



Exploring the textured textual world of James 1:1-27 - A multidimensional, embodied– rhetorical reading

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DECLARATION

I, Sanrie de Beer, declare herewith that the thesis entitled *Exploring the textured textual world of James 1:1-27 - A multidimensional, embodied–rhetorical reading*, which I herewith submit to the North-West University complies with the requirements set for the degree: is my own work, has been text-edited in accordance with the requirements and has not already been submitted to any other university.

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Kearney (2015:53) describes how all people are connected:

“I do not begin with an isolated body opposed to another consciousness; I exist my body because I am already operating in and from the flesh of the world. I touch because I am in touch with the world. I speak because I am spoken to and spoken through. In short, flesh is the pre-existing, pre-reflective chiasm which allows for the mutual insertion of the world between the folds of my body and my body between the folds of the world.”

In the same way, the people around me have shaped my life in many ways. I am truly grateful for their support, presence, and guidance. The individuals named below were instrumental in bringing this project to life. I am equally grateful to all who offered encouragement and support along the way.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an integrated, embodied rhetorical reinterpretation of the Two Ways motif in James 1:1–27. Previous scholarship has frequently characterised the Two Ways as a static moral binary or rigid ethical dualism, often separating ethical exhortation from the text's theological depth, rhetorical strategy, and embodied dimensions. In contrast to these reductionist perspectives, the present study proposes a multimodal hermeneutic that synthesises socio-rhetorical analysis, embodied cognition, carnal hermeneutics, and chiasmic typology. By shifting the focus from dualism to duality, the thesis advances an anti-dualistic and anti-mechanistic perspective on human nature.

The interpretative framework is developed and implemented through three interrelated stages. The first stage, structural–rhetorical analysis, examines James 1:1–27 as a cohesive, formative textual unit, identifying chiasmic patterns and tracing shifts across syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic levels. The second stage, an embodied-cognitive analysis, investigates metaphor, rhetography, marginality, intertextual memory, community dynamics, and embodied chiasmus, focusing on how meaning emerges through sensory imagery, affective engagement, and social context. The third stage, theological–ethical analysis, offers a synthetic examination of sacred authority, ideological critique, and the formation of ethical agency. Collectively, these stages demonstrate that meaning in James arises from the interaction of rhetorical structure, embodied cognition, social influence, and the sacred, rather than from any single interpretative approach.

The analysis shows that the Two Ways is not a schematic choice between opposing moral paths but a dynamic, relational, and embodied framework for ethical development. Elements such as trials, desire, speech, action, and care for the vulnerable are rhetorically and structurally integrated to foster practical wisdom and moral discernment over time. Interpreting chiasmic structures as generative of meaning rather than merely decorative, the study underscores the ethical significance of James's multi-effect, hourglass, and exclusionary patterns, which emphasise transformation, reversal, and moral tension. These rhetorical forms engage readers in a continuous process of discernment and practice, presenting the Two Ways not as abstract oppositions, such as hearing versus doing or faith versus action, but as lived orientations shaped through bodily discipline, intentional speech, perseverance, restraint, and communal care.

This study contributes original scholarship by developing and applying an embodied–rhetorical hermeneutic that reconceptualises the Two Ways motif in James 1:1–27 as a dynamic process of ethical formation rather than a fixed moral dualism. By presenting the Two Ways motif as a lived moral landscape characterised by relational movement and ongoing formation, this thesis

advances James' scholarship. It demonstrates the broader interpretative potential of an embodied rhetorical hermeneutic for early Christian texts. This approach resists simplistic dualisms while maintaining the ethical urgency of James's exhortation.

Key terms: Two Ways motif; dualism; duality; multimodal hermeneutic; socio-rhetorical analysis; embodied cognition; carnal hermeneutics; chiasmic typology; embodied–rhetorical hermeneutic; James 1:1–27.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie proefskrif bied 'n geïntegreerde, beliggaamde retoriese herinterpretasie van die Twee-Weë-motief in Jakobus 1:1–27. Vorige navorsing het die Twee Weë dikwels gekarakteriseer as 'n statiese morele binariteit of 'n rigiede etiese dualisme, en het die etiese vermaning van die teks se teologiese diepte, retoriese strategie en beliggaamde dimensies geskei. In teenstelling met hierdie reduksionistiese perspektiewe stel die huidige studie 'n multimodale hermeneutiek voor wat sosio-retoriese analise, beliggaamde kognisie, karnale hermeneutiek en chiasiese tipologie sintetiseer. Deur die fokus van dualisme na dualiteit te verskuif, ontwikkel die proefskrif 'n anti-dualistiese en anti-meganistiese perspektief op die menslike natuur.

Die interpretatiewe raamwerk word ontwikkel en toegepas deur drie onderling verweefde fases. Die eerste fase, 'n struktureel-retoriese analise, ondersoek Jakobus 1:1–27 as 'n samehangende, vormende tekseenheid, identifiseer chiasiese patrone en volg verskuiwings op sintaktiese, semantiese en pragmatiese vlakke. Die tweede fase, 'n beliggaamd-kognitiewe analise, ondersoek metafoor, retografie, marginaliteit, intertekstuele herinnering, gemeenskapsdinamika en beliggaamde chiasme, met die fokus op hoe betekenis na vore kom deur sensoriese beelde, affektiewe betrokkenheid en sosiale konteks. Die derde fase, 'n teologies-etiese analise, bied 'n sintese van heilige gesag, ideologiese kritiek en die vorming van etiese agentskap. Gesamentlik toon hierdie fases dat betekenis in Jakobus voortvloei uit die interaksie tussen retoriese struktuur, beliggaamde kognisie, sosiale beïnvloeding en die heilige, eerder as uit enige enkele interpretatiewe benadering.

Die analise toon dat die Twee Weë nie 'n skematiese keuse tussen opponerende morele paaie is nie, maar 'n dinamiese, relasionele en beliggaamde raamwerk vir etiese ontwikkeling. Elemente soos beproewings, begeerte, spraak, handeling en sorg vir die kwesbares word retories en struktureel geïntegreer om praktiese wysheid en morele onderskeiding oor tyd te bevorder. Deur chiasiese strukture as betekenisgenererend eerder as bloot dekoratief te interpreteer, beklemtoon die studie die etiese betekenis van Jakobus se multi-effek-, uurglas- en uitsluitingspatrone, wat transformasie, omkering en morele spanning uitlig. Hierdie retoriese vorme betrek lesers in 'n voortdurende proses van onderskeiding en praktyk, en stel die Twee Weë voor nie as abstrakte teenstellings — soos hoor teenoor doen of geloof teenoor daad — nie, maar as geleefde oriëntasies wat gevorm word deur liggaamlike dissipline, doelbewuste spraak, volharding, selfbeheersing en gemeenskaplike sorg.

Hierdie studie lewer 'n oorspronklike bydrae deur 'n beliggaamde-retoriese hermeneutiek te ontwikkel en toe te pas wat die Twee-Weë-motief in Jakobus 1:1–27 herkonseptualiseer as 'n

dinamiese proses van etiese vorming eerder as 'n vaste morele dualisme. Deur die Twee Weë voor te stel as 'n geleefde morele landskap gekenmerk deur relasionele beweging en voortdurende vorming, verryk hierdie proefskrif die Jakobus-navorsing. Dit toon verder die breër interpretatiewe potensiaal van 'n beliggaamde retoriese hermeneutiek vir die lees van vroeë Christelike tekste. Hierdie benadering weerstaan simplistiese dualismes terwyl dit die etiese dringendheid van Jakobus se vermaning behou.

Sluteltermes: Twee-Weë-motief; dualisme; dualiteit; multimodale hermeneutiek; sosio-retoriese ontleding; beliggaamde denke; karnale hermeneutiek; chiastiese tipologie; beliggaamde-retoriese hermeneutiek; Jakobus 1:1–27.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The spaces which are unwritten are anything but empty. They are the places where deeper power lives, where the “more” of living experience refuses to be ruled by the “less” of what can be written. These unwritten spaces pull with the power of a star’s gravity, drawing everything into orbit around themselves. It is around the unwritten spaces that the “texts” rotate. The lived world is stronger than the authorized world. It is around the lived world that the texts of authorization revolve as lesser satellites, although a Ptolemaic imagination believes otherwise.

Edgerton (1992:107)

1.1 Research rationale

Although we are familiar with human existence, we continually seek to understand what it truly means to be human. As Migliore (1991:120) notes, "We human beings are a mystery to ourselves. We are rational and irrational, civilised and savage, capable of deep friendship and murderous hostility, free and in bondage, the pinnacle of creation and its greatest danger." This theological and anthropological exploration of humanity poses a significant challenge. Issues such as globalisation, economic justice, equality, ecology, gender, sexuality, free will, and determinism continually invite us to reflect on our human nature (Cotez, 2010:4). Each generation reinterprets the meaning of humanity through the lens of its sociocultural, historical, and political contexts. Conradie (2004:564) further comments:

In the context of liberation theology, feminist theology, indigenous theologies, and ecological theology, another set of anthropological questions has been articulated: How are human beings constituted by the structures of society and how can they transform such societies from within? How should the relationship between different human genders be constructed? How can a sense of community to which all humans belong be retrieved? How should the relationship between humanity and nature be understood? Or, more precisely, what is the specific place of humankind within the earth community? Or more theologically: What is humanity's place in the household of God?

An entire industry exists to address the needs for wholeness, beauty, and salvation, which are often not fulfilled by traditional religious institutions in a contemporary context (Ammicht-Quinn, 2004:72). Recognising that our physical bodies shape human experiences, the past decade has seen a rise in studies focused on how bodies are depicted in religious knowledge and how humans conceive of the Divine. The human body and reflections on embodiment have become significant subjects in contemporary theological discourse (Isherwood & Stuart, 1998; Isherwood, 2004:140–56; Pinn, 2010; Copeland, 2010; Loughlin, 2007; Creamer, 2009; Ryan, 2004). A

theology of the body necessitates what Meiring (2015:3) describes as "embodied sensing" — a sentiment of the flesh and a sensitivity to the textures of life. In this context, Meiring advocates for a contemporary theological anthropology that acknowledges our complex relationship with our lived bodies. Ruthrof (2004:34) refers to a “corporeal-linguistic turn,” stating that “the body is reclaiming its central place in evolution, particularly in evolutionary developments such as language and human imagination.” This corporeal-linguistic turn has been supported by cognitive science and cognitive linguistics research, emphasising how language is expressed through the body and the influence of metaphorical thinking. Sheets-Johnstone (2009:3) highlights the importance of examining the living realities of corporeal life and understanding what it means to be the bodies we inhabit.

Isherwood and Stuart (1998:11) assert that biblical texts and the early church fathers have predominantly portrayed the body in a negative light. They addressed and warned against issues related to sight, lust, touch, sex, and the taste of food. This perspective has enslaved the body within the confines of a patriarchal system, from which feminist theologians seek to offer liberation. Contemporary Christian body theologians aim to recover a Jewish understanding of the body's unity, in contrast to the dualism inherited from Greek philosophy (Shinall, 2014:185). Shinall (2014:186–87) discusses several theological problems associated with this dualism as it pertains to embodiment:

- Dualism diminishes the value of physicality (Ryan, 2004: vii–xv).
- Physical pleasure is often met with disdain, casting a shadow over the pursuit of physical well-being and impeding our journey toward holistic health. (Isherwood & Stuart, 1998:17–19).
- The human body is unjustly viewed in a negative light, leading to the devaluation of individuals with disabilities. (Creamer, 2009:49, 54).
- Dualism sustains patriarchal gender roles, where the so-called spiritually superior male dominates the more physically oriented female. (Isherwood & Stuart, 1998:16, 17, 19–21; Sheets-Johnstone, 2000:173).
- It cultivates an economic framework that exploits physical labour by establishing a pervasive normalisation of bodily control. (Isherwood & Stuart, 1998:47).
- Violence is unequivocally promoted. Althaus-Reid & Isherwood (2008:1–4) critique “a Christian culture that ... slices the bodies of women through acts of theological

dismemberment, beginning with the fundamental split of mind from body, which serves as the insidious and deadly weapon of dualism sustaining patriarchal ideologies.”

Isherwood and Stuart (1998:34) define body theology as offering “the hope of healing the cruel rupture that patriarchal thinking has introduced into theology; it attempts to reunite the body, mind, and emotions to recognise anew the glory and goodness of all creation.”

Moltmann-Wendel (1995) addresses the urgent need to confront the division between body and mind. She reflects on the tension inherent in the two-fold claim of "having a body" versus "being a body".¹ Through her development of a Theology of Embodiment, she emphasises the significance of the body, including its experiences, traditions, and religious and social roles (Moltmann-Wendel, 1995: xiii). Moltmann-Wendel's argument is crucial to the Christian faith because it encourages a shift from our disengagement with our bodies. It inspires us to embrace the idea that we embody our experiences; we are our bodies, not merely their possessors. In the African context, Ras (2017:1) asserts that our experiences are not mere abstract phenomena; they are deeply rooted and intimately tied to our bodies. She states, "If you break down the body, the mind, or the community, you break down the person — and vice versa." African anthropology views personhood and the body as interconnected, in contrast to the Greek and subsequent Cartesian perspectives that uphold a dualistic separation between body and soul. Ras (2017:1–7) advocates for a positive theological anthropology that envisions a restored body — "one that is whole in all its relations and interdependencies." This vision of healing and restoration is informed by African concepts such as *ubuntu*, which translates to "I am a person through other persons." Meiring (2015:3) supports this perspective, emphasising that the body is continuously interconnected with its context, biology, and environment.

In 1992, I earned my master's degree (Smith, 1993) by examining the portrayal of humankind in the Epistle of James. I concluded that James presupposes a dualism present in several contexts: in the macrocosm (God versus Satan), within society (the rich versus the poor), and in the structure of humankind as a microcosm (good versus bad). Consequently, this dualism also implies a distinction regarding the completion of humanity and its ultimate destiny. My research on intertextuality, as presented in James (Van Zyl, 2000), also highlights this dualistic outlook. I identified a three-dimensional dualism encompassing actants, space, and time: God (good)

¹ Generally, we perceive our bodies as instruments for working, eating, dancing, making love, and enjoying ourselves. However, there are times when we feel unwell, fatigued, or in pain, which alters our perception; at such moments, we see ourselves as our bodies. Moltmann-Wendel (1995:1) states that we have bodies for our day-to-day lives, but when our bodies are in crisis, our experience is that we are our bodies.

versus Satan (evil), above (heaven) versus below (hell), and now (the earthly dimension) versus then (the eschatological dimension, or the hereafter). These observations have been noted by researchers such as Niebuhr (2013:223–242), Wolmarans (1992:523–530), Elliot (1993:73–91), and Hearon (2020:353–362). Lockett (2008:275) asserts that while James employs Greco-Roman moral themes and rhetorical strategies, it remains a Jewish text. The letter is influenced by the tradition of Jewish wisdom literature, which incorporates the "Two Ways" theme. This motif is common in moral teachings, contrasting positive and negative behaviours to guide students toward righteousness (e.g., Proverbs 9). The theme evokes imagery of "ways," "roads," or "paths," which, in both Jewish and early Christian literature, serve as metaphors for the paths of righteousness versus unrighteousness, life versus death, and so forth.

A re-evaluation of the reading and interpretation of dualisms in ancient Christian didactic texts, such as the Epistle of James, is necessary to address the alleged theological problems associated with a presumed dualistic view of the world, the body, and humanity. This reassessment may help to shift away from "either-or" language. The Epistle of James discusses embodiment within its context, considering its understanding of biology and the environment. Dealing with an ancient biblical text that emphasises a dualistic view of the human body (James 2:26)² and humankind, observes the physical body negatively by warning against lust and sex (James 1:13-15)³ as well as reflecting negatively on females, thereby revealing the patriarchal nature of the text⁴, how can a vision of a restored, whole body be made possible? The motivation for my investigation stems from an existential concern: What message does the Epistle of James convey to millions of South Africans, of whom I consider myself a part? When personhood and embodiment are understood within the South African context as fundamentally holistic, expressed through a constructive anthropology of healing and restoration and further informed by African philosophical frameworks

² ὥσπερ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα χωρὶς πνεύματος νεκρὸν ἐστίν, οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις χωρὶς ἔργων νεκρά ἐστίν – Like the body without breath, life, spirit is dead, faith without works is dead.

³ Wolmarans (1994:135–38) argues that the female metaphor found in James 1:14-15 is portrayed negatively. According to Wolmarans (1994:135), the metaphorical woman is depicted as someone who entices an unidentified male into a sexual encounter. The sexual imagery in James 1 reflects two important aspects of its context: the hierarchical structure of ancient society and the unequal relationship between men and women (Wolmarans, 1994:139). In this regard, Johnson (2004:103-13), Tamez (1994:384–85), Mongstad-Kvammen (2013), and Visser (2022) provide valuable insights for interpreting James through the lens of patriarchy.

⁴ Tamez (1994:384–85) discusses the patriarchal language present in the letter. She notes several aspects of this language: In James 1:17, God is referred to as the "Father of Lights." Additionally, in James 1:14–15, sexual desire, which encompasses seduction, sin, and death, is compared to women's experiences of pregnancy, such as conceiving, giving birth, and propagating. In contrast to this negative portrayal, the idea of propagation is also used positively; for example, the "Father of Lights" is described as engendering the "Word of Truth" in James 1:8, 12, and 3:2. Tamez believes that the term "adulteress" (μοιχαλίδης) in James 4:4 further illustrates the patriarchal nature of the letter. She argues that the metaphor of prostitution highlights the way women are marginalised within the text (Tamez 1994:385).

such as *ubuntu* (“I am a person through other persons”), in what ways might the dualisms found in an authoritative biblical text like the Epistle of James be critically interpreted? How does the Epistle of James, as a presumed wisdom text, offer wisdom⁵ in our context, characterised by patriarchy, violent conflict, racism, and discrimination? Given these serious issues, should not James' wisdom help address them? Or does James' anthropology inadvertently perpetuate disparity?

This research project does not involve a comprehensive appropriation of the text concerning the South African context, as such an exploration is beyond its scope. Instead, I aim to develop a hermeneutical approach that can incorporate diverse perspectives, contexts, and interpretations of bodies and embodiment, ultimately encouraging a positive anthropology of unity and interconnectedness. It is vital to recognise that the concept of embodiment in the 1st-century CE context of the Letter of James differs considerably from how these ideas are understood in a postmodern South African context. Nonetheless, my South African background motivates and shapes my interest in re-evaluating the reading and interpretation of dualisms in ancient Christian didactic texts, such as the Letter of James.

1.2 Research problem

Recent scholarship on the Epistle of James has significantly deepened understanding of the letter's rhetorical, theological, social, and wisdom dimensions. Despite these developments, interpretations of James continue to rely predominantly on rigid dualistic frameworks that structure the text around binary oppositions. This section, therefore, examines recent developments in James scholarship, the persistence of dualistic interpretations and the limitations of such readings. Following these discussions, a problem statement is formulated.

1.2.1 Recent developments in James's scholarship

According to Dibelius and Greeven (1976:1–2), although the Epistle of James is presented as a letter, its literary form reflects the Hellenistic paraenetic style. They define paraenesis as “a text that strings together admonitions of general ethical content” (Dibelius & Greeven, 1976:3). However, they argue that the paraenesis in James is not aimed at any specific historical or situational context. Researchers challenge this view,⁶ arguing that paraenesis in the Epistle of

⁵ Researchers like Johnson (2000), Wold (2019:73–86), Laws (1980), and Cheung and Yu (2019:87–98) consistently highlight the Epistle of James' strong connection to wisdom literature.

⁶ See Cheung and Yu (2019:87–98); Mason (2019:27–44); Jackson-McCabe (2019:45–72); Watson (2019:99–116).

James is rhetorically helpful in addressing an actual audience facing the situations presupposed by this writing. James' connections to the Jewish wisdom tradition have been recognised by various researchers (Verseput, 1998:691–707; Bauckham, 2019:9–26; Wold, 2019:73–86). Watson (2019:114–115) suggests that the topics in the Letter of James are presented in a sequence like that found in the Jewish wisdom literature of Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon. Greco-Roman rhetoric is utilised in this topical development.⁷

James may thus be classified as didactic literature. The author of the text presents himself as a wisdom teacher or sage (διδάσκαλος in James 3:1) who admonishes and encourages his readers to adopt a Christian-ethical lifestyle. Didactic activities aim to impart an understanding of human nature that displays a specific structure and assumes that behaviour can be affected or modified. It conveys knowledge, confirms skills, and motivates the audience (Loader, 1986:103–107, 114–22). The Epistle of James' communicative intent is to teach the presumed audience to adapt their lives/behaviours to a new view of reality, namely his reality (Watson, 2019:92–93). The author of James employs terminology that denotes specific aspects of humankind, based on the notion that people possess certain inherent features. The terminology used⁸ refers to human behaviour and human characteristics. The text references individuals who exemplify ideal characteristics, such as Abraham (2:21–24), Rahab (2:25), the Old Testament prophets (5:10), Job (5:11), and Elijah (5:17–18). James suggests that human behaviour can be influenced by presenting these examples (ὑπόδειγμα) to his readers. This terminology implies that the Letter of James may convey specific ideas about humanity that are not explicitly stated.

The past twenty-five years have witnessed a renewed interest in scholarship on James. Many ideas that historically shaped discussions about the Letter of James have been reassessed. Penner (1999:293) notes that rhetorical critical methods introduced a significant dimension to James's interpretation. This shift in rhetorical analysis emphasises not only the letter's structure and coherence but also its argumentative framework. Consequently, the focus has shifted towards the rhetorical qualities, such as persuasiveness, and the features of James's discourse. Previously, the text's purpose and message received less emphasis. Topics such as potential sources and background, authorship, dating, the letter's structure, the social-historical context,

⁷ Cheung (2003:40) identifies a close connection between Hellenistic paraenesis and wisdom in James. Watson (2019:114) describes this close connection as "... Jewish Christian wisdom influenced by Hellenistic rhetoric ...". When examining an ancient religious text such as James, it is crucial to consider the intricate social, political, economic, and historical factors at play. A comprehensive understanding of the text within its socio-historical context also involves recognising the impact of Greek and Roman cultural influences (Jackson McCabe, 2019:45–72; Tamez, 2019:193–208; Mongstad-Kvammen, 2013).

