify the idea that individuals have a responsibility to care for the welfare of others, especially those in distress. The parable encourages listeners to consider their moral obligations to fellow human beings and to act in a way that reflects their commitment to helping those in need.

Literary Implication of the Themes

Parable of the Good Samaritan: Russian Formalism emphasizes literariness through compassion and which is developed through characterisation by action. The Samaritan's compassion is revealed through a sequence of concrete actions by approaching the wounded man, treating his wounds, placing him on his animal, taking him to an inn, and paying for his care. The literary implication is that compassion becomes an artistic construct expressed through narrative action rather than abstract description, thereby strengthening the realism and emotional impact of the story. The narrative juxtaposes the indifferent behaviour of the priest and Levite with the compassionate response of the Samaritan. This binary opposition foregrounds the concept of neighbourly love, making it the central artistic focus of the narrative. Also, the literary implication is that repeated acts of kindness function as a stylistic pattern, emphasizing mercy through structure rather than explicit commentary. The choice of a Samaritan as the hero functions as defamiliarisation in that the readers would likely have expected the priest to act compassionately. By reversing these expectations, the narrative makes readers reassess conventional assumptions about virtue and social identity.

Parable of the Ten Virgins

Preparedness: One of the central themes of this parable is preparedness. The story revolves around the ten virgins who are awaiting the arrival of the bridegroom. Five of them are described as "wise" because they are prepared with enough oil for their lamps, while the other five are labeled as "foolish" because they lack sufficient oil. The central message here is the importance of being spiritually and morally prepared for significant divine events, particularly the Second Coming of Christ. This theme emphasizes the necessity of being vigilant, responsible, and proactive in one's spiritual journey. It underscores the individual

responsibility for one's own spiritual readiness and highlights the potential consequences of being unprepared.

The Second Coming: The parable alludes to the concept of the Second Coming of Christ. The virgins represent those awaiting this event, symbolizing the anticipation of Christ's return and the establishment of God's kingdom. This theme is significant in Christian theology and underscores the idea that believers should be watchful and prepared for this divine event. It conveys the concept of future accountability and judgment, as the bridegroom's arrival represents a time when individuals will be called to account for their spiritual readiness and moral conduct.

Individual Responsibility: The theme of individual responsibility is closely related to preparedness. The parable places a strong emphasis on personal responsibility for one's spiritual state. Each virgin is responsible for her own supply of oil and, consequently, her level of preparedness. This theme highlights the idea that personal faith, righteousness, and preparedness cannot be transferred or shared with others. It encourages self-reliance in one's spiritual journey and a sense of ownership over one's relationship with God.

Literary Implication of the Themes: The Russian Formalist approach to the *Parable of the Ten Virgins* reveals that its themes derive their literary significance from the deliberate organisation of characters, symbols, dialogue, and narrative progression. From this perspective, preparedness is developed through binary characterisation. The narrative divides the characters into two clearly contrasted groups, the wise and the foolish virgins. This structural opposition creates dramatic tension and establishes preparedness as the organizing principle of the narrative. The literary significance lies in the artistic contrast rather than in direct moral instruction. Wisdom is expressed through action rather than description. Their practical preparation serves as indirect characterisation. And, foolishness functions as the narrative's counterpoint to wisdom. The contrast between the two groups establishes a symmetrical structure that strengthens thematic coherence. The literary implication is that foolishness gains significance through its structural relationship with wisdom. The parable achieves its enduring impact through its formal organisation, demonstrating the Russian Formalist principle that the artistic arrangement of language and narrative is fundamental to literary meaning.

Parable of the Two Sons

Obedience and Repentance: One of the central themes of this parable is obedience to God's will and the importance of repentance. In the parable, a father asks his two sons to work in the vineyard. The first son initially refuses but later repents and goes to work, while the second son agrees but does not follow through.

This theme emphasizes that it is not just the initial words or intentions that matter, but the actions and attitudes of obedience and repentance. It highlights the idea that true obedience to God involves not only saying "yes" but also following through with one's commitments.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation: The parable explores the themes of forgiveness and reconciliation within the context of the family. The father's response to both sons' actions demonstrates forgiveness and reconciliation. He welcomes back the first son who initially refused but later repented.

This theme conveys the idea that, no matter one's past mistakes or disobedience, there is room for forgiveness and reconciliation. It serves as a moral lesson about the capacity for individuals to change and be reconciled with God.

Hypocrisy and Self-Righteousness: The parable indirectly addresses the theme of hypocrisy and self-righteousness. The second son, who initially agrees to work but does not follow through, represents the hypocrite who may give the appearance of righteousness but lacks true obedience in the heart. This theme serves as a warning against mere outward displays of piety or religious commitment without genuine, heartfelt obedience. It encourages self-examination and humility, cautioning against self-righteousness.