⁸ διψυχος: double minded (James 1:8, 4:8); τέλειος: perfect (James 1:4, 17, 25; 3:2) and ἀκατάστατος: unstable or unmanageable (James 1:8; 3:8).

and the presumed audience or recipients suggested by the epistle are examined anew to better understand James's distinctive role in early Christian thought:

- Possible sources and backgrounds utilised by the author of James are discussed anew (Bauckham, 2019:9–26; Du Toit, 2020:275–305; Mason, 2019:27–44; Jackson-McCabe, 2019:45–72; Wold, 2019, 73–86). Researchers examine the epistle's relation to the Jesus tradition (Bauckham), Jewish traditions (Mason), Hellenistic philosophy (Jackson-McCabe), Mosaic Law (Du Toit) and Jewish wisdom literature (Wold).
- The genre and structure of the Letter of James are reflected upon (Cheung and Yu, 2019:87–98; Jackson-McCabe, 2014:161–184; Watson, 2019:99–116).
- The modern scholarly perspective on James has been greatly influenced by Dibelius' (1976) claim that the disconnected sayings in the letter are so incoherent that the letter "has no theology" (1976:21). Challenging this prevailing view, scholars like Davids (2019:117–128), Kovalishyn (2019:129–146), and Stokes (2019:145–160) have re-examined the theology of James, offering fresh insights and perspectives that invite more profound reflection.
- In the re-awakening of James scholarship, several important insights into the epistle's social, cultural, and narrative meaning have emerged through the application of new methodologies (Batten, 2019:161–176; De Beer and Jordaan, 2021:23–42; Tamez, 2019:193–208; Gurry and Wasserman, 2019:209–230; Hearon, 2020:353–362).
- Recent researchers also consider reflections on the reception and interpretation of the Epistle of James (Botha, 2018:1–18; Painter, 2019:231–252; Lockett, 2019:253–272; Chester, 2019:273–290; Wendland, 2022:1–25).
- The composition of the readers/receivers has been reassessed (Allison, 2015:1–9; Bauckham, 2021:85, 98; Marcus, 2014:433–447; Niebuhr, 2021:67–84; Jackson-McCabe, 2019:45–72; Mongstad-Kvammen, 2013; Visser, 2022).
- More recently, Dancy (2021) has explored the theological significance of James from a mission perspective, applying a missional hermeneutic to the letter.

1.2.2 The persistence of dualistic readings

Although recent research on the Letter of James has introduced innovative interpretive approaches and questions, much of the scholarship continues to interpret the Epistle through binary oppositions, dyadic reasoning, and related forms of “neither-nor” thinking. This tendency is evident in analyses of themes such as God versus Satan (Jas 2:18; 4:7), rich versus poor (1:9–11; 2:1–12; 5:1–6), good versus evil (1:12–15; 3:1–12; 4:1–12), heaven versus hell (1:16–18; 3:6), faith versus deeds (2:14–26), heavenly versus earthly wisdom (3:13–18), and hearing versus doing (1:19–27). Although consensus on the binding structure of James is lacking, there is agreement that the epistle consistently draws on antithetical contrasts to convey its message (Lockett, 2008:269–287). These “either-or” interpretations corroborate my 1992 and 2000 research on the dualistic framework presupposed by the Letter of James. Johnson (1995:84) argues that the contrast between “friendship with God” and “friendship with the world” in James 4:4 not only offers the best “thematic centre for James’ ethical and religious dualism” but may also be the letter’s thematic centre. Luke Timothy Johnson (1995:14) asserts:

James’s important organizing (and selecting) principle is a central set of convictions concerning the absolute incompatibility of two construal of reality and two modes of behaviour following such diverse understandings. This ‘deep structure’ of polar opposition undergirds the inclusion and shaping of James’ material.

Lockett (2008:285) concludes that in presenting the typical features of the “Two Ways” theme, James contrasts different ways of living: “the way of life” and the “way of death”. This method of teaching aims to instil virtues while reducing the influence of vices. James’ communicative intention was to challenge his audience to select contrasting ways of living. In this regard, Watson (2007:106) identifies themes used in the epistle as a rhetorical strategy that establishes cohesion in the argument: “Doubt and vacillation versus trust and faith; separation versus integration of hearing and doing; faith and action; partiality versus impartiality; duplicity versus sincerity; uncontrolled speech versus controlled speech; war and discord versus harmony and peace; friendship with society and the devil versus friendship with God; arrogant boasting versus humility; instability versus steadfastness; and pollution versus purity”. James encourages his readers to be inspired by the “word/law/wisdom” on life’s journey. Although the Epistle of James reflects an ‘ethical and religious dualism,’ thus embodying the ‘Two-Ways’ theme (Lockett, 2008:269–287; Dancy, 2021:18) characteristic of ancient Jewish wisdom and didactic literature, the issue lies in failing to recognise the extensive space of play between opposites — the inhibited space. From a literary perspective, dualisms mark the two ends of a spectrum: one to be avoided, the other to be sought. James employs polar oppositions on social, moral, and religious levels.

1.2.3 The research problem: the limitations of binary interpretations

Scholarly research on the Epistle of James has frequently emphasised the identification of dualistic or oppositional structures, often interpreted through the “Two-Way motif”, such as wisdom versus folly, faith versus doubt, rich versus poor, speech versus silence, and friendship with God versus friendship with the world. However, these approaches rarely articulate the relationships among the various levels of contrast present within the Epistle. Consequently, the text is often interpreted in a reductionist manner, neglecting its rhetorical, experiential, and structural complexity.

This limitation exemplifies a broader tendency in dualistic thinking to impose rigid binary categories on human experience and on theological discourse. As Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2000:173) notes, binary oppositions “fail to take into account invariant everyday experiences of living human bodies.” This observation calls for a re-evaluation of how dualisms are interpreted in ancient Christian didactic texts, with particular attention to the Epistle of James.

Accordingly, this study argues that the central interpretive challenge in James scholarship extends beyond merely identifying dualistic structures within the Epistle. Rather, the problem lies in the absence of a multidimensional hermeneutical framework capable of accounting for the text's embodied, relational, rhetorical, and textured dimensions of meaning. Traditional readings that rely primarily on rigid binaries or moralistic oppositions risk oversimplifying the complexity of James's theological argumentation and the dynamic interplay of its rhetoric.

Based on the research problem outlined above, the central theoretical statement of this study is presented below.

1.3 The central theoretical statement of the study: toward a multidimensional hermeneutic

This study contends that the oppositional structures in James 1:1–27 are better understood as embodied and relational dualities rather than as rigid dualisms that divide concepts into fixed, mutually exclusive categories. By foregrounding duality, the analysis presents a multidimensional hermeneutic that captures the complexity of lived, spatially embodied experience and challenges strict binary frameworks and their associated exclusions. The study argues that James 1:1–27 offers a strong textual foundation for demonstrating a multidimensional hermeneutic.⁹ As the

⁹ Paragraph 1.7 of this chapter discusses the rationale for selecting James 1:1–27 as a case study for a multidimensional hermeneutic approach.

opening section of the Epistle, this chapter introduces the letter's central theological and ethical concerns and foregrounds its literary, rhetorical, embodied, and experiential dimensions. The study offers a novel interpretation of James through a hermeneutical and methodological framework that enables oppositions to be embraced and contradictions to be transcended (Paul, 2014:41), thereby supporting an anti-dualistic and anti-mechanistic perspective on human nature (Paul, 2014:41). By integrating embodied cognition, carnal hermeneutics, chiasmic typology, and socio-rhetorical criticism, this approach demonstrates how a multimodal, embodied-rhetorical reading of James can reveal deeper textual layers and challenge conventional dichotomous interpretations.

In this context, Lowe (2022:241) differentiates between dualism and duality. A modernist view of a relationship based on Cartesian dualism presumes that oppositions are clearly separate and distinct. By contrast, a duality conception regards sensemaking (mind) and perceiving activities (body) as simultaneously performing and representing the world through inter-animating chiasmus,¹⁰ or mutual, bi-directional crossing (Merleau-Ponty, 1968:138). The concept of duality presents a fascinating perspective that highlights the interplay between opposing forces or elements, with chiasmus as a fundamental structure of reality, underscoring the reciprocal relationship between perceiving bodies and the world. Merleau-Ponty (1968:138-140) employs the concept of embodied chiasmus¹¹ to illustrate how the body functions as both the subject and the object of experience. This framework emphasises how our bodies engage with and interpret the world, and how the world perceives us in return. This study asserts that linguistic expression is fundamentally linked to experience, serving as both a component of reality and a response to it (Paul and Wiseman, 2014:6). Consequently, a text like the Epistle of James will reflect this connection. Embracing oppositions and transcending contradictions (Paul 2014:41), this study will employ chiasmus as a heuristic prism to re-read and reinterpret the text of James, which presents a seemingly dualistic perspective. The literary chiasmus identified within this text will be

¹⁰ The term 'chiasmus' encompasses language, body, and perception in various forms. Within an ontological framework, chiasmus signifies a reversal or reinterpretation of modes of being, such as subject/object, self/other, or presence/absence. The division between these opposing poles is not simply inverted; instead, it is dynamically intertwined (Pelkey, 2017:20–26). As a widely used syntactic and rhetorical device, chiasmus rearranges elements within a sentence to form an A-B-B-A pattern. A prominent example is the famous saying, often wrongly credited to Hippocrates: "Let thy food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food." Symbolically, chiasmus signifies a pattern of intersecting lines, often represented as an "X" (Grausso, 2020: iv). It is characterised as a structure that outlines two potential arrangements of elements A and B – specifically, AB and BA. This can be easily demonstrated by comparing the two or by illustrating the co-functioning or disharmonious interplay between elements A and B (Grausso, 2020:51).

¹¹ The relationship between ontological chiasmus, literary chiasmus and embodied chiasmus will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of this research.

interpreted as a reflection of the body's perception of reality. Similarly, the images¹², imagery,¹³ metaphors¹⁴, metonymy,¹⁵ and similes¹⁶ presented in the text are treated in the same manner as chiasmus.

Focusing on duality can deepen our understanding of the emotions conveyed by the text and their impact on the audience, thereby enhancing its rhetorical effect. Sheets-Johnstone (2009:380) notes that emotions have a dual nature, stating they "move through us in distinctive ways and move us to move in distinctive ways." We experience cognitive emotions such as fear, sadness, and joy, where a "felt dynamic moves through our bodies and prompts us to act — or not to act — in a uniquely affective manner." Essentially, an embodied-rhetorical hermeneutic approach to the text can offer valuable insights into the emotions it evokes, allowing us to identify these feelings and understand how they influence behaviour.

Building upon the central theoretical framework, the study addresses three primary research objectives.

1.4 Research objectives

1.4.1 Investigating the possibilities of an embodied cognition reading of James 1:1–27

The first objective of this study is to revisit earlier research, recognising that the Letter of James reflects a strict dualism, but also acknowledging that possible reflexive observations and

¹² An **image** is a concrete verbal reference to or a mental reproduction of a sensory object or experience; for instance, the image of a flower (Jindo, 2010: xiii).

¹³ **Imagery** is a collection of images, which may consist of specific verbal references, or a mental depiction derived from them. The words 'image' and 'imagery' both describe a representation of any sensory experience; however, the former refers to a specific object or experience, while the latter denotes a grouping of such images (Jindo, 2010: xiii)

¹⁴ A **metaphor** is a form of expression where one concept (A) is interpreted and explained using another (B); for instance, 'man is a wolf' ('man' = A; 'wolf' = B). The connection between A and B is that they exist in distinct frames or conceptual realms: 'man' belongs to the realm of humanity, while 'wolf' fits within the domain of animals. This term can also refer to the thought process that supports the use of metaphorical expressions. When used as an abstract noun, it captures the essence of metaphor; as a concrete noun, it refers to a specific verbal statement understood metaphorically (Jindo, 2010: xiii).

¹⁵ **Metonymy** is a way of expression where one thing (A) is interpreted and described through another (B). For example, saying 'Parliament said . . .' instead of 'The press secretary said . . .' illustrates this, where 'Parliament' represents A and 'press secretary' represents B. The connection between A and B lies in their shared conceptual domain; both terms relate to the overarching idea of Parliament. Additionally, the term can refer to the underlying mode of thinking associated with metonymy. When used abstractly, it represents the phenomenon of metonymy itself; when used concretely, it refers to a specific verbal expression interpreted metonymically (Jindo, 2010: xiii-iv).

¹⁶ A **simile** is a nonliteral comparison that uses 'like' or 'as.' It serves as a metaphor in which one thing is expressed through the lens of another. The distinction between simile and metaphor lies in their rhetorical nature: a simile is less direct and less emphatic than the associated metaphor (Jindo, 2010: xv).

observations of reflexivity may be implied in the text (Pelkey, 2016:22–50). This line of action may open the possibility of a more nuanced reading of ancient didactic texts, which often reflect a strict dualism. The opportunities presented by an *embodied cognition reading*¹⁷ of James, which embraces *chiasmus* as an alternative manner of arriving at meaning, will be explored. An embodied cognition perspective explores the idea of a ‘fully lived, spatially embodied experience’ by emphasising the interconnectedness, or symbiosis, between opposites — the essence of human existence and aspects of being human. This approach provides an interpretative framework in which meaning emerges not from abstract analysis but from lived, narrative, and socially contextualised experiences of bodies. Dynamic feedback loops between self and other, cause and effect, represented and representamen should be reflected upon in seemingly opposing themes presented by the Epistle of James.

Kearney and Treanor (2015:13–14) emphasise the ethical and emotional aspects of embodied interpretation by proposing a theoretical framework for embodied cognition called carnal hermeneutics. While embodied cognition describes how bodily experience underpins thought and language, carnal hermeneutics emphasises that this bodily aspect holds affective and ethical significance, framing reading as a vulnerable and responsible, flesh-bound act.

Carnal hermeneutics, a philosophical approach to ‘the body as interpretation’, seeks to understand how we make sense of bodies with our bodies and how to ‘read between the lines of flesh¹⁸ and skin.’ Kearney and Treanor’s (2015:14) hermeneutical project aims to ‘go all the way

¹⁷ A discussion of ‘embodied cognition’ is presented in Chapter 2 to explain the theoretical framework of this study.

¹⁸ The basic idea of carnal hermeneutics dates to Aristotle, who maintains in *De Anima* (2:423–424) that flesh (σάρξ) is not merely an organ but a medium, the in-between (μετᾶξύ). Flesh (σάρξ) relates to the bodily senses, hearing, seeing, touching, smelling, and tasting, which enable the body to connect with and interpret its surroundings through these senses. In this context, σῶμα (human body) and σάρξ are not synonyms; rather, σάρξ is a component of σῶμα, linking the body to the world through sensation. While the body (σῶμα) represents the whole living system informed by the soul, flesh (σάρξ) acts as the medium through which specific faculties, particularly touch, operate. In a complex passage, Aristotle asserts that the primary sensation associated with flesh is touch, regarded as the most fundamental of all senses. Touch is the most philosophical of senses, as it inherently embodies interpretation. Sensible differences, such as those between smooth and hard, hot and cold, offer a way to experience the world through values, qualities, projects, and possibilities. As the hermeneutics of touch shapes our world, it simultaneously remains passively exposed to it. Touch thus operates in both directions, since touching also involves being touched. The most philosophical individual, Aristotle concludes, is the one who is most vulnerable, sensitive, and discerning, for this individual is most in touch with the world being touched. Flesh is thus the medium of perception, the space where the world is encountered sensually and affectively. Kearney (2015:55) reclaims flesh (σάρξ) as a hermeneutic medium, affirming that meaning begins with the body’s encounter with the world. Critiquing an embodied cognition approach that emphasises rational thought, Kearney (2015:28–74) argues that interpretation occurs through the senses: touch, sight, sound, taste, and smell. He intends to demonstrate how carnal phenomenology is ultimately linked to carnal hermeneutics. ‘Carnal’ serves as a synonym for σάρξ, interpreted as a medium of interpretation, the spacing between the intimate

down' and to abandon 'residual tendencies to oppose language to sensibility, word to flesh, text to body' and to realise that 'all experience, from birth to death, is mediated by our embodiment and only makes sense of sense accordingly'. This implies that 'flesh' cannot simply be understood as a phenomenological interpretation of the body; instead, it should be recognised as a medium that connects humans to 'the flesh of the world.' The authors describe flesh as 'the edge' where humans encounter 'worlds that exceed and entreat it — both animal and environmental, sacred and profane' (Kearney and Treanor, 2015:14).

An embodied cognition interpretative framework enriched by the insights of carnal hermeneutics employs a reading strategy that goes *against the grain*¹⁹, thereby aiming to resist the dominant voices, opinions, and interpretations articulated concerning dualistic concepts within James's text. This study recognises that the original author of James likely did not interpret thought, self, or experience using modern cognitive science concepts such as sensorimotor schemas. However, it adopts an *embodied cognition perspective as a heuristic tool or lens* to identify patterns in the text, especially those related to bodily orientation, thereby helping uncover the relationships the text suggests. The aim is not to "recover" a pure original meaning but to engage in a dialogue with the text.

An examination of the first chapter of the Epistle of James (1:1–27) emphasises the importance and relevance of an embodied cognition perspective. By recognising the central role of bodily existence and drawing on insights from embodied cognition, this study explores how the epistle depicts the body and embodiment in relation to religious experience. Instead of seeking the "ultimate meaning" of the text, the study aims to assess the hermeneutical potential of an embodied cognition approach, further enhanced by carnal hermeneutics. The researcher argues that any literary work, when subjected to consistent exegetical principles, can yield multiple interpretations — a reality particularly evident in the complex and ancient Epistle of James.

body (σῶμα) and the object perceived. It is flesh (σάρξ) that touches, feels, and is touched, and through which interpretation begins.

¹⁹ By using this reading strategy, which also forms part of a hermeneutics of suspicion, readers seek to improve their critical reading skills, making it a key element of their textual analysis (Aichele, 1995:36–38). Reading a text against the grain means challenging the dominant perspective. In this study, I believe there are deeper meanings in James's text than have been previously acknowledged by other scholars. By adopting this counterapproach, I intend to reassess James's text, encouraging a re-evaluation of traditional translations and interpretations. This critical reading process does not focus on uncovering hidden motives or causes; instead, it involves confronting the text to explore what it *reveals, evokes, or enables* (Felski, 2015:5). The text is not approached with suspicion as if the reader were a detective analysing clues for evidence of wrongdoing (McKenzie and Jarvie, 2018:303–304). Instead, I am influenced by Gallop's (2000:7) concept of a resistant or close reading. Such reading necessitates attention to "unusual vocabulary, repetitious words, and striking images or metaphors." In this research, the stylistic device of chiasmus will be included. For Gallop (2000:17), reading against the grain means "listening closely to the others" to discover "something one did not know before," and ultimately to be surprised by the text.

Therefore, this analysis aims to demonstrate the interpretative depth and theological richness that an embodied cognition approach can reveal in the biblical text, especially in James.

1.4.2 The potential of chiasmus as a heuristic prism

The second objective is to explore the *potential of chiasmus*²⁰ as a *heuristic prism*²¹ for re-evaluating binary oppositions. An embodied cognition approach, rooted in cognitive linguistics and linguistic anthropology (Pelkey, 2016:23), examines how reflexivity manifests in both linguistic and extra-linguistic contexts. Paul and Wiseman (2009:3-5) argue that chiasmus helps create and understand meaning, stating that it is “a pattern both of thought and for thought.” They further describe chiasmus as “a dialectical tool” (Paul and Wiseman, 2014:3) and “a process of change” (2014:5). They see it as “a dynamic pattern that is both diagram and force, system and movement, and a powerful instrument for opposing dogmatism and time-honoured nonsense” (2014:5). To fully understand chiasmus, we need to look beyond its purely stylistic role and explore its structural and meaning-shaping functions within texts and systems of thought.

Although the specifics of chiasmus can differ, a chiastic axiom or construction consistently involves some form of crossing. Each chiastic structure represents a junction or crossing point of components, whether syntactic or anatomical. Gasché (1987: xvi) characterises chiasmus as “what allows oppositions to be bound into unity... a form that makes it possible to determine differences concerning an underlying totality.” Beyond organising oppositional structures, chiastic patterns are intended to serve as a dynamic figure of thought, fulfilling a “reconciliatory function” and acting as a means of bridging seemingly insurmountable differences and integrating diverse elements (Wiseman, 2009:93). Chiasmus will be shown to be a meaningful tool for deciphering and understanding the dualistic worldview inherent in the didactic teaching of the Epistle of James. This research will thus focus carefully on the literary chiasmus in the text,²² while also endeavouring to illuminate the relationship between the dualistic, contrasting concepts it presents. This literary structure not only emphasises the intricate relationship between contrasting ideas but also illuminates the underlying harmony within these opposing concepts (Toadvine,

²⁰ A discussion of ‘embodied chiasmus’ is presented in Chapter 2 to explain the theoretical framework of this study.

²¹ A heuristic prism is a conceptual lens or interpretative framework employed to explore, discover, or illuminate complex phenomena. It serves as a guiding model that refracts and reveals various aspects of a subject, facilitating the generation of new understanding or insights, allowing for a more profound comprehension and fresh perspectives (Pelkey, 2017:215–216).

²² The Epistle of James is introduced by a chiastic construction – Ἰάκωβος (A) θεοῦ (B) καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (B') δοῦλος (A'). This is one among many presented in James 1:1–27.

2012:337). By revealing this unity, chiasmus enhances understanding of the text's complex messages and themes, fostering the idea of duality rather than dualism.

Grausso (2020:28–43) identified eight distinct types of chiasmi. The researcher made a commendable effort to present typologies of chiasmus, focusing on its literal structure to enhance understanding of cross-linguistic usage and how form and function converge in this device. These typologies provide greater insight into the relationship between so-called dualistic concepts. They will be used as an *analytical tool*²³ to identify the different relations between A- and B-elements implied by chiasmus.

Pelkey (2017) traces the X-form to embodied experience, particularly the “spread-eagled” posture, which provides a template for perceiving reversals and symmetries in thought and culture. He develops a functional typology that treats chiasmus not as ornament but as a “semiotic operation with embodied, pragmatic, and cultural implications” (Pelkey, 2017:2). Classified along axes of form, modality, and function, chiasmus operates across verbal, gestural, spatial, and narrative media, performing context-sensitive functions such as highlighting contrasts, resolving paradoxes, and mediating tension. In line with speech act theory²⁴, it not only communicates but acts, reorienting audiences through embodied rhythms of constriction and release (Pelkey, 2017:134). As such, chiasmus functions as a strategy of meaning-making that integrates bodily perception, cognition, and cultural performance. This study employs Pelkey's typology as a *heuristic*²⁵ for exploring the text's theological tensions and affective dynamics.

Grausso's (2020:28–43) detailed typology of literary chiasmus, which identifies relationships between A and B constructions, complements Pelkey's model of thematic chiasmus. Together, these frameworks illuminate the structural and thematic significance of chiasmus in James 1:1–27 and support the use of a multidimensional hermeneutic for analysing the text.

²³ This study defines an analytical tool as a method or framework used to examine and interpret data or texts to identify patterns and insights.

²⁴ Yule (1996:48) explains the difference between the illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in pragmatics. In Speech Act Theory, the Illocutionary Act refers to the intention behind a speaker's statement, emphasising the speaker's communicative purpose. It involves speaking and addresses the question: What type of act is being performed? For example, is it an assertion, promise, order, question, warning, or congratulation? In contrast, the Perlocutionary Act concerns the effect that the utterance has on the listener. It relates to the actual outcome or consequence of the speech act in terms of the hearer's thoughts, feelings, or actions. This aspect of communication answers the question: What impact did the utterance have? For instance, did it persuade, frighten, amuse, anger, or inspire the listener?

²⁵ This study defines a heuristic as a practical method or rule of thumb used to guide problem-solving or discovery.

1.4.3 Exploring the potential of the 'third term'

The third objective for this study is to investigate the potential and promise of the 'third term'. In chiastic modelling, the concept of 'mixing and merging' (Wiseman, 2014:224), which results from blending two extremes, is identified as the creation of a 'third term'. Since chiastic modelling involves recognising 'likeness and difference, partitioning and totality, duality and reciprocation' (Lissner, 2007:17), a third term or third space naturally emerges. Pelkey (2017:206) suggests that 'thirdness' or mediation exists in the middle and fosters meaningful growth. Chiastic modelling demonstrates the reversal and crossing of concepts, producing new meaning. The crossing point (the centre of the X) represents the third term — the place where A and B invert and interact, giving rise to something beyond either one alone. This centre is seen as a locus of potential, where oppositions are both preserved and transformed (Pelkey, 2017:206–209). Carter (2010:6) states: "The in-between, that interstitial stuff of which chiastic reality is made, is, as it were, everywhere." The third term is not simply a midpoint or compromise. It is a new category or concept that surpasses the binary — a space of negotiation or transformation where meaning becomes dynamic and fluid rather than fixed.

This research will focus on the space or liminality between binary opposites as envisioned by the author of the Epistle of James. In this context, Hearon (2020:353–362) refers to the 'storied world' contained within the letter. Exploring this storied world or textured textual dimension reveals the letter's relational aspects, emphasising how speech and actions significantly shape social realities (Hearon, 2020:353). This objective necessitates an investigation of the syntactical (the relationships between signs), semantical (the relationships between signs and reality), and pragmatic (the relationships between signs and their users) dimensions of the text, specifically in James 1:1–27.²⁶

Exploring the textured textual world²⁷ described in the Epistle of James requires investigating the text's context at the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic levels. Robbins' (1996) five fields of

²⁶ This approach to text-analysis is described by Hardy (1978:132) as follows: "Sign analysis is the determination of the semantical, syntactical, and the pragmatical dimensions of specific processes of semiosis; it is the determination of the rules of the usage of given sign vehicles."

²⁷ Texture is understood as the quality that allows a text to 'hang together' (Forey and Thompson, 2010:3). According to Forey and Thompson (2010:2), "Texture in written texts arises when the author attempts to monitor and control the flow of information in a manageable way, guiding the reader towards the intended interpretation." Robbins (1996:2-3) employs the metaphor of textures within a broader tapestry metaphor: "The richness of a tapestry is best appreciated when viewed from several perspectives, each offering a unique insight into the composition of the whole." The tapestry metaphor is appropriate because Robbins (1996:132) suggests that meaning is multi-layered. He indicates that words operate in intricate ways to convey meanings that we only partially understand, and that meanings gain their significance from their

textural analysis will be applied to examine the textual texture in James 1:1–27, as this didactic passage displays notable rhetorical features:

- The inner texture, described as the ‘features in the language of the text itself’ (Robbins, 1996:6), includes syntactical patterns, structural elements, and techniques used to persuade the reader. These elements are essential to the text’s ‘close reading,’ which involves interpreting literary and rhetorical features and the patterns within the material (Gowler, 2010:195). Concerning the inner texture of the text, Robbins also introduced the term rhetography, defined as “the graphic images people create in their minds as a result of the visual texture of a text” (Robbins, 2008:81). Rhetography relates to the developing, sensory aesthetic and/or argumentative texture of a text (rhetology), encouraging a hearer or reader to form a mental image or picture that implies a particular kind of truth or reality (Jeong, 2025:8).
- Intertexture refers to the relationship between a text and other texts, whether oral, written, cultural, social, or historical. It describes how a text depicts, alludes to, and utilises elements from the external world. This includes the text’s citations, references, and reconfigurations of specific texts, events, languages, objects, institutions, and other contexts that extend beyond the text itself.
- A text’s social and cultural texture relates to how it influences readers to adopt specific social and cultural perspectives. According to Robbins (1996:72), this texture involves the interaction between texts and the surrounding society and culture. It signifies the shared social and cultural viewpoints familiar to everyone in a community. Moreover, a text defines its identity in relation to the dominant cultural system by engaging with, rejecting, or transforming prevailing attitudes, values, and beliefs (Gowler, 2010:195).
- The ideological texture concerns the biases, opinions, preferences, and stereotypes of both a specific writer and a particular reader (1996:95). It includes the alliances and conflicts that the language of the text creates and evokes, as well as how the text and its interpreters position themselves concerning other individuals and groups (Gowler, 2010:195).
- The sacred texture describes how readers interact with texts to link human experiences to the divine (Robbins, 1996:120). It includes how a text expresses insights about the connection

relationships with other meanings. Given these assumptions, Robbins’s view of the multidimensional nature of texts may help this research examine the duality and connections in James 1:1–27.

between humanity and the sacred. This contains elements related to deities, holy figures, spiritual beings, divine history, human redemption, religious communities, and ethics.

This study seeks to integrate insights from embodied cognition into the broader socio-rhetorical interpretative framework to develop a comprehensive understanding of James 1:1–27. The research constructs a multidimensional hermeneutic by combining three primary approaches: embodied cognition informed by carnal hermeneutics, Vernon K. Robbins' Socio-Rhetorical Analysis, and chiasmic typology. Rather than treating these methods in isolation, the study aims to unify them into a single interpretative model that addresses the formal, affective, cognitive, rhetorical, and ideological dimensions of biblical texts, with particular emphasis on the Epistle of James.

1.4.4 Research aims summarised

The objectives of this thesis are summarised as follows:

- This study challenges the rigid dualism traditionally linked to the didactic structure of the Epistle of James by proposing a reading informed by embodied cognition and enhanced through carnal hermeneutics. Instead of reinforcing binary oppositions, this approach highlights duality as a dynamic and interconnected relationship between seemingly opposing elements. Embodied cognition emphasises how bodily experience shapes thought and language, while carnal hermeneutics underscores the affective and ethical dimensions of embodiment, framing interpretation as a flesh-bound practice of vulnerability and relational responsibility. Together, these perspectives facilitate a deeply engaged reading that connects the text and the reader to the lived experiences and ethical concerns of early Christian communities.
- To analyse the role of oppositions within the text, this study employs chiasmus as both an analytical and heuristic tool. Drawing on established chiasmic typologies, the analysis investigates how James structures opposing ideas not only for rhetorical effect but also to emphasise theological and ideological values. Chiasmus proves particularly effective in revealing reversals, transformations, and focal points within the text, demonstrating how these structures embody theological assumptions that shape the audience's understanding.
- These approaches are incorporated into a multidimensional hermeneutic framework that pays close attention to the liminal space between apparent binaries in James. By combining embodied cognition and chiasmic analysis within the broader scope of socio-rhetorical

interpretation, the study offers a nuanced, layered reading of James 1:1–27. This framework surpasses simplistic either/or models, revealing the relational complexity and theological depth of the epistle while offering new insights into embodiment, transformation, and ethical engagement in early Christian discourse.

1.5 Research questions

This study aims to analyse and illustrate the underlying relationships within the Letter of James using a multidimensional hermeneutic approach. It examines how theological presuppositions are embodied and how they influence the audience's reception of the text, with particular emphasis on the complex layers found in James 1:1–27. Several key research questions emerge from this inquiry. Drawing on the idea of a “fully lived, spatially embodied experience,” the study investigates how interdependent or symbiotic relationships between apparent opposites develop. The following relational dynamics will therefore be examined:

- How are God and the cosmos connected to human beings, especially at the *cosmic scale of existence*?
- How do humans relate to their environment, emphasising the *ecological or spatial level of existence*?
- As a Christian writer, how does James portray the relationship between Christ and the implicit Christian believers, *particularly on a personal level*?
- How do the community members described in the Letter of James relate to each other, particularly at the *social level of existence*?
- How are relationships between males and females perceived, especially at the *gendered level of existence*?
- How are ideas and values embodied in the Letter of James to illustrate theological propositions? Additionally, how do these embodied ideas and values influence the audience? In what ways do they validate, change, or enhance behaviour?
- Finally, regarding the idea of the ‘third space’ or liminality created by perceived binary oppositions, how are the textured textual worlds or storied experiences in James 1:1-27 depicted?

1.6 Presumptions elucidated

To explore the textured textual world presented and presupposed by the Epistle of James, a multidimensional hermeneutical framework for interpretation is employed. This multidimensional hermeneutic — interweaving rhetorical form, bodily experience, and cultural texture — offers a comprehensive approach to the biblical text, in this case the text of James, and recognises the following presumptions:

- A fully lived, spatially embodied experience posits relationships of interdependence or symbiosis between contrasting elements. Since the Letter of James embodies, in content, the literary form of Hellenistic parenesis, the author takes on the role of a wisdom teacher or sage (διδάσκαλος, 3:1) who addresses the embodied inhabitants of the 1st-century CE Greek and Roman worlds. He admonishes and encourages his audience to adopt a Christian-ethical lifestyle in a specifically concrete, lived context. 'Encouragement' presupposes a relationship with the recipients whose behaviour should be influenced or transformed. The rhetorical nature of the Letter of James is acknowledged.
- Embodiment underpins how individuals interpret their lives and the world around them. We comprehend the world through our bodies and use them to conceptualise. Regarding James's text, the author who takes on the role of a wisdom teacher or sage also embodies his teachings and theological assumptions, thereby influencing or changing his readers' behaviour. Ideas and values are embodied in the Epistle of James to illustrate theological concepts related to religious experience. The recipients also experience their embodiment within a specific context or situation.
- Since the Letter of James presents itself as a Hellenistic didactic text rooted in the Jewish wisdom tradition, it presupposes a dualism in the macrocosm, society, and the structure of humankind as a microcosm. Consequently, this dualism is also implied in the completeness of humans and their ultimate destination. A re-evaluation of the concept of dualism may help to de-centre 'either-or' language. There could be value in exploring chiasmus as a heuristic framework. Therefore, the significance of the relationship between opposites is regarded as essential.
- From a literary perspective, dualism identifies two endpoint scales: one to avoid and the other to pursue. A vast play area exists between these two endpoints, which is an inhibited and embodied space. Exploring and investigating this space may deepen our understanding of the text's texture.

1.7 Justifying the use of James 1:1–27 as a case study for a multidimensional hermeneutic approach

James 1:1–27 is deliberately selected to illustrate a multidimensional hermeneutic. This chapter introduces the letter's theological and ethical objectives and emphasises its literary, rhetorical, and experiential dimensions. Scholars generally concur that it encapsulates themes developed throughout the letter (Dibelius-Greeven, 1976:3; Davids, 1983:27; Hartin, 1991:26; Kistemaker, 1986:25-67; Johnson, 2000:157), and many regard it as essential for understanding the entire text. Luke Timothy Johnson (2000:157) affirms:

A reasonable approach to James' literary structure is to see chapter one as a rhetorical epitome of the succeeding essays. In effect, James 1 uses aphorisms to introduce the themes that are later developed in essay form. By so doing, the epitome also necessarily establishes the basic dualism between God and World that is thematic to the composition (1:27; 4:4).

James 1:1–27 provides a robust context for the application and demonstration of the five interpretative lenses central to this study: embodied cognition enhanced by carnal hermeneutics; typologies of chiasmus, including Grausso's (2020:28–43) typology of literal chiasmus and Pelkey's (2017:134) typology of embodied chiasmus; and Robbins's (1996) Socio-Rhetorical Criticism. The selection of James 1:1–27 is intentional, as this chapter integrates rhetorical structure, embodied imagery, ethical exhortation, theological reflection, and socio-cultural critique, each of which corresponds directly to the interpretative frameworks outlined in the research methodology. Each interpretative method is exemplified in James 1:1–27 in a distinct and effective manner.

James 1:1–27 is rich in metaphors and schemas rooted in bodily experience. The language of being "a slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος in 1:1), "tossed by the sea" (κλύδωνι θαλάσσης ἀνεμιζομένῳ καὶ ῥιπιζομένῳ in 1:6), "standing firm against temptation" (ὑπομένει πειρασμόν in 1:12), or "looking into a mirror" (κατανοοῦντι τὸ πρόσωπον τῆς γενέσεως αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ in 1:23–24) activates sensorimotor image schemas such as instability, vertical orientation, and visual perception. These linguistic structures connect with essential bodily experiences, enabling readers to relate spiritual and ethical ideas to their embodied reality. Consequently, the chapter naturally lends itself to a cognitively grounded, schema-based analysis and the exploration of its metaphors.

Beyond mere abstract conceptualisation, James 1:1–27 promotes an affective and ethical understanding rooted in bodily vulnerability. The call to "count it all joy when you face trials" (1:2), the depiction of desire leading to sin (1:15), and the plea to care for "orphans and widows in their

distress" (1:27) evoke the reader's embodied empathy and moral responsibility. These elements present the flesh as a hermeneutic medium, not merely a receptive site but the ethical centre from which interpretation originates. Carnal hermeneutics thus emphasises that suffering, longing, and compassion are not only portrayed in the text but also enacted through its language.

Some pericopes in James 1:1–27 display patterns suggestive of a chiasmic arrangement. For example, the author's introduction in James 1:1 is arranged in a chiasmic pattern, and James 1:9–10 displays a classic chiasmus. Grausso's typology enables the identification of formal chiasmic structures, such as ring compositions and step chiasms, that organise the passage's theological logic. This structural approach enhances understanding of the letter's rhetorical emphasis and theological focal points.

While Grausso (2020) emphasises formal symmetry, Pelkey (2017) highlights affective, temporal, and experiential reversals. James 1:12, for example, signifies a shift from trial to reward: "Blessed is the one who perseveres... for he will receive the crown of life," a change best understood as an embodied reversal of condition. The move from hearing to doing (1:22–25), or from instability to focused perseverance (1:6–8), illustrates the affective and performative rhythm that Pelkey describes as chiasmic embodiment. Therefore, Pelkey's approach demonstrates how James's rhetoric is not just logical but also experientially recursive, guiding the reader's emotional journey through the text.

Robbins's (2016) approach provides a methodological framework for examining multiple layers of the Epistle of James 1:1–27, with particular attention to its rhetorical textures, cultural context, and potential ethical and theological dimensions.

In summary, James 1:1–27 highlights the importance of an embodied-rhetorical hermeneutic approach, encouraging a reading that is structurally attentive, rhetorically engaged, emotionally perceptive, cognitively informed, and socially aware. It shows how structure and embodiment, cognition and affect, and rhetoric and ethics interact, emphasising the need for interpretative methods that are layered, interdisciplinary, and sensitive to the human condition.

Chapter 3 provides a structural analysis of James 1:1–27, which serves as the foundation for the organisation of subsequent chapters.

1.8 The aimed contribution of the study to research

This study introduces a multidimensional hermeneutical framework for interpreting the Epistle of James, especially James 1:1–27, grounded in recent advances in cognitive linguistics and social

rhetoric, with a focus on embodied cognition. A key aspect of this approach is the use of chiasmus as a heuristic device to explore the interaction between seemingly opposing concepts. The framework provides an original and innovative method for analysing dualistic themes in James and other early Christian instructional texts.

By re-evaluating the concept of dualism through a multidimensional embodied-rhetorical hermeneutics approach, the relational dynamics within the text are uncovered, revealing a rich and textured landscape of theological and ethical meaning — a “fully lived spatially embodied experience” that challenges dyadic “either-or” or “neither-nor” thinking. This innovative approach integrates insights from embodied cognition, carnal hermeneutics, the typology of chiasmus, and socio-rhetorical criticism to move beyond dualism in analysing James's text. A multidimensional hermeneutic framework can shift interpretation from rigid dualism (i.e., binary oppositions) to a more dynamic sense of duality, enabling a move from linearity to circularity, and from fixed constancy to embracing change and transformation.

This shift influences contemporary theological reflection, especially in its engagement with embodiment. It confirms that the physical body not only influences human perception but also guides ethical decision-making. Reinterpreting dualistic ideas in ancient Christian texts as relational dualities encourages a fresh appreciation for theological anthropology rooted in embodied experience.

Unlike traditional ‘either-or’ readings that often oversimplify or polarise opposing ideas, the proposed multidimensional hermeneutic fosters reflexivity. It examines the relationships between contrasting concepts and uncovers the subtle, liminal space between them. In doing so, it reveals the complexity, nuance, and depth of ancient texts shaped by dualistic language and thought.

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework and methodology. Chapter 1 introduces the research problem, delineates the central theoretical framework, and specifies the objectives, but omits methodological discussion because this depends on the study's theoretical and hermeneutical assumptions. Consequently, Chapter 2 establishes the conceptual foundation for the selected methodology, which is subsequently detailed (see section 2.6). Chapter 3 provides a structural analysis of James 1:1–27, which guides the organisation of the subsequent chapters. The overall chapter structure will be summarised at the conclusion of Chapter 3, following the structural analysis.

CHAPTER 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

From the moment we are born we live in the flesh. Infant skin responds to the touch of the mother, hands and feet unfurling, mouth opening for first milk. Before words, we are flesh, flesh becoming words for the rest of our lives. Matter, no less than form, is about what matters — to us, to others and to the world in which we breathe and have our being.

The old dichotomies between “empirical” and “transcendental,” “materialism” and “idealism” are ultimately ruinous. Life is hermeneutic through and through. It goes all the way up and all the way down. From head to foot and back again.

(Kearney 2015:28)

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical exploration and methodological approach for investigating the three objectives of this research project:

- Unlike the rigid dualisms often associated with the didactic structure of the Epistle of James, this study examines duality through embodied cognition as a hermeneutical framework. Engaging with carnal hermeneutics, this approach highlights interpretation as a fully lived, spatially embodied experience. Instead of reinforcing binary oppositions, it emphasises the dynamic interplay between seemingly opposing elements. Embodied cognition underscores how bodily experience underpins thought and language, shaping conceptual metaphors and rhetorical structures. Carnal hermeneutics broadens this by recognising the body as a site of affective vulnerability, ethical response, and interpretative engagement. Together, they foster a flesh-bound hermeneutic that not only analyses the text but also interacts with it ethically, emotionally, and physically, in solidarity with its communities. This integrated approach will be applied to James 1:1–27, which provides a rich context for examining how dualities — such as testing and perseverance, hearing and doing, and wealth and humility — are not presented as static opposites but as embodied and relational dynamics. The analysis seeks to reveal the underlying structures and tensions through which James constructs ethical and theological meaning in embodied language and lived experience.
- This study investigates oppositions and binary structures in the Epistle of James using chiasmus as both an analytical and heuristic tool. Drawing on various typologies, it will evaluate how the literary depiction of opposites influences the audience’s rhetorical experience, either reinforcing or challenging underlying ideological values. The analysis will

also examine how theological presuppositions are embedded in these chiasmic patterns and continue to influence interpretation, both in James's original setting and in postmodern readings.

- This study creates a multidimensional hermeneutic to investigate the liminal spaces between the binary oppositions often attributed to the Epistle of James. Combining embodied cognition and chiasmic typology within a socio-rhetorical framework, it provides a detailed and thorough reading of James 1:1–27.

The following section presents the theoretical framework underpinning the stated objectives. It addresses embodied cognition, carnal hermeneutics, an embodied-cognition approach to textual analysis, and explains how Robbins's socio-rhetorical interpretation supports an embodied-cognition reading of James's text. Furthermore, the discussion explores embodied cognition in relation to the potential of chiasmus by examining the connections among literal, embodied, and ontological chiasmus and by clarifying the concept of the "third space." The typology of chiasmus is also elaborated.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 The theory of embodied cognition

Embodied cognition, originating from cognitive linguistics and cognitive science, investigates how abstract reasoning, metaphor, and conceptualisation emerge from the body's physical interactions with the world. It marks a significant shift in understanding cognition: rather than being solely a mental activity, cognition develops through the dynamic interaction of mind, body, and environment (Rohrer, 2007:25–27). In this perspective, the body is central to knowledge (Gibbs, 2007:27), as cognitive processing is profoundly influenced by the perceiver's physical traits (Macrine and Fugate, 2022:1).