Literary Implication of the Themes

Parable of the Two Sons: The Russian Formalist's perspective demonstrates that the themes acquire literary significance through the deliberate arrangement of dialogue, character contrast, and narrative structure. The parable's enduring appeal lies not only in its moral teaching but also in the literary techniques that shape readers' understanding. For stance, obedience is expressed through action rather than speech. The narrative contrasts words with deeds, making behaviour the principal means of characterisation. The implication is that obedience becomes an artistic concept revealed through plot development instead of direct explanation. Russian Formalists view this transformation as an important structural device that sustains reader interest and gives unity to the narrative. This reversal produces surprise and foregrounds the contrast between appearance and reality, enhancing the literary effect of the story. Responsibility is communicated through dialogue and individual characterization. Transformation is conveyed through narrative progression. Russian Formalists interpret this progression as a structural device that gives coherence and movement to the narrative. This indirect characterization demonstrates how literary meaning is created through actions rather than authorial explanation.

Summary

The research discusses the importance and composition of the Bible, highlighting its two main parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament, which were written over several centuries in different languages. It also mentions key translations of the Bible and various types of texts within the Old and New Testaments.

The research emphasizes the significance of parables in the Bible, describing them as short, fictional stories that convey moral or spiritual lessons through allegorical characters and events. Parables make complex ideas accessible to a wide audience, offering both literal and metaphorical interpretations.

The latter part of the paper shifts its focus to stylistics and style in literature. Stylistics is identified as a field that studies individual authors' use of linguistic resources in language, especially in works of literature. Style is defined as the unique use of language by an individual, reflecting how a writer structures their work and communicates ideas. Stylistic analysis is explained as the in-depth examination of an author's style, focusing on linguistic features and their effects in the text.

The research covers the Bible's composition, the significance of parables within it, and introduces the concepts of stylistics and style in literature, as well as the practice of stylistic analysis.

The paper primarily focuses on two main areas: stylistics literary and the analysis of parables. Stylistics is described as the study of style in language, involving the examination of how individuals use language to convey thoughts and ideas uniquely. The research explores the distinct attributes of style and its role in effective communication, emphasizing its adaptability for various purposes.

Parables which are brief narratives conveying moral or deeper meanings, are also discussed. Their significance is noted in literary criticism, theology, historical analysis, and exegesis due to their ability to provide insights into various concepts and contexts.

The paper also delves into the theoretical frameworks for the analysis of parables, specifically Russian Formalism. Russian Formalism focuses on formal aspects of texts and the unique use of language in literature, emphasizing literariness and the artistic qualities of literary works.

Conclusion

This research presents an analysis of the stylistic elements found in eight biblical parables from the New Testament. It begins by examining the use of figures of speech, including simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, repetition, alliteration, and symbolism, within these parables. Figures of speech are used to enhance the impact of the narratives and convey deeper meanings.

The research also delves into the thematic elements present in these parables, highlighting the central themes and elements of literature within each story. Themes such as spiritual growth and fruitfulness, the impact of the Word of God, the coexistence of good and evil, judgment and separation, materialism and greed, the temporal nature of life, and many others are explored in the parables, adding depth and meaning to the narratives.

Overall, this research provides a comprehensive analysis of the literary and stylistic elements present in these biblical parables, shedding light on their use of language and themes to convey profound moral and spiritual lessons.

Recommendations

This paper takes a fresh look at the biblical parables through a stylistic lens, offering deep and meaningful insights that go beyond what traditional studies have explored. It examines stylistic elements of these narratives and puts forth tailored recommendations for various

audiences, including scholars, theologians, educators, and literature enthusiasts. The aim is to foster a deeper understanding of biblical parables and enhance academic, pedagogical, and storytelling appreciation. These recommendations act as guides to uncover the moral and spiritual nuances of these timeless tales, aiming to enrich one's comprehension of their intricate fabric.

1. This research recommends that instructional designers should develop educational materials that integrate the findings of the literary stylistic analysis into courses on religious studies and biblical literature. This will enhance students' critical thinking skills and provide a more engaging learning experience.
2. This research recommends religious educators to incorporate insights from the study into teachings and sermons. This will enable clergy and religious educators to communicate spiritual and moral lessons more effectively, fostering a deeper connection with congregations and students.
3. This research recommends that those in faith communities should promote awareness and accessibility of the study's findings to the general public and other faith communities, which can be achieved through workshops, publications, or online resources, enhancing the broader understanding of the literary artistry in the Bible.
4. The research suggests that Theologians should always conduct a comprehensive literary stylistic analysis of a diverse range of biblical parables to uncover nuanced insights into the intended messages and theological implications. This will contribute to a more thorough understanding of the artistic choices made by biblical authors in crafting these narratives.

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