Importantly, the body is never experienced in isolation but always within culture. While human bodies share universal features, their experiences are shaped by cultural processes at every level (Gibbs 2007:13, 17). Consequently, theories of conceptual systems must be inherently cultural, as cognition occurs through the body's interaction with the world in culturally embedded ways. As Gibbs (2007:2) observes, "embodiment provides the foundation for how people interpret their lives and the world around them." Thus, embodiment not only grounds our experience of reality but also structures the conceptual frameworks through which we interpret it.

Research in enaction theory (Varela, 1997:72–87), cognitive semiotics (Sebeok and Danesi, 2000), and cognitive semantics (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999) demonstrates that humans both experience their bodies in motion and project bodily sensations onto people, objects, and events. This cultural essence of embodiment requires that scholars of ancient texts attend to the specific historical and cultural contexts in which meaning was produced. As Gibbs (2007:272) emphasises, thought and consciousness must be conceived “in terms of dynamical interactions of brain, body, and world.” In a similar vein, Lakoff and Johnson (1999:568) describe a “philosophy in the flesh,” by which human identity is inseparable from physical being — “flesh, blood, and sinew, hormone, cell, and synapse” — and from the world we encounter daily.

Ruthrof (2004:34) discusses a “corporeal-linguistic turn,” emphasising that “the body is reclaiming its central place in evolution, particularly in the development of language and the human imagination.” This concept highlights the deep connection between language, the body, and experiential understanding, making it difficult to separate these themes without forcing a division. Sheets-Johnstone (2009:2) argues that the corporeal-linguistic turn corrects a long-standing misrepresentation of the body concerning the mind. She critiques the Cartesian legacy, which viewed the body as subordinate and inferior to the mind, reducing it to “a mere material handmaiden of an all-powerful mind, a necessary but ultimately discountable aspect of cognition, intelligence, and even affectivity.”

Similarly, Kelsey (2009:199) emphasises the connection between the living body and its capacity for language, noting the close relationship between language and a culture's rituals, myths, symbols, and images. The ability to walk upright marks a significant point in hominid evolution, enabling the development of signals and language. Consequently, the human brain has adapted to this linguistic evolution (Pelkey, 2017:11–12). The living body is integral to language as a discourse. Gendlin (1997:28) asserts that “speaking is a special case of bodily interaction.” He emphasises that the body possesses an implicit knowing function, encompassing an understanding of language and its relevance to specific situations. This form of bodily knowledge, which encompasses language, reflects a living body that continuously interacts with its environment. Therefore, it is essential to transcend the subject-object distinction (dualism) and explore how humans engage corporeally in explicit contexts, drawing from a felt experience of living in a tangible world.

From the perspective of embodied cognition, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) introduced the concept of Conceptual Metaphor Theory.²⁸ This theory is pivotal in cognitive linguistics, redefining metaphor not merely as a linguistic feature but as a framework for thought and understanding. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) posits that our thoughts are primarily metaphorical, enabling us to grasp complex or abstract ideas by relating them to simpler, tangible experiences. Metaphors are not just ornamental aspects of language; they are essential cognitive tools that shape our perceptions, emotions, and interactions with reality. We comprehend abstract concepts by connecting them to tangible, bodily experiences. Metaphors arise from mapping a source domain (a familiar experience) onto a target domain (an abstract or complex concept). Metaphors like “walking in the truth” or “standing firm in faith” are grounded in spatial, sensory, and motor experiences. These bodily schemas become the architecture of theological language and thought.

In conclusion, embodied cognition emphasises that the human body plays a vital role in understanding cognition, as embodiment influences how individuals perceive their experiences and the world around them. Any approach to studying how humans create and comprehend meaning must recognise that people are both embodied and social beings. This consensus between cognitive scientists and socio-rhetorical interpreters highlights the importance of applying cognitive science methods to the study of religion within a socio-rhetorical framework. Robbins (1996:2) describes socio-rhetorical interpretation as an analytical approach that promotes a ‘full-body’ mode of interpretation, in contrast to traditional methods that tend to be disembodied and abstract. He encourages engaging with biblical texts through an awareness of embodiment, moving beyond conventional disembodied approaches. This insight encourages the development of this study’s multidimensional hermeneutic — interweaving rhetorical form, bodily experience, ethical vulnerability, and cultural texture — to provide a comprehensive approach to biblical texts.

²⁸ This research recognises the substantial impact of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) on the study of metaphors, but their contribution is not the main emphasis of this study. A multimodal, embodied-rhetorical hermeneutic approach to reading and analysing James 1:1–27 refers to their work and explores metaphors through their lens. Concerning metaphors, they confirm (1980:257): “You don’t have a choice as to whether to think metaphorically. Because metaphorical maps are part of our brains, we will think and speak metaphorically whether we want to or not. Since the mechanisms of metaphor are largely unconscious, we will think and speak metaphorically, whether we know it or not. Further, since our brains are embodied, our metaphors will reflect our commonplace experiences in the world. Inevitably, many primary metaphors are universal because everybody has basically the same kinds of bodies and brains and lives in basically the same kinds of environments, so far as the features relevant to metaphor are concerned.” This statement is significant and holds extensive implications. If these “primary metaphors” are valid, then it is crucial to refer to metaphors, including their primary forms and culturally specific expressions, considering a multimodal embodied-rhetorical hermeneutics approach.

2.2.2 Carnal hermeneutics: weaving the existential and ethical aspects into embodied cognition

Given the objectives and scope of this research, Richard Kearney's (2015) work is especially valuable for adopting an embodied cognition perspective on James 1:1–27. He introduced the concept of *carnal hermeneutics*. While embodied cognition is primarily *descriptive and structural*, carnal hermeneutics is *existential and ethical*: it emphasises that interpretation occurs through our flesh, with all its susceptibility to pain, pleasure, longing, and injustice. According to Kearney's hermeneutical approach, the physical, sensory, and bodily aspects of human existence are central to understanding. Carnal hermeneutics highlights the role of the vulnerable, sensory body in interpretation. It criticises disembodied readings by returning to the flesh as the centre of ethical relations, desire, pain, and moral imagination. Biblical texts are therefore read as addressing the reader's embodied state: not simply as cognitive beings but as desiring, suffering, and ethically responsive bodies (Meiring, 2016:9–11).

The fundamental questions of carnal hermeneutics, as articulated by Kearney (2015:15), include: "How does the body read the world as this or that? As hospitable or hostile? As attractive or repulsive? As tasty or tasteless? As living or dying?" Kearney (2015:15–20) asserts that the body is the primary site of interpretation. We perceive reality through our senses — touch, taste, sight, smell, and hearing. Sensory experiences form the foundation of our understanding. The body actively constructs meaning rather than passively receiving external stimuli. Kearney uses the term "sense" in three ways: firstly, to refer to the physical sensations of smell, taste, sight, and touch; secondly, concerning meaning; and finally, regarding direction — specifically, how we orient ourselves in space and time and how we move towards or away from things. All three meanings highlight how people comprehend their existence in a physical form (Kearney, 2015:15–16). There is an inherent "sensing in sense." A person interprets and derives meaning from interactions with others. The body "mediates this otherness," creating a relationship between self and the unfamiliar (Kearney, 2015:20).

Kearney criticises conventional hermeneutical approaches that often prioritise cognitive or linguistic processes over the physical aspects of experience. He aims to restore what he describes as the 'carnal dimension.' According to Kearney, embodied practices — such as rituals, gestures, and tangible encounters — are as essential to meaning as words or abstract thoughts. He argues that hermeneutics begins in the flesh, countering the 'hermeneutic turn' of the 1960s, which was influenced by Ricoeur's "Conflict of Interpretation" and Gadamer's "Truth and Method," where language was placed above the body. Kearney characterises this shift as a "journey from

flesh to text," noting that the linguistic turn in hermeneutics departed from the carnal as a site of meaning (Kearney, 2015:16). Through his concept of carnal hermeneutics, he seeks to "revisit the deep and inextricable relationship between sensation and interpretation." He emphasises that we are constantly "reading the flesh, making sense of sensibility, and discerning bodies in lived passion and place, even as we symbolise and dream" (Kearney, 2015:17).

Building on the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Kearney elaborates on the concept of "flesh" as a means of establishing relationships. According to Kearney (2015:45–46), the body is not a distant object but a dynamic conduit connecting us to others and the world. Flesh is inherently intersubjective; it exists before and transcends language, creating relational spaces where meaning is shared and experienced. This intersubjectivity embodies what Kearney describes as the reciprocity of sensing and being sensed. Kearney seeks to reignite a creative dialogue between a phenomenology of the flesh and a hermeneutics of existence (2015:45–46) by emphasising Merleau-Ponty's insight that sensation and interpretation mutually influence one another at the most fundamental level. He asserts that "sensation is expression and expression is sensation," or in other words, "flesh is word and word is flesh." When we touch, we are simultaneously touched; when we see, we are also seen. This mutuality highlights the relational and participatory nature of interpretation, wherein understanding is not limited to an individual mind but is realised through bodily engagement.

According to Kearney (2015:45–46), vulnerability is a fundamental aspect of embodiment. Our bodies are open to pain, pleasure, and the touch of others, which ties interpretation to an ethical dimension. Embodiment reveals that perception is not merely intellectual but deeply moral, grounded in our shared, fragile existence as human beings. This common vulnerability demands courtesy toward others, interpreting an ethical act as much as a cognitive one. Our experience of living in our bodies suggests a sense of belonging. Our flesh is our space as both beings who suffer and act. Moreover, flesh epitomises otherness; it is that which is "most mine and most other" (Kearney, 2015:51). Kearney argues that to empathise with others and engage in an intersubjective world, one must possess both an intimate body for oneself (*Leib*) and a physical body shared with others (*Körper*)²⁹. This reflects a "complex intertwining" in which an individual

²⁹ Edmund Husserl referred to the body-soul as "flesh" when he suggested that "all sensing pertains to my soul" (Kearney, 2015:28). He described the body (*Körper*) as an object among many, which can transform into a living, incarnate body (*Leib*) when it engages with "tactile sensations" as flesh. Kearney interprets this by stating, "... we are not, in the first instance, cerebral sovereign egos, but sensing incarnate bodies" (Kearney, 2015:28). Regarding interconnectedness, Husserl distinguishes between the lived experience of others' bodies as objects "out there" (*Körper*) and as living bodies like our own "here" (*Leib*). In this way, "flesh is the source of both our empathy and enmity with others" (Kearney, 2015:29).

perceives him or herself as "someone" within a shared world. There is no clear separation between flesh and body. (Kearney, 2015:53).³⁰

However, there will always be a gap or distance between "your body over there as flesh and my body here as flesh." Total integration is impossible (Kearney, 2015:54). Within this gap, hermeneutic mediation plays a role. Treanor (2015:73) states, "Where there is a gap, there is a surplus: something more to be understood. The movement or transition back and forth across these gaps constitutes the work of hermeneutics."³¹ Kearney argues that hermeneutic interpretation involves the framework of "carnal hermeneutics, across distance, gaps, and differences: carnal hermeneutics as diacritical hermeneutics" (Kearney, 2015:54).

The implications of carnal hermeneutics are far-reaching, particularly in theology and ethics. In theology, Richard Kearney's insights engage deeply with the incarnational aspects of religious experience, in which the divine is encountered through the physical body and materiality. For example, the sacraments are profoundly embodied acts that convey grace through touch, taste, and presence. Regarding ethical reflection, Kearney's emphasis on vulnerability and intersubjectivity encourages us to acknowledge the moral implications of our shared bodily existence.³² Kearney's concept of carnal hermeneutics suggests that meaning is intrinsically linked to our sensory, physical, and relational existence. This idea challenges abstract or purely intellectual interpretations of understanding and promotes a more comprehensive, embodied perspective. Kearney emphasises that interpretation is always grounded in the physicality of our

³⁰ Kearney (2015:71) describes this notion: "So what does all this mean for the hermeneutic relationships between self and other? It means, first, that the other who is stranger is also my "semblable," a counterpart who, like me, can say "I." The transfer of sense shows how "she thinks" signifies "she says in her heart: I think"; and at the same time it reveals the inverse movement of "she thinks and feels in a way that I can never think or feel." I am called by the other who comes to me in a way that I cannot assimilate to my immanence. I can only respond by "reading" their transcendence in immanence, across distance and difference."

³¹ Treanor (2015:77–78) defines "gaps" as follows: "At the most basic level, hermeneutics, much like the cautionary announcements on the London Tube, urges us to 'mind the gap' (écart, metaxu). These gaps are evident in texts and language: the spacing of plots, the *différance* in words and meanings, the fractures or betrayals in translations, the difference between the saying (le dire) and the said (le dit), the contrast between parole and langue, the silences in speech, the gaps in narratives, and so forth. However—and this is critical—gaps are also carnal, material, and earthy: the synaptic gap between nerves, the spaces between sense organs and the objects they perceive, the distinction between body (Körper, la chose) and flesh (Leib, la chair), the nuances of proprioception, the reversibility or "intertwining" (Verflechtung, entrelacs) of sensing and sensed, the distance of alterity between the self and the other (autre or autrui), and the spaces between bodies in the world, as well as the phenomenon of stellar parallax, and so on."

³² See the article by Pretorius, H. (2016) Reading "blackface": A (narrative) introduction to Richard Kearney's notion of carnal hermeneutics. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72, pp 1-9. Pretorius introduces Richard Kearney's notion of carnal hermeneutics and applies it to a case study of an event at one of South Africa's university campuses.

bodies, the interconnectedness of relationships, and the vulnerability that defines our humanity. We can truly experience the human body only when it exists in relation to other bodies.

2.2.3 An embodied cognition reading elucidated

What does an embodied cognition approach, in conjunction with carnal hermeneutics, entail when applied to literary texts?

Rojcewicz (2018:253) suggests that carnal hermeneutics is not merely an interpretation performed by the body but rather an interpretation of (objective genitive) the body. While it is well acknowledged that hermeneutics has historically focused solely on interpreting texts, there is also meaning in embodiment. Carnal hermeneutics aims to bring this realm into the scope of interpretative research. The theme revolves around the surplus of meaning that arises from our carnal embodiment, its role in our experiences and understanding, and its interaction with the broader world.

Regarding text reading, Basaran (2020:iii) contends that reading occurs between two entities: the body, as the site of bodily and sensory reactions to what is read, and the text itself, as a material entity whose form, construction, and layout shape the reader's moods, feelings, and attitudes. The body that reads and the text that is read interact to create an environment for meaning, where the reader is influenced, "touched by the text touching." The carnal hermeneutics of reading focuses on understanding what happens to the reader during the act of reading, while addressing the neglect of the body in philosophical hermeneutics. The reader's response to the text is inherently corporeal. The text that resonates with us is the text that affects us. Whether it gives us headaches or goosebumps, evokes smiles or seriousness, inspires delight or gloom, or leaves us feeling perplexed, displeased, irritated, fearful, or desperate to read more (Basaran, 2020:iii).

As reading is always mediated through the body, hermeneutics begins with the embodied reader interpreting itself, transforming corporeality into a living experience, and listening to the body's response to the text. In Kearney's (2015:16) words, "the journey from flesh to text often forgot a return ticket". Carnal hermeneutics seeks to initiate this return journey, which is not a one-way process but a continual round-trip from flesh to text and back to flesh. Basaran (2020:iii) explains:

That means the perceiving body is to differentiate reading (touching) and the text as read (the touched) in their unity in the act of reading; for the body that touches (viz. reads), which is immediate and intimate to us, is also the same body that is touched, the same body that belongs to the world (viz. the text) touching us outwardly." Therefore, the task of the carnal hermeneutics of reading is to offer an interpretation

of this enigma of the intertwining of touching the text and the touching text, reserving and reversing their difference in the same act of reading.

An embodied cognition reading of James 1:1–27 with distinctive reference to the notion of *carnal hermeneutics* thus presupposes:

- Interpretation involves not only mental or intellectual processes but also sensual, corporeal, and emotional engagement. Readers respond to texts with both cognitive and embodied reactions, which enables what Sheets-Johnstone (2009:380) identifies as the double dynamic of emotions: they “move through us in distinctive ways and move us to move in distinctive ways.”
- Language has a material and affective dimension. Words, sound, rhythm, and imagery evoke physical and emotional responses.
- The body is a site of interpretation, vulnerability and openness. Reading thus becomes an ethical act of encountering the “other” in the text, rather than merely extracting meaning.
- Our bodily histories, including culture, gender, emotions, and trauma, shape the ways in which we interpret texts. As a result, interpretations are inherently situated and contextual rather than neutral.

Using a carnal hermeneutic lens, the researcher must pay close attention to how James 1:1–27 affects both the original audience and the researcher herself, considering bodily, emotional, and ethical aspects. Therefore, an embodied cognition reading will consider the original recipients of James’ Epistle as perceiving bodies, the researcher’s perceptions and senses, and the text itself as read and experienced, all interconnected and intertwined. In the reading performance, the oral-aural character of the epistle is recognised.³³ Wendland (2024) emphasises that, although presented as an epistle, James may be classified as an epistolary homily³⁴, including the four

³³ Scholars agree that writing texts in ancient times was an oral and audible process (Botha, 2018:1–18).

³⁴ A homily is a lengthy, sermon-like speech designed to instruct, inform, encourage, edify, warn, admonish, and console believers. It is directed at a group of like-minded followers, combining written text with oral delivery, mirroring a similar presentation style — such as in James 5:7–20 (Wendland, 2024:7).

discourse types of paraenesis³⁵, diatribe³⁶, wisdom literature³⁷, and midrash literature.³⁸ It is a text written to be preached, thus orally “performed” in public.

The oral-aural character of this Epistle of James calls for a “listening ear” and a “spelling eye” (Botha, 2018:1–18). Botha (2018:7) explicates:

The contrast expressed by the two designations is, on the one hand, studying a text with “an eye toward” precision of textual and word features, as different, on the other hand, from paying intent attention to the communicative event, “listening” thoughtfully to what is being conveyed. The underlying idea is that it would be a very poor comprehension that prefers to examine a text (and correct the spelling, so to speak) rather than attend to the possible realisation of the text. The spelling eye ‘fixes’ the text, whilst the listening ear is aware of the multifaceted processes when a body speaks to others.

One must assume and create an audience to give a text a voice. The “spelling eye” concept aims to capture what a text conveys at face value. It considers the inner texture of the text, referring to “the features in the language of the text itself” (Robbins, 1996:6). Conversely, the “listening ear” acknowledges that there are always multiple voices for various audiences; it does not focus solely on the text’s context, as it prioritises contextualisation. The listening ear actively seeks to hear the voice and sense the body projecting that voice, striving for meaning and understanding (Botha, 2018:6). The “hearing ear” pertains to connotative meaning, which includes the traditional associations that memory attaches to words in specific contexts. This ear engages with the intertextual, social, cultural, ideological, sacred, and visual aspects of texts. Botha’s references to the “spelling eye” and the “hearing ear” link hermeneutics and reading to embodied involvement, suggesting a research method based on an embodied cognition approach to ancient texts. It advocates a contextual exploration that delves into the text’s textured world, aiming to understand not only the forms of the New Testament’s oral-aural texts but also how they generate meaning in their various contexts of use.

³⁵ Paraenesis includes various moral and life-related sayings, conduct rules, aphorisms, widely accepted truths, admonitions, and ethical passages. These are connected in a sequence, either closely or loosely, through common themes and catchwords, such as in James 3:1–12 (Wendland, 2024:7).

³⁶ Diatribe features a brief, imaginary critical debate with a fictional opponent, characterised by clear syntax and rhetorical devices such as a stereotyped address (vocative), mock objections to a thesis or argument, catechetical questions and answers, and sometimes abstract personifications, like James 2:14–26 (Wendland, 2024:7).

³⁷ Wendland (2024:7) suggests that James aligns with the common moral philosophy of the Greco-Roman era by emphasising the regulation of passions and speech, and by demonstrating verbal commitment through actions. It also perceives envy and arrogance as harmful vices, as exemplified in James 3:13–18.

³⁸ Wendland (2024:7) proposes: “A literary text is midrashic insofar as it interprets an earlier text as part of its own redaction and argumentation for a new audience and its particular situation” (allusions, not direct citations, for example, James 4:10).

The following section examines how Robbins's socio-rhetorical interpretation supports an embodied-cognition reading of James's text.

2.2.4 Robbins' socio-rhetorical interpretative analytic encompassing an embodied cognition reading of the text of James

To develop a multidimensional hermeneutic that fully accounts for lived, spatially embodied experience and acknowledges the rhetorical character of James's text, I have found Robbins's socio-rhetorical interpretative analysis helpful in analysing the textual texture of James 1:1–27. He views a text as a tapestry with several layers.³⁹ Socio-rhetorical interpretation is an analytical approach that allows exegetes to explore how persuasive language operates from various viewpoints.

Robbins (1996:1–2) contends that there is a philosophical distinction between an interpretative analytic, such as socio-rhetorical analysis, and a method. "The philosophy of a method," Robbins explains, "is grounded in a belief that the true nature of something is "in something itself" (Robbins, 1996:1). In contrast, the philosophy of interpretative analysis is founded on the belief that the true essence of something is revealed through its relationships with all other things. Interpretative analysis advocates a structured, multi-dimensional approach to interpreting texts, especially biblical ones, that integrates social, rhetorical, cultural, and ideological analyses into a cohesive method. It is not merely a single technique or theory, but rather a set of tools for examining texts from various interconnected perspectives. *Interpretative*, thus, refers to going beyond the surface meaning to explore how texts create meaning in context, while *analytic* suggests an exegetical approach that is not arbitrary or purely intuitive; it employs methods that can be applied consistently across texts.

Socio-rhetorical interpretation provides a conceptual framework for integrating analytical tools to explore relational dynamics in texts. Within this framework, it becomes feasible to apply meaning-making theories from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, such as embodied cognition, enhanced by carnal hermeneutics, to the interpretation of a first-century document. This approach is justified because embodied cognition is rooted in a shared human capacity to create meaning through bodily experience, while also considering cultural and contextual

³⁹ Robbins employs the metaphor of a rich tapestry to elucidate the nature of texts. When we examine a thick tapestry from various angles, we perceive different 'textures': configurations, patterns, and images inherent in its warp and woof. Likewise, when we investigate a text from multiple perspectives, we discern various textures of meanings, convictions, values, emotions, and actions (Gowler, 2010:195).

differences. When combined with socio-rhetorical analysis, embodied cognition, especially as shaped by carnal hermeneutics, which “centres on the body as the main site of interpretation and sensory experiences that underpin human understanding” (Kearney, 2015:15–20), provides a compelling and contextually attentive hermeneutical method.

Section 2.6 will examine the various textures of texts described by Robbins (1996). The next section investigates embodied cognition in relation to the potential of chiasmus by analysing the connections among literal, embodied, and ontological forms of chiasmus.

2.3 Embodied cognition and the potential of chiasmus: examining the relationship between literal, embodied, and ontological chiasmus

2.3.1 Literal chiasmus

Since one of the aims of this study is to examine oppositions and binary oppositions by introducing chiasmus as a hermeneutical and heuristic tool, the potential of chiasmus is explored, and the relationship between literal, embodied, and ontological chiasmus is analysed.

The chiasmus⁴⁰ is a structural pattern characterised by the parallel, or symmetrical, inversion of two or more terms framed as antithetical pairs, held in a mirror-image relation to suggest unity, tension, reversal, and/or exchange. Pelkey (2017:20) explains the chiasmus pattern:

The chiasmus pattern, also known as the X figure, is often formally rendered A: B:: B': A'. It can be described as the parallel, or (a)symmetrical, inversion of two or more terms framed as antithetical pairs, being held in something of a mirror-image relation to suggest relations and processes of unity, tension, reversal, and/or exchange.

Observing chiasmus through symbols reflects a pattern of intersecting lines. The simplest form is the “X” symbol (Pelkey, 2017:39–62). While the details of chiasmus may differ, a chiasmic principle or structure will consistently involve a crossing pattern. An “X” is created by combining symbols or repeating ideas. In this context, Grausso (2020:28–43) identifies eight different types of chiasmi. She has made a commendable effort to present typologies of chiasmus, focusing on its literal structure to improve understanding of cross-linguistic usage, and how form and function come together in this device. These typologies provide deeper insight into the relationship of so-

⁴⁰ Paul (2014:21) points out that the standard textbook example, “Non ut edam vivo sed ut vivam edo” (I do not live to eat but eat to live), provided by Quintilian (A.D. 35–100), was labelled “antimetabole.” The term “chiasmus” was not introduced until the second century by Hermodorus of Tarsus. The key distinction between the two terms is that antimetabole involves repeating the exact words in reverse order, while chiasmus involves an inverted repetition of grammatical structures. Over the centuries, the distinction between antimetabole and chiasmus has become increasingly blurred.

called dualistic concepts and are considered useful for this research. Grausso's (2020:28–43) typology of chiasmus offers a nuanced framework for understanding how formal inversion generates different communicative effects. These eight types are summarised in **Table 2.1** and form part of the analytical lens employed in this study. Her typologies are illustrated in the table below.

Table 2.1: Typologies of chiasmus and their communicative functions

Chiasmus type	Relation of “A” and “B” elements	Communicative function
Equalisation	AB equates to or is the same as BA; A and B are the same.	The criteria for including elements in this category are that elements A and B are defined as synonyms of copular verbs “is” or “are” or are otherwise regarded as interchangeable. This structure is quite balanced, as it allows for the combination of two disparate terms (Grausso, 2020:29).
Part-whole	A is part of B, and B is part of A.	These sentences are balanced because they show a connection between elements rather than suggesting disconnection or discord. To be included, they must use key terms like “on” or “in,” give a clearer reference to the connection of elements, or demonstrate possession of one by the other (Grausso, 2020:31).
Exclusion	A excludes B, and B excludes A.	Elements A and B are considered with a strict “never” condition, meaning they do not intersect or overlap in any way. This creates an exclusionary situation with no possible middle ground (Grausso, 2020:33).
Dissociation	A dissociates from B, and B dissociates from A.	An association is created and then disassembled (Grausso, 2020:35).
Combination	A and B, B and A; the elements are grouped, and in some cases, one or more elements are polysemous.	One of the elements, A or B, might have multiple referents or be combined with a conjunction such as “and” (Grausso 2020:37).
Comparison	A and B are better than B and A; or A and B are worse than B and A.	Although all examples of chiasmus are inherently comparative, many cases involve an explicit comparison using terms like “better” or “worse,” or frequency terms such as “more frequently,” along with measurements of time or ability. The criteria for including this group involve using phrases or terms that rank the A and B elements or directly compare them with the terms listed above (Grausso, 2020:38).

Chiasmus type	Relation of “A” and “B” elements	Communicative function
One-Way Effects	A affects B, but B does not affect A; or A does not affect B, but B affects A.	A cause-and-effect relationship is defined as one-directional: element A influences element B, but the phrase “not” or similar wording negates any reciprocal influence. Therefore, if A affects B, B does not influence A back (Grausso, 2020:40).
Multiple Effects	A affects B, and B affects A; or A affects B and B affects A.	The A and B elements mutually influence or modify each other, creating a multiple effect. To illustrate this type, there must be bidirectional activity or interaction between the elements (Grausso, 2020:41).

Source: Adapted from Grausso (2020:28–43).

Chiasmus has attracted significant attention in scriptural research. The widespread use of chiastic and concentric arrangements in biblical, ancient, and pre-modern texts is well recognised⁴¹. However, many studies focus primarily on chiasmus as a structural technique, often limiting their analysis to syntactic and rhetorical aspects (Nänny, 1988:51–59; Levinson, 2020:271–280). In the context of biblical studies, these observations support the comment made by Paul and Wiseman (2014:1):

Even today, anyone who has heard of chiasmus is likely to think of it as no more than a piece of rhetorical playfulness, a lively figure, at times challenging, helpful in supplying a memorable sententious note or for performing a terpsichorean pirouette of syntax and thought.

One of the many advantages of closely analysing chiasmus patterning is its potential as a practical dialectical tool for addressing binary contradictions and other oppositions (Pelkey, 2017:23). Chiasmus can be used not only to frame the contradiction or rupture between different sets of oppositions but also to promote a dialogue among these differences. Reflexivity and chiasmus are deeply interconnected. This research employs a multidimensional hermeneutic approach to analyse the text of James, emphasising the coexistence of dualistic concepts by examining its nuanced texture. Chiasmus functions as a heuristic device for examining reflexivity and uncovering the texture of the text. Wiseman (2014:2) states: “The spirit of chiastic inversion [allows] the questioner to be questioned by his own object of intention.”

⁴¹ Decaen (2021:56–74), Bryan (2020:407–423), DeSilva (2008:343–371), Brouwer (2018:195–214), Brouwer (2018:99–127), Brouwer (2018:304–322), Thomson (1995:34–38), Gardner (1999:355–391).

2.3.2 Embodied chiasmus

The concept of embodied cognition, emphasising the link between mind and body, traces back to the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968). He promoted a holistic view of the relationship between the body and the mind, stressing that they do not operate separately or independently. Barbaras (2004:175) describes Merleau-Ponty's philosophical approach as "a proliferation of chiasmi that integrate themselves according to different levels of generality." In his later work, Merleau-Ponty (1968:138) concluded that the body acts as a "nexus of living meanings," realised through a "reciprocal insertion and intertwining of sensed and sentient" experiences. The body's features capable of sensation must also be sensed. Merleau-Ponty (1968) discussed the idea of chiasmus, which refers to reversibility. He revisits the concept of intertwining by interpreting flesh as a mutual interweaving of the perceiving subject and the perceived world. Flesh functions as a shared membrane between the body and the world. I "exist my body" because I operate "in and from the flesh of the world" (Kearney, 2015:38).

Merleau-Ponty presents the idea of "diacritical sensation" as a novel way to describe a sensitivity at the point where sensation and language meet. Meaning is not derived from isolated objects or words; instead, it emerges from a dynamic exchange of signs, which include intervals, absences, folds, and gaps (Kearney 2015:42). There is a level of meaning that is unrelated to any specific object. This idea relates to the structure of perception and is not just a function of language. Merleau-Ponty argues that "the sensing of meaning" is communicated through diacritical perception, particularly through the intervals and gaps between our experiences and the objects around us (Kearney 2015:43). Kearney (2015:45) reinterprets this concept as follows:

... perception operates like language in that it does not confront an object head-on but senses things which speak to it laterally, on the side, provoking one's 'complicity' in the manner of an 'obsession'... the thing perceived 'solicits' us ... the flesh of the world solicits us before we read ourselves back into it.

Merleau-Ponty's concept of "the sensing of meaning" aligns closely with Kearney and Treanor's (2015:1) idea of *carnal hermeneutics*, highlighting a renewed interest in chiasmus as it relates to both body and mind. The body and mind interact through motor function, touch, and perception. Specifically, the brain's right hemisphere governs movement and function on the left side of the body, while the left hemisphere controls the right side. This chiastic relationship between body and mind is significant; it represents "an identity within the opposition, a crossing that institutes the very elements it puts in relation" (Thomas-Fogiel, 2014:111).

Merleau-Ponty (1968) explicitly situates linguistic chiasmus within the broader realm of non-linguistic chiasmic experience, shifting from implied abstract dualities to lived embodied

integrities. Merleau-Ponty called this the “chiasm” of perception, the intertwining of seer and seen, body and world. Here, chiasmus is not merely a structural pattern; it becomes an experiential and bodily entanglement. It is “embodied” because it describes how chiasmic reversals are lived through the flesh, where subject and object fold into one another. Lissner (2007:17) suggests that chiasmus is a fundamental aspect of embodiment. The concept of “chi-thinking” involves recognising “likeness and difference, partitioning and totality, duality and reciprocation” (Lissner 2007:17). According to Pelkey (2017:1–38), chiasmic constructions arise from the basic structure of *Homo sapiens*, characterised by outstretched limbs and an extended posture, which together create an “embodied X.”

Pelkey (2017:225) articulates the aim of an embodied cognition perspective: “The focus of inquiry can be framed as the grammar of embodied chiasmus and the embodied chiasmus of grammar.”

2.3.3 Ontological chiasmus

Investigations into the non-linguistic and extra-linguistic dimensions of chiasmus have continued to expand since Merleau-Ponty, encompassing analyses of chiasmus in culture (Strecker and Tyler, 2009; Wiseman and Paul, 2014), social interaction (Carter, 2010), and philosophy (Gashé, 1999; Toadvine, 2012). Ontological chiasmus denotes a profound interrelation at the level of being — how distinct ontological categories (self/other, mind/world, presence/absence) reflect or invert into one another, where dichotomies are not absolute but co-constitutive. In this context, chiasmus manifests a metaphysical condition: the intrinsic reversibility and relationality of existence. Thus, what begins as a linguistic pattern resonates through the fabric of human embodiment and ultimately establishes a chiasmal ontology — a mode of being structured by relational inversion and existential reciprocity.

Concerning chiasmic ontology, chiasmus holds a significant position within the Rhetoric Culture Project, as “rhetoric and culture themselves stand in chiastic relation to one another” (Paul and Wiseman, 2014:6). The International Rhetoric Culture Project (www.rhetoricculture.org) aims to “return rhetoric to daily life and relocate it at the foundation of human culture” (Paul and Wiseman, 2014:5). Wiseman (2009:92) states that the Rhetoric Culture Project aims to explore the potential of ontological chiasmus by viewing chiasmus not simply as a decorative flourish, nor merely as a symmetrically reversible form, but as a figure of human thought and action — a cross-cultural “creative principle.”

Considering that chiasmus is a literal, embodied, and ontological figure essential for the multidimensional hermeneutic analysis of James 1:1–27, how can we understand the connection between them?

2.3.4 The relationship between literal, embodied and ontological chiasmus

The connection between literal chiasmus, embodied chiasmus, and ontological chiasmus can be understood as a progression from rhetorical structure to phenomenological experience, and ultimately to metaphysical insight. These three levels relate to each other. Literal chiasmus affects both embodied and ontological chiasmus. Embodied chiasmus deepens the experience of ontological chiasmus. Ontological chiasmus offers metaphysical meaning for the others. In its most basic sense, chiasmus functions as a structural and conceptual principle that goes beyond language, perception, and metaphysics (Grausso, 2020:1-10).

The connection among literal, embodied, and ontological chiasmus can be understood as a progression from rhetorical structure to phenomenological experience and ultimately to metaphysical insight. This layered relationship is summarised in **Table 2.2**, which shows how each level operates within a distinct domain while remaining conceptually interdependent.

Table 2.2: Levels of chiasmus and their interconnected domains

LEVEL	CHIASMIC STRUCTURE	DOMAIN	MAIN CHARACTERISTIC
Literary chiasmus	A-B-B-A	Language/Form	Reversal in structure for poetic or rhetorical effect.
Embodied chiasmus	Reciprocity of perception. (The hand that touches is also the hand that can be felt).	Phenomenology/Flesh as medium, the in-between (μετὰξύ).	Reciprocal perception: the intertwining of body and world.
Ontological chiasmus	Self/Other Being/Nothing	Metaphysics	Reversal and interdependence of modes of being.

Source: Author's synthesis, drawing on Grausso (2020:1–10).

What begins as a linguistic pattern (literal chiasmus) resonates throughout the fabric of human embodiment (embodied chiasmus), ultimately establishing a chiasmic ontology — a mode of being shaped by relational inversion and existential reciprocity. Thus, literal chiasmus can express

embodied and ontological reversals, while ontological chiasmus can inform how literal structures are interpreted.

2.4 Exploring a third space

Pelkey (2017:224) describes the concept of third space:

The leverage chiasmus provides enables us to transcend oppositions by bringing a third or further blended possibility into view – new modes of mutual interdependence through which the oppositions themselves become more authentic, more enriched, more full of possibility. Chiasmus in its most developed mode is chiasmus as its most meaningful – consonant with the embodied chiasmus of thirdness or mediation.

Pelkey suggests that the X-shape (chiasmus) symbolises intersection. The crossing point (the centre of the X) represents the third space, where A and B invert and interact, giving rise to something beyond either one alone. This centre is often understood as a locus of potential, where oppositions are both held and transformed. Contemplating the rhetorical effect of chiasmus, Hariman (2014:49–51) argues that chiasmus functions as a figure of thought that encourages diverse perspectives. On one hand, chiasmus organises specific ideas, creating a structured arrangement that articulates similarities and differences within a defined abstract framework. On the other hand, it juxtaposes concepts, preventing fixation on either side of the equation. Chiasmus guides us towards a core that ultimately proves to be vacant, a space meant for intersection. “As one thinks with chiasmus, the doubled modality of the term provides stability only to oscillate and eventually to generate something beyond the binary, something asymmetrical” (Hariman, 2014:51).

In his article “What Is Diacritical Hermeneutics?”, Kearney (2011:9) concludes by discussing the creation of a *third space*:

To say that understanding is incarnate is to say that it answers to the life of suffering and action. Its application to human embodiment is its original and ultimate end. And here we return to its diagnostic role as a caring for lived existence – a listening to the pulse of suffering and solicitation between one human being and another. And, at times, between human being and that which precedes and exceeds it. It is in the passages ‘between’ that the dia of dia-critical takes on its full meaning. Diagnosis calls for endless dialogue: between disciplines, between text and action, between word and flesh, and above all between human persons who give and receive wisdom, attention, and healing.

The third space challenges rigid dualism by representing a conceptual realm of liminality that fosters complexity, transformation, and relationality. Instead of resolving the binary, it destabilises and deepens it. Thus, the third space does not merely exist between two poles; it reconfigures their relationship, illustrating that binary logic is fundamentally incomplete. Its role is to act as a

mediator, facilitating interaction between two opposites rather than isolating them in conflict. Furthermore, it has the potential to transcend or completely undo the binary, revealing a more intricate and dynamic landscape, while exposing that each pole of a binary inherently contains traces of the other. In this manner, it introduces internal differences (Pelkey, 2017:220–221).

The multidimensional hermeneutic framework introduced in this research will focus particularly on the idea of space or liminality — the ‘third term’ between what are often perceived as binary opposites — as envisioned by James.

Section 2.5 provides a detailed analysis of chiasmus typologies and examines their relationship to embodied cognition.

2.5 Typologies of chiasmus

Pelkey (2017) goes beyond structural analysis by developing a functional typology that categorises chiasmic structures by their communicative functions. This approach explores how chiasmus signifies affiliations, contradictions, or dialogues between opposing ideas. He further contends that our physical understanding of chiasmus is closely linked to our interpretation of the world, connecting embodied chiasmus with both literary and ontological aspects (Pelkey, 2017:1–37). At the core of his theory is the spread-eagled posture, which forms the bodily “X” and is associated with intense emotional experiences that shape various aspects of life.

Pelkey’s research spans semiotics, anthropology, and interdisciplinary studies, yielding four semiotic types of thematic chiasmus. These typologies examine pragmatic functions by considering the communicative intentions behind chiasmus. The human body, through stabilising or destabilising postures, provides the basis for understanding how semiotic X produces pragmatic and thematic effects. Pelkey’s framework shows how chiasmus conceptualises the human body and mediates cultural contradictions, conceptual tensions, and cognitive shifts (Pelkey, 2017:58).

By repositioning chiasmus as a multimodal, embodied, and culturally embedded rhetorical strategy, Pelkey (2017:22–23) challenges classical rhetorical assumptions that regard figures such as ABBA patterns as merely stylistic embellishments. Drawing on embodied cognition and semiotic theory, he demonstrates that chiasmus functions rhetorically not only in verbal expression but also through bodily gestures, narrative structure, spatial arrangement, and ritual action (Pelkey, 2017:24–37). This perspective aligns with contemporary rhetorical theory, particularly George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s (1980; 1999) work on conceptual metaphor, which

emphasises that persuasion and meaning-making are rooted in embodied experience. Therefore, Pelkey's typology not only broadens rhetorical analysis beyond textual boundaries but also repositions chiasmus as a dynamic, embodied, and context-sensitive rhetorical gesture that can facilitate argument, transformation, and cultural memory (see **Figure 2:1**).

Concerning this study, Grausso's (2020:28–43) extensive typologies of literary chiasmus will aid in identifying the different relations between A and B constructions. They will be combined with Pelkey's thematic chiasmus. Grausso (2020:43) provided a schema of how her typologies intersect with Pelkey's (see **Figure 2.2**). These typologies can help understand the perceptible impact of the literary chiasmus identified in James 1:1-27 and highlight a multidimensional hermeneutic framework for interpreting this text.

Chiasmus Type	Description
Type: X 	Description: In its most basic appearance, "X" represents human posture with spread arms and legs. Pelkey (2017:63-83) defines this as a "spread-eagled leap". He deems the overall mood of the "X-type" chiasmus to be "satisfaction". Skiing and figure-skating activities challenge competitors to compete gracefully and meticulously (Pelkey 2017:42).
Type: Hourglass 	Description: The hourglass is a disruptive figure, with an unsustainable midpoint. It is denoted by an extreme and unnerving "spread-eagled posture". Pelkey (2017:85-111) portrays this as "spread-eagling torture". The hourglass type correlates with a "tortured psyche", one in which there is a restrictedness that cannot be overcome unless the configuration is disassembled. The hourglass has a tapered centre, implying that the structure will disintegrate. The hourglass symbolises the "tortured spread-eagled posture" of the human figure, extended beyond what it can tolerate.
Type: Diamond 	Description: A diamond is established by binary "X"-figures intermeshing around the inner, rhombic shape or general base (Pelkey 2017:204).
Type: Argyle 	Description: The "argyle pattern" entails replicating "X" patterns, dovetailing, and being crammed together. There is a shared communal space between the symbols (Pelkey 2017:193-225). Echoed patterns or meshes communicate an awareness of open-ended connection – <i>"an open-ended movement, returning the point to a starting point that is now changed"</i> (Paul 2014:36).

Figure 2.1: Pelkey's typologies of chiasmi

Source: Pelkey, 2017:215.

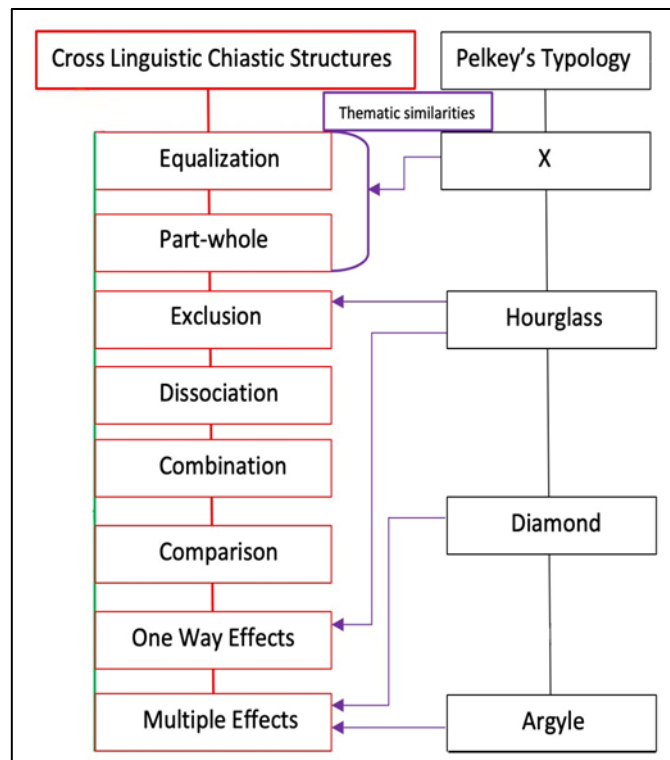


Figure 2.2: Intersection of Grausso's typologies with Pelkey's thematic chiasmus

Source: Grausso, 2020:43.

2.6 Research methodology

2.6.1 A multidimensional hermeneutic elucidated

Since this research seeks to incorporate insights from embodied cognition within the broader context of socio-rhetorical interpretation, it advocates a multidimensional hermeneutic for a comprehensive reading of James 1:1–27. This hermeneutic combines three key approaches: Embodied Cognition (enhanced by carnal hermeneutics), Vernon K. Robbins' Socio-Rhetorical Analysis, and Chiastic Typology (Grausso's typologies of literary chiasmus and Pelkey's typologies of embodied chiasmus). Instead of employing these methods separately, the study aims to synthesise them into a single interpretative model that considers the form, emotional impact, cognitive structure, rhetorical devices, and ideological elements of the biblical text. This holistic approach is especially suitable for the Epistle of James, where embodied wisdom, rhetorical influence, and literary form converge to shape theological meaning and ethical guidance.

Table 2.3 summarises how each analytical lens contributes to the interpretation of James 1:1–27 and illustrates the complementarity of this multidimensional approach.

Table 2.3: Complementary analytical lenses in the interpretation of James 1:1–27

METHODOLOGICAL LENS	KEY FEATURES IN JAMES 1:1–27	INTERPRETATIVE CONTRIBUTION
Embodied Cognition	Metaphors of motion, orientation, and perception.	Grounding conceptual meaning in bodily experience reveals how metaphors arise through mapping a source domain (a familiar experience) onto a target domain (an abstract or complex concept).
Carnal Hermeneutics	Affective appeals (trial, desire, compassion).	Highlights the vital importance of ethical engagement and vulnerability as strong interpretative forces.
Grausso’s Literal Chiasmus	Symmetric structures and focal inversions.	Highlights textual coherence and rhetorical emphasis.
Pelkey’s Embodied Chiasmus	Reversals in affect, rhythm, and orientation.	Frames transformation as an embodied, affective journey of reversal and repetition. Helps in understanding how chiastic patterns in James evoke theological and emotional responses, influence interpretation, or organise wisdom teaching.
Socio-Rhetorical Criticism	Literal, intertextual, cultural, sacred, and ideological critique.	Places the text within its community context, highlighting rhetorical devices and theological perspectives.

Source: Author’s own summary.

The main reason for using a multidimensional hermeneutic is that meaning in biblical texts, especially in James, arises from the dynamic interaction of bodily experience, literary form, rhetorical design, and social context, rather than from isolated analysis. Each perspective offers a distinct but complementary view: Embodied cognition and carnal hermeneutics emphasise the body as the basis for cognition and moral response; chiastic typologies show how structural and perceptual inversions shape meaning; and socio-rhetorical criticism situates the text within its ideological and communal frameworks while also examining its literal aspects. By combining these approaches, the study seeks to move beyond simple binary interpretations and explore the

liminal, relational, and emotional spaces within the Epistle of James, leading to a deeper understanding of its theological and moral vision. Together, these perspectives form a multi-layered hermeneutical framework that allows the reader or researcher to explore not only what the text states but also how it communicates, why it persuades, and to whom it speaks — across both ancient and postmodern embodied contexts. This unified model is particularly well suited to a nuanced reading of James 1:1–27, where embodiment, moral exhortation, rhetorical contrast, and theological dualities are central.

This research recognises a complex relationship between a text and the contexts in which it has been read and reread, encompassing diverse dynamic interactions between the creator/author and recipients, both past and present. By adopting a strategy of reading *against the grain*, which is also part of a hermeneutics of suspicion, the researcher aims to develop her critical reading skills, making it a key feature of her textual analysis (Aichele, 1995:36–38). Reading a text against the grain involves questioning the dominant view of the Epistle of James as dualistic. This approach entails “listening attentively to others” to uncover “something one did not know before,” ultimately leading to surprise by the text (Gallop, 2000:17). The “spelling eye” and the “hearing ear,” which link hermeneutics and reading to bodily engagement, inform my research method. A close literary and rhetorical reading of the text focuses on syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects to reconstruct the context or texture implied by the communication process. This methodological approach relies on the hermeneutical activity of a multi-dimensional, embodied rhetorical reading, which includes the concept of a ‘fully lived, spatially embodied experience.’ During this process, relationships of interdependence or symbiosis between opposites are mapped out. The analytical unit of James 1:1–27 is divided and analysed into smaller segments, providing the basis for the chapter divisions in this study.

2.6.2 Bridging the hermeneutical gap between the ancient text of James and the researcher's context

This study notes that the original author of James likely did not interpret thought, self, or experience through modern cognitive science concepts such as sensorimotor schemas. Nonetheless, it employs a multidimensional, embodied rhetorical hermeneutic as a heuristic tool to identify and analyse patterns within the text, particularly those related to bodily orientation, metaphors, lived experience, and interaction with the environment. The aim is not to recover a singular “original meaning” or pinpoint the author’s exact intention but to engage critically with the text. This interpretative approach is influenced by the researcher’s methodological framework,

which emphasises embodiment, rhetoric, and multidimensional meaning-making as key to understanding the theological and ethical dynamics in James.

As previously noted, this research emphasises the researcher as an active participant in the process of meaning-making. It is based on the idea that meaning is not fixed or solely contained within the text (James 1:1–27), but emerges through a connected, dynamic interpretative process. Therefore, the role of the interpreter-researcher is not neutral or passive but deeply engaged. Within the framework of embodied cognition, primarily through the perspective of carnal hermeneutics, the reader is regarded as a text/flesh engaging with another text/flesh. This reciprocal relationship emphasises the corporeal and affective aspects of interpretation. As Kearney (2015:16) suggests, carnal hermeneutics encourages a “return journey” that is not linear but ongoing and circular — moving from flesh to text and back to flesh — where understanding develops in the space between bodily experience and textual encounter. Kearney (2015:53) describes this process:

Flesh is the cradle of both perception and the word. The phenomenon of multi-reversibility extends from touch and sight to language itself, revealing flesh as a shared membrane between body and world. ... I do not begin with an isolated body opposed to another consciousness; I exist my body because I am already operating in and from the flesh of the world. I touch because I am in touch with the world. I speak because I am spoken to and spoken through. In short, flesh is the pre-existing, pre-reflective chiasm which allows for the mutual insertion of the world between the folds of my body and my body between the folds of the world.

The hermeneutical movement “from flesh to text and back to flesh” begins by recognising the “foreignness” of the text. The Epistle of James was written within a first-century Jewish-Christian context, shaped by values, symbols, and assumptions that differ significantly from those of modern readers. Interpreting such an ancient religious text requires attentive consideration of the complex social, political, economic, and historical factors that influenced its creation and reception. This includes recognising the influence of Greco-Roman cultural frameworks, as noted by scholars such as Jackson-McCabe (2019:45–72), Tamez (2019:193–208), and Mongstad-Kvammen (2013). Therefore, the methodological approach used in this study requires the researcher to stay critically and reflexively engaged with the text, viewing it not as a static artefact but as a dynamic dialogue partner within a multidimensional interpretative process. Contemporary frameworks such as Pelkey’s typology of chiasmus, carnal hermeneutics⁴² and embodied

⁴² The researcher recognises that “carnal hermeneutics” is a modern Western hermeneutical tool that cannot be applied “as is” to interpret biblical texts without considering its epistemological differences from those of the first century. The notion of ‘carnal’ (σάρξ) has a different meaning based on the context in which the word is used. Du Toit (1995:457–460) thoroughly discusses the different references of σάρξ in the New Testament. The main domains of meaning in which σάρξ is used in the New Testament (based mainly on

cognition are employed in this study as transparent and critical interpretative tools, not as an attempt to reconstruct the author's original intent.

Although ancient texts, such as the Epistle of James, may lack formal theoretical language to describe embodied experiences, their authors and audiences nonetheless inhabited bodies, moved, felt pain, engaged in rituals, and experienced emotions as part of daily life. These embodied experiences profoundly shaped their understanding of reality. Slingerland (2004:328) notes that “the basic stability of the human body and the environment with which it interacts across cultures and time would lead us to expect a high degree of universality in core cognitive structures.” Similarly, Von Thaden (2017:40) affirms that, despite historical and cultural differences, all humans share a fundamental physiological framework for engaging with the world. A surface reading of James reveals frequent bodily metaphors and imagery — such as “bridling the tongue” (3:2), “double-minded” (1:8), and “draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (4:8) — indicating that embodied experience is essential to its rhetorical and theological structure.

This study employs a multidimensional, embodied rhetorical hermeneutic to examine how the original audience may have physically experienced and understood meaning, even without formal cognitive frameworks. This approach reveals what can be termed the text’s “lived logic”: how emotions, spatial awareness, perception, and bodily actions contribute to theological insight. By emphasising the embodied aspects of meaning, this framework offers postmodern readers a deeper, more tangible engagement with ancient texts and their sensory, physical dimensions.

In analysing the Epistle of James, this study employs Jamin Pelkey’s typology of chiasmus with careful attention to method and scope. Rooted in semiotics, cognitive linguistics, and embodied cognition, Pelkey’s framework serves as a heuristic tool to generate new insights into the text rather than impose outdated assumptions. For Pelkey (2017:2), chiasmus is “a semiotic operation with embodied, pragmatic, and cultural implications”, a cross-cultural and transhistorical phenomenon that extends far beyond literary form.

Louw and Nida 1988) are the following (from basic/literal to extended/figurative): (1) physical flesh, (2) the human body, (3) a human being, (4) of human or earthly descent, (5) nation, (6) earthly life, (7) physical human nature and (8) psychological human nature. Another meaning claimed for *σάρξ* is that it points to someone’s “sinful nature” As argued earlier, *σάρξ*, translated as ‘carnal’, is used by Kearney (2015:28–74) to refer to the sensing body. Interpretation occurs through the senses: touch, sight, sound, taste, and smell. ‘Carnal’ serves as a synonym for *σάρξ*, understood as a medium of interpretation—the space between the intimate body (*σώμα*) and the perceived object. It is flesh (*σάρξ*) that touches, feels, and is touched, and through this process, interpretation begins.

The Epistle of James, influenced by the Jewish wisdom tradition and Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions⁴³, readily lends itself to chiasmic analysis. Pelkey's typology, which emphasises contrast, symmetry, and transformation, offers a valuable perspective for examining the rhetorical, emotional, and theological aspects of chiasmus in James. The aim is not to impose modern cognitive theory anachronistically but to employ Pelkey's model heuristically, revealing what the text does rather than attempting to reconstruct the author's original intent. By focusing on the effects of chiasmic structures — how they direct interpretation, evoke theological and emotional responses, and shape wisdom teachings — this approach highlights the communicative strategies embedded in the text.

This interpretative use of Pelkey's typology aligns with socio-rhetorical criticism as developed by Vernon K. Robbins, who affirms the value of contemporary perspectives in illuminating ancient texts while cautioning against ignoring historical and cultural distance (Robbins, 2016:1–3). Accordingly, this study employs Pelkey's framework reflectively rather than reconstructively, using it to reveal the embodied and rhetorical logic at work in James's use of chiasmus.

This study underscores the dialogical nature of interpretation, highlighting the dynamic interplay between the text, the reader, and the embodied experience. Aichele and Phillips (1995:14) describe this active process as *intergenesis*, involving continuous engagement influenced by the interpreter's questions, context, and interpretative approach. Employing a multidimensional hermeneutic method, the research examines James 1:1–27 by analysing its various layers of meaning, with particular attention to the sensory, emotional, and performative dimensions that arise through embodied interaction with the text.

Methodologically, this study employs an abductive research approach. Abduction, unlike deduction or induction, involves reasoning from observable data to the most plausible explanation. In this context, it entails an iterative engagement with the text, allowing interpretative patterns, bodily motifs, and rhetorical structures to develop naturally, rather than being dictated by rigid theoretical frameworks. This abductive method is particularly well suited for exploring chiasmic structures, embodied metaphors, and the corporeal aspects of interpretation, where meaning emerges not from straightforward argumentation but from circularity, contrast, and relational dynamics.⁴⁴

⁴³ Watson (2019:115) asserts that James's rhetorical strategy shows how an early Christian writer blended Jewish and Greco-Roman rhetoric to address his community, resisting clear classification and structure. The author is of Jewish background and influenced by Hellenistic rhetoric.

⁴⁴ The abductive process of research is thoroughly discussed in paragraph 2.10 of this Chapter.

2.7 Utilising Robbins' socio-rhetorical interpretative analytic adapted for this research

2.7.1 An overview

Robbins's Socio-Rhetorical Criticism offers a versatile and inclusive framework that accommodates multiple interpretative perspectives. It comprises five main types of textual analysis: Inner Texture, Intertexture, Social and Cultural Texture, Ideological Texture, and Sacred Texture. This method is especially appropriate for a multidimensional hermeneutic because it avoids methodological isolation and instead encourages dialogue among diverse interpretative frameworks, including rhetorical, cognitive, embodied, ethical, and theological approaches.

Such openness makes Robbins's model ideal for this study, which integrates five complementary methodologies: Embodied Cognition, Carnal Hermeneutics, Grausso's Typology of Literal Chiasmus, Pelkey's Typology of Embodied Chiasmus, and Socio-Rhetorical Criticism. Each can be meaningfully embedded within Robbins's schema, enriching textual analysis across multiple layers. As Robbins (1996:3) notes, while the socio-rhetorical approach allows a text to be examined from different perspectives, not every aspect of each passage needs to be explored. In line with this, this study employs Robbins's model flexibly, selecting the textures most relevant to the interpretative goals and rhetorical features of James 1:1–27. The analysis will focus on the textures that most effectively highlight the theological, rhetorical, and embodied dimensions of the passage.⁴⁵

Each of Robbins's (1996) proposed "textures" is examined in sequence, with attention to how each contributes to and aligns with the key dimensions of the study's multidimensional hermeneutic.

2.7.2 Five primary textures of textual analysis

2.7.2.1 The inner texture of the text

Inner texture involves analysing a text's internal features, particularly how it communicates with itself, without considering external contexts or influences. This includes repetition (words or

⁴⁵ Von Thaden (2017:65), who has utilised social-rhetorical analytic in his study "Sex, Christ, and Embodied Cognition: Paul's Wisdom for Corinth", states: "Although not often recognized by its critics, SRI does *not* require an exegete to 'run through the paces,' as it were, of all the different textures. Rather it offers a means whereby an 'interactive analysis' of texts can take place 'within multiple arenas of texture.' Depending upon the exegetical project, different textures will be of greater or lesser importance."

phrases that recur and help establish themes), progression (how ideas develop or unfold throughout the passage), the opening-middle-closing texture (how the beginning, middle, and end of the passage contribute to its overall structure and meaning), argumentative texture (the logical flow and reasoning within the text), and sensory-aesthetic texture (the use of language that appeals to the senses, emotions, or imagination).

A cursory examination of James 1:1–27 reveals the *recurrence of certain words and phrases*; for example, the verb χαίρειν (infinitive present active of χαίρω – rejoice in 1:1), which is connected to the noun χαρά (1:2). Associated with the theme of joy (χαρά), the adjective μακάριος (blessed, happy) appears in verses 1:12 and 1:25. The direct address to ‘my brothers’ (ἀδελφοί μου) recurs in verses 1:2, 16, and 1:19. The theme of πειρασμός (trials, temptation) is prominent in verses 1:2–4 and 1:12. The significance of these repetitions will be examined, helping to identify the argumentative structure.

Closely linked to the repetition of words and themes is the idea of *progression*. How is the address in 1:1 expanded upon in 1:2–27? How does the theme of πειρασμός (trials, temptation) develop? This concept of progression relates to the *opening-middle-closing texture*, as an address is introduced in James 1:1 and then elaborated. The argumentative texture is vital since an argument is presented following the introduction, addressing ‘my brothers’ (ἀδελφοί μου). For a multidimensional analysis of this text, the sensory-aesthetic texture (encompassing the senses, emotions, and imagination) is crucial, as it pertains to the embodiment of concepts and the audience's experience.

Within the sensory-aesthetic fabric of a text, Robbins (2008:81–106) highlights the concept of visual texture, which refers to features that generate mental images for readers or listeners. To describe this phenomenon, he coined the term *rheto-graphy*, referring to the visual dimension of rhetoric — the ways a text evokes vivid mental images that enhance its persuasive power. These images construct scenes and narrative elements, shaping the audience's experience of the argument. Robbins distinguishes *rheto-graphy* from *rheto-logy* (reasoned argument), noting that although they are different, the two work together: vivid imagery can reshape thought as powerfully as logical reasoning. Therefore, the persuasive power of *rheto-graphy* lies not solely in the images themselves but in the dynamic interaction between textual textures and the mental pictures they evoke, thereby increasing the rhetorical impact of the discourse (Jeong 2025:1–29).

The first verse shows that exploring its inner texture is essential to understanding it, especially in the use of the term δοῦλος and in the audience described as ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ

([to] the twelve tribes in the diaspora). Here, wholeness versus disparity/partiality is implied. Furthermore, the text addresses senses (hearing) and emotions (anger) – ἔστω δὲ πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ταχύς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι, βραδὺς εἰς τὸ λαλῆσαι, βραδὺς εἰς ὀργήν (any person should be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to be angry [1:19]). James 1:26 refers to the tongue as a body part (1:26), whilst James 1:23–24 highlights self-perception reflected in a mirror. James 1:7 evokes the imagery of a sea's gulf, rising and falling; an individual who does not pray is likened to this gulf of the sea. This image also evokes the sensation of bodily motion. Thus, the images, imagery, metaphors, metonymy, and similes presented by the text are considered reflections of embodied experiences. Embodied cognition fits here, as it accounts for how bodily experiences and socio-environmental interactions shape cognition and meaning-making.

Furthermore, the chiasmic structures in the text and their various typologies receive close attention. For example, the identification of the author in James 1:1 unfolds within a carefully organised chiasmic structure: Ἰάκωβος (A) θεοῦ (B) καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (B) δοῦλος (A). This structure suggests a meaningful interaction between the corresponding elements. Both Grausso's typology of literal chiasmus and Pelkey's typology of embodied chiasmus are employed to explore the recursive, symmetrical, and transformational features embedded in such patterns.

2.7.2.2 The intertexture of the text

Intertexture refers to a text's representation, reference to, and use of phenomena in the 'world' outside the text. This includes a text's citations, allusions, and reconfigurations of specific texts, events, language, objects, institutions, and other distinct extra-textual contexts with which the text interacts. The intertexture of texts highlights the idea that not only the author and reader participate in creating texts, but other texts do as well. This reflects the concept of *intertextuality*, suggesting that every text reinterprets other texts (Robbins, 1996:96). A text's meaning is not independent; instead, the act of reading immerses the reader in a network of textual relations. Interpreting a text and uncovering its meaning or meanings involves tracing those relations. Therefore, reading becomes a process of navigating between texts (Robbins, 1996:30–33; 96–143).

In James 1:1, the audience to whom the Letter of James is addressed is defined as ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορά (the twelve tribes in the diaspora). This reference assumes intertextual knowledge among the audience. The exploration of the intertexture of James 1:1–27 will be employed in this research. Furthermore, its pragmatic impact on the audience warrants investigation.

Robbins's Intertexture becomes a rich site for exploring a multidimensional hermeneutic. It permits analysis not only of textual echoes but also of embodied resonances, structural borrowings, and ethical suggestions across interpretative traditions. Each of the selected frameworks — embodied cognition, carnal hermeneutics, Grausso's and Pelkey's chiasmic typologies — helps reveal how James 1:1–27 is both influenced by and influences its intertextual environment in formal, rhetorical, bodily, and affective ways.

2.7.2.3 The social and cultural texture of the text

Social and cultural texture refers to how a text engages with society and culture by reflecting the shared attitudes, norms, and modes of interaction prevalent in a society. It establishes a relationship with the dominant cultural system by sharing, rejecting, or transforming its attitudes, values, and dispositions. Biblical texts, such as the Epistle of James, were produced and read within a specific cultural context. Therefore, intertexture also mirrors culture. Robbins refers to this as cultural intertexture, which encompasses two aspects: (a) references to individuals or traditions recognised within a culture, and (b) the resonance of a cultural tradition. Cultural intertexture represents the textualised form of culture, offering insights about a culture inferred from a text, independent of social science methods. Social intertexture also relates to this concept, as it examines social phenomena within a text. These observations can be made without employing social science tools.

However, to fully comprehend these observations, social science methods are utilised, which Robbins refers to as social and cultural texture (Robbins, 1996:33–36; 144–191). Robbins thus distinguishes between social and cultural intertexture and social and cultural texture. The most straightforward explanation of the difference between them is that social and cultural texture differs from social and cultural intertexture in that it uses “anthropological and sociological theory to explore the social and cultural nature of the voices in the text under investigation” (Robbins, 1996:144). Thus, the social and cultural texture does not examine the textualised witnesses of culture and society but employs the full range of tools known from the social sciences to analyse the societies and cultures in which the biblical texts were written. Bruce Malina (1993) is a typical exponent of social and cultural texture work concerning biblical texts. Analysis of social and cultural texture has provided insights into “honour and shame culture, patronage, hospitality, health systems, relation of countryside to cities, purity systems” (Robbins, 1996:36).

The examination of the cultural and social intertexture will be employed, where necessary, for the proposed multidimensional analysis of James 1:1–27. For example, the author of this epistle identifies himself as James, a slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ (Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου

Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος). To understand how the author of James embodies his presence, the cultural and social intertexture and texture of the term δοῦλος (slave) must be explored. James 1:27 appeals explicitly to the audience to “ἐπισκέπτεσθαι ὀρφανοὺς καὶ χήρας ἐν τῇ θλίψει αὐτῶν” (visit the orphans and widows in their affliction). Why are the orphans and widows afflicted? What was their social status? To comprehend this appeal, an investigation of the cultural and social intertexture is essential.

Embodied cognition asserts that meaning comes not from abstract thought but through physical engagement with the environment. Within Robbins’s framework, this enables an analysis of how James’s social world is shaped by sensorimotor experiences, culturally influenced bodily metaphors, and perceptual frameworks. For example, metaphors such as “tossed by the sea” (James 1:6) and “brought forth by the word of truth” (James 1:18) activate embodied schemas that symbolise instability, birth, and movement, through which theological and moral meanings are constructed. The social and cultural context then positions these metaphors as shared experiential knowledge embedded within the lifeworld of ancient audiences.

2.7.2.4 The ideological and sacred textures of the text

Ideological texture concerns the alliances and conflicts fostered and evoked by the text's language, as well as by the language of its interpretation, and how the text and its interpreters position themselves in relation to other individuals and groups. The audience should recognise and interpret the ideological point(s) of view evoked, advocated, and nurtured by a text, as well as their own ideological point(s) of view. Sacred texture refers to how a text conveys insights into the relationship between the human and the divine. This texture encompasses elements associated with deities, holy figures, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, religious communities, and ethics. Gowler (2010:95) regards the sacred textures of the text as a subset of ideological texture.

According to Robbins (1996:36), ideology “concerns the particular ways in which our speech and action, in their social and cultural location, relate to and interconnect with resources, structures and institutions of power.” There may be both an ideology *in* the text and an ideology *of* the text. The ideology in the text may be understood as the original author’s intended ideology. In contrast, the text’s ideology refers to the perspective it conveys to its audience.

In James 1:1, the author introduces himself as James, slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ (Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος). This introduction reveals a chiastic construction

and is unique in the New Testament, as it mentions being “a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ” in the greeting. Other New Testament writers (for instance, Paul⁴⁶ and Peter⁴⁷) use similar titles like “servant of God” or “servant of Jesus Christ” but not in the same combined form as James. This is the only place in the New Testament where the designation θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος occurs (Martin, 1988:4). Exploring this unique combination may require examining the text's ideological and sacral texture.

Robbins's *Ideological and Sacred Textures* offers a broad interpretative space in which embodiment, rhetoric, and theology are closely interconnected. Embodied cognition and carnal hermeneutics highlight the lived and ethical aspects of sacred discourse. At the same time, the typologies of chiasmus reveal the deep structure of how ideology and theology are embodied, remembered, and enacted. Together, these approaches enable a multidimensional hermeneutic that is simultaneously cognitive, ethical, and theological, rooted in the text, attentive to the body, and receptive to the sacred.

2.8 The analysis of the literal text

Exploring the textual world described in the Epistle of James requires a detailed literary and rhetorical analysis of the text, focusing on the syntactical (the relationships between signs), semantical (the relationships between signs and reality), and pragmatic (the relationships between signs and their users) aspects to reconstruct the context or texture implied by the communication process. Texture is understood as the quality that allows a text to “hang together” (Forey and Thompson, 2010:3); therefore, a detailed close reading of the text is essential. Recognising that meaning is multi-layered — indicating that words operate in complex ways to convey meanings we can only partly understand, and that meanings become significant through their connections to other meanings (Robbins, 1996:132) — it is vital to examine all dimensions of the literal text in James 1:1-27, specifically the syntactical, semantic, and pragmatic aspects.

A rhetorical close reading focuses mainly on the pragmatic aspects of the text; however, the syntactical and semantic dimensions are also vital for uncovering its various textures. The text is viewed as a literary work that conveys meaning. The structure of language, word choice, and their

⁴⁶ Παῦλος δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, κλητὸς ἀπόστολος ἀφωρισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ — Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, set apart for the gospel of God (Romans 1:1).

⁴⁷ Πέτρος ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς Πόντου, Γαλατίας, Καππαδοκίας, Ἀσίας καὶ Βιθυνίας — Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1 Peter 1:1).

usage are crucial when analysing the text's persuasive intent. Language use and word selection help us, in the modern era, deepen our understanding of the context from which the text originates (Robbins 1996:131–133). Hermeneutics covers not only the content of the text but also its form. Grammatical rules and syntax play a vital role in how different words and symbols are connected. The arrangement of these words and symbols facilitates communication. Therefore, analysing the text from a grammatical standpoint is also essential for improving understanding.

When syntactical ambiguity occurs in the text, relevant intertexts are identified to clarify the phonological, morphological, syntactical, and paragraph relationships within the smaller segments of James 1:1-27. The immediate intra-textual context is also considered. To resolve syntactical issues, the grammar textbooks by Blass, Debrunner and Funk (1961), Adam (2013), and Jordaan (2014) are utilised.

The semantic relations within the text are analysed by examining the references of specific words, with choices of meaning guided by both intra- and intertextual contexts. I will utilise the dictionaries by Liddell and Scott (1987) and Louw and Nida (1988). Furthermore, intertexts cited by commentaries and articles will be considered to address the semantic issues the text presents.

This study will not blindly follow Robbins's approach in analysing each texture at every stage of the examination. However, I will use Robbins's recommended tools when appropriate to uncover the textual texture of James 1:1–27, which primarily highlights its pragmatic aspects. Data interpretation may not follow a fixed order, and the three levels of analysis will not be applied strictly. The nature of the text's problem or question determines which analytical steps to undertake in the hermeneutical process.

2.9 The proposed methodological framework

The proposed multidimensional hermeneutic, grounded in Robbins's socio-rhetorical criticism, aims to establish a flexible, dialogical platform that combines various interpretative lenses. It incorporates three key approaches — Robbins's five textures, Embodied Cognition enhanced by Carnal Hermeneutics, and typologies of chiasmus (Grausso's Typology of Literal Chiasmus and Pelkey's Typology of Embodied Chiasmus) — into a unified method for analysing James 1:1–27. Rather than viewing these approaches as separate steps, the model treats them as interconnected layers, each offering distinct yet overlapping insights. **Table 2.4** outlines this framework.

Table 2.4: A layered multidimensional framework for interpreting James 1:1–27

Socio-Rhetorical Texture	Interpretative Focus	Integrated Theoretical Lenses	Key Questions
Inner Texture	Rhetorical structure, repetition, progression, and argumentation.	Grausso's literal chiasmus.	What chiastic patterns shape the internal logic and flow of the argument? How are the A- and B-components of the chiasmus related to one another? What is the structure and flow of the argument?
Intertexture	Use of external texts, allusions, echoes, and cultural references.	Embodied cognition, carnal hermeneutics.	How does James reinterpret earlier Jewish wisdom or Greco-Roman ethical traditions? How do intertextual connections influence embodied practices?
Social and Cultural Texture	Cultural norms, social roles, bodily experiences expressed through metaphors, etc. Bodily experiences are expressed through metaphors, and the rhetography of the text.	Embodied cognition, carnal hermeneutics, Pelkey's embodied chiasmus.	What cognitive metaphors arise from bodily experiences shared with the ancient audience? How does the rhetography of the text relate to assumed metaphors? How do literal patterns influence perception, memory, or the embodiment of theological ideas?
Ideological Texture	Power relations, ethical frameworks, and implicit value judgments.	Carnal hermeneutics, embodied cognition, Pelkey's embodied chiasmus.	Whose bodies are centralised or marginalised? How does the text illustrate social reversal through rhetorical form?

Socio-Rhetorical Texture	Interpretative Focus	Integrated Theoretical Lenses	Key Questions
Sacred Texture	Theological discourse, divine-human interaction, moral order.	Embodied cognition, Pelkey's embodied chiasmus, carnal hermeneutics.	How does the text depict the divine as embodied or relational? How does theological inversion influence ethical engagement in sacred life? How does the text mirror or challenge social constructions of status, suffering, or moral discipline?

Source: Author's own summary.

The framework is implemented in **three interpretative phases**:

Phase 1: Structural and Rhetorical Mapping (Structural-Rhetorical phase)

- A surface reading of the text is presented.
- Identify chiasmic structures using Grausso's categories.
- Map rhetorical flow and textual progression – identify syntactic and semantic relations (Robbins's Inner Texture and Intertexture).

Phase 2: Embodied and Socio-Cultural Engagement (Embodied-Cognitive phase)

- Apply embodied cognition and conceptual metaphor theory to detect metaphorical structures grounded in bodily experience (e.g., trial as fire, doubt as instability). Identify the rhetography of presented conceptual metaphors.
- Use carnal hermeneutics to interrogate bodily vulnerability, marginality, and ethical demand.
- Use embodied cognition and carnal hermeneutics to determine how James reinterprets prior Jewish wisdom or Greco-Roman ethical traditions and how intertextual associations shape embodied practices (Robbins's Intertexture Texture).
- Explore social dynamics (e.g., rich vs. poor) (Robbins's Social and Cultural Texture).
- Examine embodied movement or ritual logic within chiasms via Pelkey's typology.

Phase 3: Theological and Ethical Synthesis (Theological-Ethical Phase)

- Investigate how sacred authority is presented: sensorial, cognitive, or relational (Robbins's Ideological and Sacral textures).
- Discern ideological critiques and sacred inversions (e.g., low exalted, rich humbled) through chiasmic inversion.
- Assess how the reader is ethically formed by divine discourse that addresses the body and community (carnal hermeneutics).

This methodological framework does not seek to reduce James 1:1–27 to a single viewpoint. Instead, it affirms that form, cognition, flesh, power, and the sacred are intrinsically connected within the interpretative process. Robbins's socio-rhetorical approach provides the necessary flexibility and rigour to support this integrative hermeneutic. At the same time, the additional lenses ensure that rhetoric remains relevant, theology stays grounded, and ethics are not separated from flesh.

2.10 The course of the inquiry

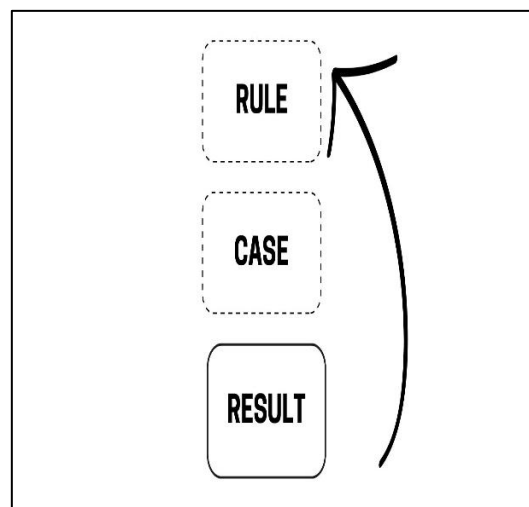
To engage with a multidimensional embodied rhetorical hermeneutic that centres on the various textures identified in James 1:1-27, the investigative approach adopted is abductive. An abductive course of investigation “enables us to formulate a general prediction, but with no warranty of a successful outcome, withal, abduction as a method of prognostication offers the only possible hope of regulating our future conduct rationally” (Eco and Sebeok, 1988:8–9).

This research adopts an abductive approach, proposing that a multidimensional, embodied rhetorical hermeneutic enables a more nuanced interpretation of ancient didactic texts, which often display rigid dualistic structures. At its core is the integration of chiasmus as a recursive mode of meaning-making that emphasises “fully lived, spatially embodied experience.” This perspective highlights the symbiotic interaction between opposites — the relationship between human nature and the lived experience of being human — and the feedback loops between self and other, cause and effect, and representation and the represented. Applied to the Epistle of James, this hypothesis is examined through a combined literary and socio-rhetorical methodology, allowing both form and embodied meaning to emerge in dialogue with the text.

An abductive investigation proceeds in a cyclical rather than linear manner, allowing continuous refinement of both outcomes and the hypotheses from which they originate (Eco, 1990:158–159).

Eco (1990:159) identifies three levels of abductive reasoning. At the first level, an unexpected result occurs, but an explanatory rule already exists and must be correctly identified as the most plausible. At the second level, the rule operates in a different domain and must be adapted to explain the current phenomenon. The third level involves developing a new interpretative rule where none existed before.

This research operates at Eco's third level of abduction, aiming to develop an interpretative framework — a multidimensional, embodied hermeneutic — for reading James 1:1–27. There is no guarantee that an embodied cognition approach will successfully challenge dyadic “either-or” logic and its negative counterpart, “neither-nor”, by proposing a concept of fully lived, spatially embodied experience. Similarly, there is no certainty that the proposed multidimensional hermeneutic will uncover the text's multi-layered textures. Therefore, this abductive inquiry ventures into uncharted interpretative territory, creating a new rule in response to a complex textual phenomenon. **Figure 2.3** illustrates the cyclical development of an abductive argument, with the solid line indicating verified data and the dotted line indicating tentative data introduced during the argumentation process.



Note: Solid line = verified data; dotted line = tentative data.

Figure 2.3: Cyclical development of an abductive argument

Source: Author's own illustration.

This study adopts an abductive research approach, employing a multidimensional embodied rhetorical hermeneutic to James 1:1–27. By engaging the body as an interpretative site, this method aims to uncover both dualities and subtle complexities within the passage. The approach combines literary and socio-rhetorical analysis, examining chiasmic structure, rhetorical design,

and embodied meaning. Insights obtained through this process are evaluated against the guiding hermeneutical hypothesis.

Since abductive inquiry is cyclical and generative, interpretation is regarded as an ongoing process rather than a quest for definitive answers. Findings are provisional and subject to verification, refinement, or falsification. This methodological approach requires critical self-reflection, transparency about assumptions, and accountability for interpretative choices. Its openness allows for multiple readings and promotes continued scholarly dialogue, rather than arriving at conclusions.

Having established the theoretical and methodological foundations of this study, the discussion now turns to an analysis of James 1:1–27, which serves as the primary textual framework for applying the multidimensional hermeneutic developed in the preceding chapter and from which the arguments of the subsequent chapters will proceed. Chapter 3 examines the intrinsic structure of James 1:1–27, thereby laying the groundwork for the research presented in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 3 THE INHERENT STRUCTURE OF JAMES 1:1–27

τὸ ὅλον οὐκ ἔστιν ἀπλῶς ἴσον τοῖς μορίοις, ἀλλὰ τι πλεόν.

The whole is not simply equal to the sum of its parts but is something more.

(Aristotle, Book H, 1045a.10)

3.1 Introduction

Contemporary scholars widely agree that James 1:1–27 introduces the main themes of the Epistle of James. Johnson (2000:157) and Wendland (2024) argue that the opening passage (1:2–27) outlines a set of interconnected key terms, including trials, faith, works, endurance, maturity, completeness, wisdom, prayer, and humility. Each of these principles of Christian character, or their opposites and complements, emerges in the subsequent paragraphs throughout the remainder of the Epistle of James. The rhetorical thrust of the text is strengthened by the “word-linkages” within it, which aid in creating unity. Johnson (2008:174) shows that *χαίρειν* is linked with *χαρὰν*. In James 1:3–4, the repetition of *ὑπομονήν* (1:3) and *ὑπομονή* (1:4); *κατεργάζομαι* (1:3) and *ἔργον* (1:4) connect the phrases. James 1:4a is also connected to James 1:4b through *τέλειον*, *τέλειός*, and *λειπόμενοι*. *λείπεται* connects James 1:4 and 1:5. The command *αἰτέτω* is repeated in James 1:5 and 1:6 as well as *διακρινόμενος*, which is found twice in James 1:6. The repetition of *πειρασμόν*, *πειραζόμενος*, *ἀπείραστός*, *πειράζει* and *πειράζεται* in James 1:14 connects James 1:12–14. *ἐπιθυμία* is repeated in James 1:15. James 1:19–20 is connected by *ὀργήν* and *ὀργή*, while *λόγον* and *λόγου* are repeated in James 1:21–22, and lastly 1:26–27 is connected by *θρησκὸς* and *θρησκεία*.

Most scholars agree that James 1:2–18 and James 1:19–27 constitute separate sections. However, commentators differ on the nature of these parts, their relationship, and their connection to the rest of the letter. It is recognised that James 1:1 serves as a typical letter inscription, including a sender, recipient, and greeting. The various views on the structure of James 1:2–27 are summarised as follows:

- Dibelius (1976:69–71, 108–109) denies any logical connection between sentences and units within the text. He finds it evident that James 1:2–18 represents a complete section centred on temptation. However, Dibelius treats James 1:19–27 as an isolated unit, asserting it is unrelated to the preceding and following passages.

- Bauckham (1999:72) warns against undermining the aphoristic nature of the material by trying to create linear sequences of thought and dividing the text into twelve distinct sections.⁴⁸ Other researchers organise the Epistle of James around broad themes, failing to recognise James 1:1–27 as a cohesive rhetorical unit (Kotzé, 1990:33–35; Laws, 1980; Pretorius, 1988:23–25).
- Others have observed a significant division regarding James 1:12, whether it forms part of a double introduction beginning in James 1:1, followed by James 1:2–12 (Davids, 1983:24–27; Reese, 1982; Crotty, 1992; Taylor and Guthrie, 2006; Watson, 2007:112–113; Burchard, 2000:12–13; Wendland, 2024), or whether James 1:2–12 is considered the letter's sole introduction (Von Lips, 1990: 412–424).
- Jackson-McCabe (2014:169) identifies James 1:12 and James 1:19 as key transition points in the text. He argues that James 1:2–12 and 1:13–18 represent two stages of a coherent discussion on the theme of temptation, while James 1:19–27 highlights the practical outcomes of this theme.
- Wolmarans (1994:52) identifies James 1:1–18 as the prologue of the Epistle of James, which can be divided into three sub-paragraphs: James 1:1; James 1:2–11; and James 1:12–18. In James 1:19, a new subject is introduced, shifting focus from various forms of testing to an exhortation for the hearer to listen to the word (1:19) and act upon it (1:22).

An interpretation of the text through a multidimensional embodied rhetorical lens seeks to establish unity. It examines the subtle differences between seemingly conflicting ideas, assuming that the text is deliberately and carefully organised. In this chapter, the analysis of James 1:1–27 will focus exclusively on the text's internal texture, including its syntactic patterns and structural elements. An initial progressive analysis (opening-middle-close) of the internal texture will be attempted. The "spelling eye" will be used for this analysis (Botha, 2018:7). This structural examination of James 1:1–27 will form the basis for the development of subsequent research chapters.

⁴⁸ Bauckham asserts that the text is divided into distinct short sections, only some of which comprise a single aphorism. Twelve sections are identified: (1) 2–4; (2) 5–8; (3) 9–11; (4) 12; (5) 13–15; (6) 16–17; (7) 18; (8) 19–20; (9) 21; (10) 22–25; (11) 26; (12) 27.

3.2 The structure of James 1:1–27

3.2.1 James 1:1

James 1:1 serves as the heading (inscriptio) at the start of a typical letter, which includes (a) the sender, (b) the address, and (c) a greeting. The identification of the sender is organised in a chiastic structure: Ἰάκωβος (A) θεοῦ (B) καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (B') δοῦλος (A'); (see **Figure 3.1**).

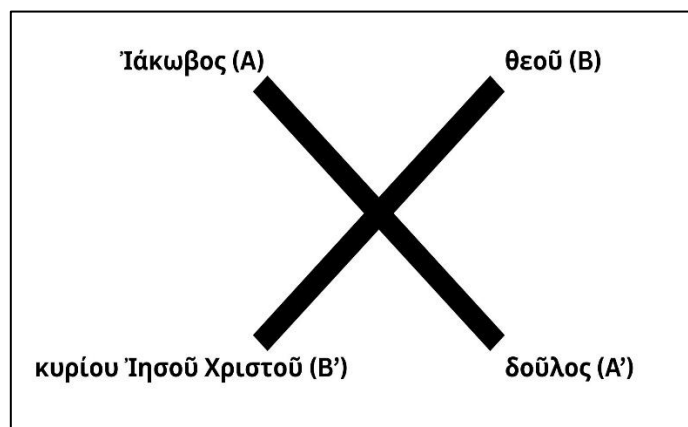


Figure 3.1: Chiastic structure of the sender in James 1:1

Source: Author's own illustration.

The address is designed to highlight a notable semantic contrast: ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς (A) VERSUS ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ (B) — (To) twelve tribes (wholeness) versus (in) the diaspora (disparity/partiality).

The greeting formula is of Hellenistic origin. It employs the verb χαίρειν as the greeting (present active infinitive of χαίρω – to rejoice). This verb connects with James 1:2, where the noun χαρά (πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἡγήσασθε – consider it pure joy) is used.

3.2.2 James 1:2–18

The first formal indication of a structured literary form in James 1:2-18 is the recurring direct address to “my brothers” (ἀδελφοί μου) found in verses 1:2, 16, and 1:19. This address typically signals the beginning of new sections within James (see also 2:1; 3:1; 4:11; 5:7), as seen in 1:2 where the core content of James’ letter to his audience is introduced (Bauckham, 1999:64; Cheung, 2003:71). Additionally, it often marks transitions or emphasises points within sections (2:5, 14; 3:10; and 5:7–20). There are compelling reasons to view 1:19 as the beginning of a

distinct literary unit. This section begins with the address “my beloved brothers” (ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί) and links to the preceding passage, a connection that will be further demonstrated.

The opening exhortation in James 1:2–4, addressing the reader with the heartfelt phrase “my brothers” (ἀδελφοί μου), frames every temptation and affliction (πειρασμοὺς ποικίλους) as profound tests of faith (τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως) that call for steadfast endurance (ὑπομονήν). The result of this perseverance is a perfect work (ὑπομονὴ ἔργον τέλειον – 1:4). Additionally, James 1:12 includes a blessing for those who remain steadfast through temptation and trials (μακάριος ἀνὴρ ὃς ὑπομένει πειρασμόν), resonating with the earlier theme stated in 1:2–4. This verbal echo reinforces the message of 1:2–4 and smoothly transitions the audience into the following verses. Thus, James 1:12 serves as a pivotal hinge, linking the insights of 1:2–11 with James 1:13–18 (Taylor and Guthrie, 2006:683–684; Penner, 1993:126–128). The *inclusio*⁴⁹ regarding temptation and affliction in 1:2–4 and 1:12 contrasts the failure to resist temptation stated in 1:13–15.

James 1:16–17 warns the “beloved brothers” about being “deceived” (μὴ πλανᾶσθε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί), particularly about the source of all good things and perfect gifts (πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον). According to the text, they come from a perfectly consistent and unchanging creator God (ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, παρ’ ᾧ οὐκ ἔστι παραλλαγή ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα). This warning stems from two interconnected points in 1:13–15: that this God is not associated with temptation, and that the trustworthy source of temptation is found within humans, namely ἐπιθυμία, their desires. Since ἐπιθυμία (desire) is linked with seduction that results in sin and death in 1:14–15, the audience is cautioned in 1:16 not to be misled about the origin of good things. Moreover, the assertion in 1:17 that the creator is consistent and unchangeable echoes the statement in 1:13 that God “cannot be tempted by evil nor does He tempt anyone” (ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἀπειραστός ἐστιν κακῶν, πειράζει δὲ αὐτὸς οὐδέν). The point at James 1:18 about the creator “bore us” further underscores the contrast. God’s will for humanity is expressed not in our experience of ἐπιθυμία but in the fact that he “bore us” through a word of truth (βουληθεὶς ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς λόγῳ ἀληθείας). The elaboration from 1:13–15 to 1:16–18 makes clear that the direct address to the “beloved brothers” (ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί) in 1:16 serves not to introduce a section division,

⁴⁹ *Inclusio* is a literary device where an author uses the same or similar words or phrases at both the beginning and the end (or near the end) of sections. This technique marks those sections as distinct movements in the discourse (Taylor and Guthrie, 2006:683).

but to emphasise the key point that the ultimate source of temptation, sin and death is not God, but rather human desire (ἐπιθυμία).

The theme of πειρασμός (temptation) that dominates James 1:13–18 also relates to 1:2–12. Jackson-McCabe (2014:167–169) argues that analysing verses 1:2–12 and 1:13–18 reveals a coherent thought process beyond mere repetition of catchwords. The introduction about managing temptation and affliction in 1:2–4 and 1:12 provides a balanced contrast to the failure to resist temptation in 1:13–15. In the passage, compliance with temptation is said to produce “sin” and lead ultimately to “death” (ἡ δὲ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα ἀποκύει θάνατον). In James 1:2–4 and 1:12, endurance of temptation is noted to produce a “perfect work” (ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ ἔργον τέλειον ἐχέτω) and eventually lead to the “crown of life” (τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς in 1:12). The two sections (1:2–12 and 1:13–15) present the two consequences of temptation — dealing with it or not resisting — in directly contrasting sequences.

Both sections emphasise how God’s providence shapes the audience's circumstances. In 1:13–18, the issue of temptation stems from the tempting nature of ἐπιθυμία and overcoming temptation involves not being “deceived” about the reliable source of any good (1:18). Likewise, the statement in 1:2–4 that someone who endures temptation will “lack nothing” (ὁλόκληροι ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι in 1:4) reminds the audience of the completeness that comes with endurance. This is followed in 1:5–8 by a discussion about who should and who should not expect to receive “the God who gives to all simply and unbegrudgingly” (μὴ ὀνειδίζοντος καὶ δοθήσεται αὐτῷ in 1:5). Jackson-McCabe (2014:167–169) states that the two themes, namely πειρασμός and providence, are interconnected and shed light on the flow of thought within the verses between 1:2–4 and 1:12. Wisdom is essential for enduring temptation (1:5). God is the ultimate source of wisdom (εἰ δὲ τις ὑμῶν λείπεται σοφίας, αἰτεῖτω παρὰ τοῦ διδόντος θεοῦ πᾶσιν ἀπλῶς καὶ μὴ ὀνειδίζοντος καὶ δοθήσεται αὐτῷ).

Asking God for help will be ineffective without sufficient faith (1:6). A “double-minded man” (ἀνὴρ δίψυχος in 1:8) wavers between death and life and should not expect anything from God (1:7–8). The following passage encourages “the humble brother” (ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινὸς in 1:9) to take pride (καυχᾶσθω) in his forthcoming exaltation (ἐν τῷ ὕψει αὐτοῦ). Conversely, “the rich one” (πλούσιος in 1:10) is urged to anticipate his “humiliation” (ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει αὐτοῦ). This contrast emphasises the themes of trials (πειρασμός) and divine provision. Although “the rich” may seem successful in their pursuits, the text affirms that this success is only temporary. The “humble brother” is

encouraged to find reassurance in the idea that a reversal will occur: the wealthy will be brought low, while he, having been tested and proven through resisting temptation, will be "exalted" and rewarded with a "crown of life" (1:11–12). The contrast between these themes is underscored in James 1:9–10 through a chiastic structure: καυχάσθω (A) δὲ ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινὸς ἐν τῷ ὕψει αὐτοῦ (B), ὁ δὲ πλούσιος ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει αὐτοῦ (B'), with the verb κλαίετω (A') implied as the opposite of καυχάσθω (see **Figure 3.2**).

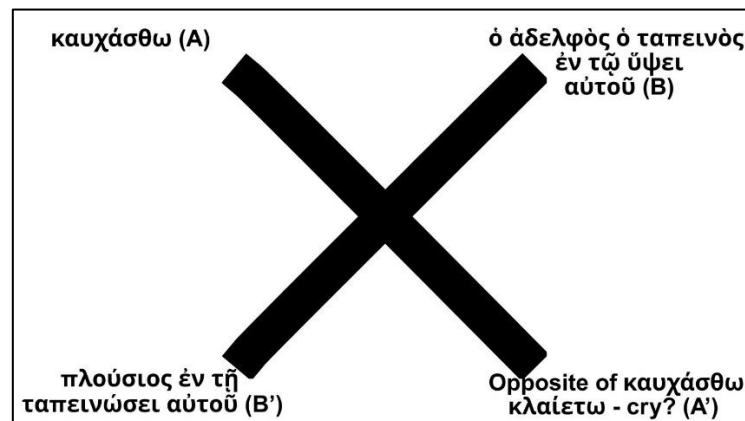


Figure 3.2: Chiastic structure of 1:9–10 highlighting verb contrast

Source: Author's own illustration

In summary, James 1:2–18 thoroughly addresses temptation in two parts. James 1:2–11 highlights the significance and benefits of persevering in the face of temptations, which test one's faith in God's provision. Perseverance in the face of temptation is essential for a fulfilling *life*. James 1:9–11 discusses the unfortunate fate of those who are rich but fail to endure temptations amidst material abundance. While the wealthy may appear to lack nothing and live free from temptation or affliction, their ultimate destiny is *death*. The themes of life and death emphasise how individuals respond to temptation and affliction. James 1:12 serves as a pivotal verse, connecting sections 1:2–11 and 1:13–18. It parallels the discussion of resisting temptation in James 1:2–4 and contrasts it with the consequences of failing to resist in James 1:13–18. This verse also introduces the themes explored in James 1:13–18, which focus on the fate of those who succumb to temptation.

In contrast, James 1:16–18 highlights that God is not involved in temptation; instead, human desire (ἐπιθυμία) is the source of temptation. After linking ἐπιθυμία to the process of seduction, which leads to sin and ultimately death in verses 13–15, the audience is warned in verse 16 not to be misled about the origin of good gifts. God is the dependable source of life and all that is

good. The structure of James 1:2–18 reveals a classic chiasmus, where **AB** and **BA** serve as contrasting pairs (see Figure 3.3).

- Temptation/affliction leads to **LIFE** (**A** [James 1:2–8]).
- The absence of temptation/affliction (in the life of the rich) leads to **DEATH** (**B** [James 1:9–11]).
- Succumbing to temptation leads to **DEATH** (**B'** [James 1:13–15]).
- Resisting temptation leads to **LIFE** (**A'** [James 1:16–18]).

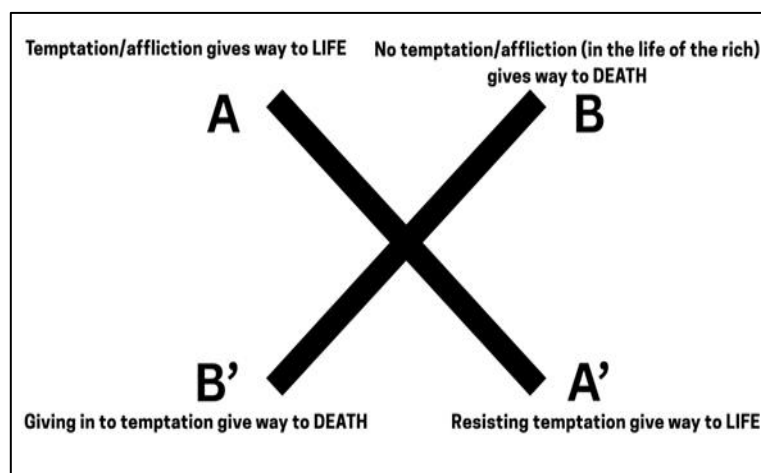


Figure 3.3: Chiastic structure of James 1:2–18

Source: Author's own illustration

This chiasmus presents a paradox because temptation and affliction are usually associated with death, yet neither is connected to a fulfilling life. To live well, one must face temptation and avoid the promise of a dull, meaningless existence (Wolmarans, 1994:56).⁵⁰ The table below provides a schematic overview of the chiastic structure of James 1:1–18, illustrating the passage's organisation around a balanced theological argument. The opening unit (1:2–11) presents temptation and affliction as formative experiences that, when endured, yield maturity and life. This theme is mirrored in the closing unit (1:13–18)⁵¹ where resisting temptation likewise leads to life.

⁵⁰ To date, no researcher on James, except for Wolmarans (1994), has identified the chiasmic thematic structure of James 1:2-18. Wolmarans acknowledges the chiasmic structure but does not explore it further.

⁵¹ Wolmarans (1994:56) proposes a similar structure for James 1:1–18 but does not regard 1:2–4 and 1:12 as an *inclusio*. He does not consider 1:12 a hinge verse that reintroduces the theme of temptation found in

In this structure, the outer sections (A/A') highlight endurance and faithful resistance as responses that produce life, while the inner sections (B/B') introduce a contrast by tracing the progression from temptation to desire, sin, and ultimately death. Centrally, verse 1:12 serves as a theological hinge, pronouncing blessing on those who endure trials and uniting the two halves into a coherent moral and theological vision that links perseverance, divine generosity, and the promise of life.

Table 3.1: Chiastic structure of James 1:1–18 (temptation, endurance, death, and life)

Section	Verses	Theme	Chiastic Marker
1.	1:1	Inscriptio	
2.	1:2–11	Temptation / Affliction	A
2.1	1:2–8	Temptations lead to life	
2.1.1	1:2–4	Temptation/affliction leads to no shortcomings (teleios)	
2.1.2	1:5–8	God provides wisdom in temptation/affliction	
2.1.3	1:9–11	No temptation/affliction results in death	B
3	1:12	Blessing on the one who endures and is “proved”; hinge verse linking 1:2–11 with 1:13–18	Central Pivot
4	1:13–18	Temptation	
4.1	1:13–15	Giving in to temptation results in death	B'
4.2	1:16–18	Resisting temptation gives way to life	A'

Source: Author's synthesis

3.2.3 James 1:19–27

James 1:19 starts with a direct call to "beloved brothers" (Ἰστε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί) and provides a threefold warning to be "quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger" (ταχύς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι, βραδὺς εἰς τὸ λαλῆσαι, βραδὺς εἰς τὸ ὀργῆν). Since James 2:1 marks the start of a new argumentative section, it is important to interpret 1:19–27 within its surrounding context. The internal structure of this section is clear. According to Jackson-McCabe (2014:169–170), verses 1:19–27 are organised around a three-part admonition introduced in verse 1:19, highlighting the phrases “quick to hear,” “slow to speak,” and “slow to anger.” The last item in this list, “slow to

verses 1:13–15. The division of James 1:2–18 is retained; however, for the purposes of the chapter structure in this study, verse 1:12 is discussed together with verses 1:13–15.

anger," is emphasised first in verses 1:20–21. This part begins with the reminder that “human anger does not produce God’s righteousness” (ὀργὴ γὰρ ἀνδρὸς δικαιοσύνην θεοῦ οὐκ ἐργάζεται). It then urges the audience to cast off all “filthy excess” (διὸ ἀποθέμενοι πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν καὶ περισσεῖαν κακίας) with humility (ἐν πραΰτητι), so they can receive the “implanted word” (τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον). This appeal encourages them to cultivate a spirit of meekness and to embrace and embody the teachings that may guide them towards righteousness.

The admonition to be “quick to hear” (ταχὺς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι) catalyses the exhortation found in James 1:22–25, which emphasises not just the act of “hearing” the *logos*, but the necessity of “doing” it (γίνεσθε δὲ ποιηταὶ λόγου καὶ μὴ μόνον ἀκροαταὶ παραλογιζόμενοι ἑαυτούς). The *logos* is intricately connected to the concept of a “perfect law of freedom,” as articulated in James 1:25 (ὁ δὲ παρακύψας εἰς νόμον τέλειον τὸν τῆς ἐλευθερίας). This passage transitions from a cautionary note regarding the self-deception of mere “hearing” to a call for “doing” the *logos*. A person who is a doer of the word will be blessed (μακάριος) in what he does (ἀλλὰ ποιητῆς ἔργου, οὗτος μακάριος ἐν τῇ ποιήσει αὐτοῦ ἔσται [but he who is a doer of the work, blessed will he be in what he does]). The theme of hearing and doing resonates powerfully in James 1:23–24 through the vivid imagery of an individual who gazes upon his reflection in a mirror, only to walk away and forget his appearance (οὗτος ἔοικεν ἀνδρὶ κατανοοῦντι τὸ πρόσωπον τῆς γενέσεως αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ· κατενόησεν γὰρ ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀπελήλυθεν καὶ εὐθέως ἐπελάθετο ὅποιος ᾗ [he is like someone who sees his image in a mirror, walks away, and immediately forgets how he was]). This illustration underscores the importance of not just passive listening but also actively embodying the *logos* encountered, ensuring it takes root in the audience’s lives and bears fruit in their actions.

According to Spencer (2020:101), James 1:26–27 emphasises both the internal and external aspects of a person through a clear illustration. The passage begins by highlighting the importance of the tongue. From an inward perspective, a person should not have a deceitful heart (1:26), as this can lead to misusing the tongue. The phrase “slow to speak” in James 1:26 acts as a warning against the risks of self-deception (ἀπατῶν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ). It cautions those who may mistakenly believe they possess genuine piety (θρησκὸς) while neglecting to “bridle the tongue” (μὴ χαλιναγωγῶν γλῶσσαν αὐτοῦ). In James 1:26, the author explains what not to do, whereas in 1:27, he provides guidance on what to do (De Beer and Jordaan, 2021:31). The term *θρησκεία* appears at both the beginning of James 1:27 and the end of 1:26, showcasing the

rhetorical device known as *anadiplosis*⁵². The theme of genuine piety (θρησκεία) culminates in James 1:27, where a definition of piety accepted by God is provided: "pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this..." ([θρησκεία καθαρὰ καὶ ἀμίαντος παρὰ τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὕτη ἐστίν]). From an external perspective, individuals are called to care for those who are most vulnerable, specifically orphans and widows, as stated: "visiting the orphans and widows in their affliction" (ἐπισκέπτεσθαι ὀρφανοὺς καὶ χήρας ἐν τῇ θλίψει αὐτῶν). The author concludes with a warning to stay alert to external influences, urging the audience to "keep yourselves untainted by the world" (ἄσπιλον ἑαυτὸν τηρεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου).

James 1:19–27 reflects a chiastic-like⁵³ structure of James, illustrating mirrored themes and emphasising the central focus on being doers of the word. This layout reflects a *thematic symmetry*:

A. (verses 19–20)

└ Be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger (Implication of receiving the word of truth implicated in verse 18 [βουληθεὶς ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς λόγῳ ἀληθείας εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχὴν τινα τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων]).

→ Human anger does not produce God's righteousness (Elaboration on the Third Admonition [βραδὺς εἰς ὀργήν]).

B. (verses 21) – Receive the word humbly.

└ Put away moral filth; receive the implanted word which can save.

C. (verses 22–25) – Central Focus: Be doers, not just hearers (Elaboration on the First Admonition: Be Quick to Hear [ταχὺς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι]).

└ Hearers who do not act deceive themselves.

└ Doers are blessed in what they do.

└ Analogy: mirror vs. action.

B'. (verse 26) – Attention to the inward person – What not to do (Elaboration on the Second Admonition: Be Slow to Speak [βραδὺς εἰς τὸ λαλῆσαι]).

└ Uncontrolled tongue is self-deception and worthless religion.

A'. (verse 27) – True religion: action and purity.

└ What to do: A person should care for the orphans and widows (Attention to the outward person).

└ Keep oneself unstained from the world.

What not to do: A person should be untainted by the world (Attention to the outward person).

⁵² Anadiplosis is a rhetorical device where the last word or phrase of one clause or sentence is repeated at the start of the next. It creates a smooth and impactful link between ideas, often adding rhythm, emphasis, or logical flow. It repeats a key term to highlight a connection or to signal a shift in thought (Jordaan, 2014:11). It originates from the Greek ἀναδίπλωσις, meaning "doubling back."

⁵³ Within novels and epic poems, chiasmus may emerge as a ring structure, typified by a balanced pattern of repetitive topics or episodes in the plot (Grausso, 2020:9). Although any passage reads linearly, from beginning to end, it can also integrate another movement: from the exterior to the interior, from the extremities toward the centre (Brouwer, 2018:105-106). The text's essential message is found at its centre.

The structure is summarised thus:

A ↔ A': The way one experiences anger and reacts to the implanted word (1:18). (**A**) is reflected in moral conduct and social care (**A'**) – both signify outward conduct.

B ↔ B': Receiving the word with humility (**B**) corresponds with controlling one's tongue (**B'**) - both signify inward transformation.

C: At the centre, obedience is emphasised as the key pivot — listening, receiving, and doing.

3.3 The unity between James 1:2–18 and James 1:19–27

James 1:19–27, although clearly a distinct section, maintains meaningful links to the preceding material. Jackson-McCabe (2014:170) observes that it "pushes the text forward." After covering the broad issues of temptation and affliction (1:2–11) and temptation through desire (1:13–15), James 1:19–27 turns to the practical implications of the audience's rebirth through the word of truth. This rebirth indicates that they are the first fruits of God's creation (βουληθεῖς ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς λόγῳ ἀληθείας εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχὴν τινα τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων). To demonstrate what it means to live righteously concerning the word of truth, the author highlights the proverbial principles of being "quick to hear" (ταχύς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι), "slow to speak" (βραδὺς εἰς τὸ λαλῆσαι), and "slow to anger" (βραδὺς εἰς ὀργήν). These principles are vital for performing the works (ἔργα) linked to the "implanted word that can save" (τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον τὸν δυνάμενον σῶσαι τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν in 1:21), exercising mastery over one's tongue, and demonstrating a meek disposition. These themes are further explored in the subsequent sections of the letter (2:1–26; 3:1–12; 3:13–14; 3:10).

James 1:13–15 also shares unique parallels with James 1:19–21. These are associated with the term κακῶν in 1:13 and κακίας in 1:21, as well as concepts of "speaking" (λεγέτω, 1:13; λαλῆσαι, 1:19). Further, both units (1:13 and 1:19–20) begin with a third-person imperative, the exhortations being followed by explanatory clauses (γὰρ...) ⁵⁴. Both contrast God's character and that of human beings. According to James 1:13–15, God cannot be tempted, whereas people are

⁵⁴ Μηδεὶς πειραζόμενος λεγέτω ὅτι ἀπὸ θεοῦ πειράζομαι· ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἀπείραστός ἐστιν κακῶν, πειράζει δὲ αὐτὸς οὐδέν· (James 1:13). ἔστω δὲ πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ταχύς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι, βραδὺς εἰς τὸ λαλῆσαι, βραδὺς εἰς ὀργήν· ὀργὴ γὰρ ἄνδρὸς δικαιοσύνην θεοῦ οὐκ ἐργάζεται (James 19b–20).

lured by their desires (ἐπιθυμία). In 1:19–21, the "anger of human beings" contrasts with God's righteousness. Therefore, believers should accept the implanted and saving word (1:21).

Building on several key themes from earlier sections, the connection between James 1:2–18 and 1:19–27 is further emphasised. The relationship between the eschatological "blessedness" (οὗτος μακάριος ἐν τῇ ποιήσει αὐτοῦ ἔσται – he will be blessed in what he does) and the concept of ἔργα mentioned in 1:25 is crucial for understanding temptation in 1:2–18, especially in 1:2–4 and 1:12. Taylor and Guthrie (2006:164) identify an *inclusio* in 1:12 and 1:25 centred on the themes of "blessing" (μακάριος), "endurance" (ὑπομονή), as well as "having become" (γενόμενος) and the recurring forms of αὐτός. The repetition of ἔργον and τέλειον in 1:4 and 1:25 maintains a connection between these passages and the initial *inclusio* (1:2–4 and 1:12). The lexical similarities among these three sections (1:2–4, 1:12, and 1:25) reveal a balanced structure and cohesive theme in the opening chapter. The ideas in 1:2–4, 1:12, and 1:25 highlight the notion of "blessing" for those enduring temptation or hardship. This perseverance is demonstrated through obedience and reverence for God. All three verses have an eschatological focus: trials are seen as leading to their perfecting (1:2–4); those who love God will receive the crown of life (1:12); and those who persist in obedience will be blessed (1:25). James 1:12 serves as the central point due to these shared elements, acting as a transitional and unifying element between the two parts of the introduction (see Table 3.2) and highlighting the double *inclusio* (Taylor & Guthrie, 2006:164).

Table 3.2: Double *inclusio* in the introduction of James 1

James 1:2-4	James 1:12	James 1:25
πάσαν χαράν	μακάριος	μακάριος
πειρασμοίς	πειρασμόν	
ὑπομονήν/ὑπομονή	υπομένει	παραμείνας
δοκίμιον	δόκιμος	
	γενόμενος	Γενόμενος
τέλειοι καί ολόκληροι	τον στέφανον της ζωής	
ἔργον τέλειον		τέλειον... ἔργου
	αὐτόν	αὐτοῦ

Source: Adapted from Taylor & Guthrie (2006:164).

Following an inclusion, closed by verse 1:25, James 1:26–27 highlights practical expressions of religion by focusing on two main themes: controlling one's speech and showing compassion by

helping orphans and widows. Additionally, it emphasises the importance of maintaining purity in the world. These themes are significant within the broader context of the Epistle of James.

A provisional structure of James 1:1–27, based solely on the text's inner texture, including syntactical patterns and structural elements, is summarised in **Figure 3.4**:

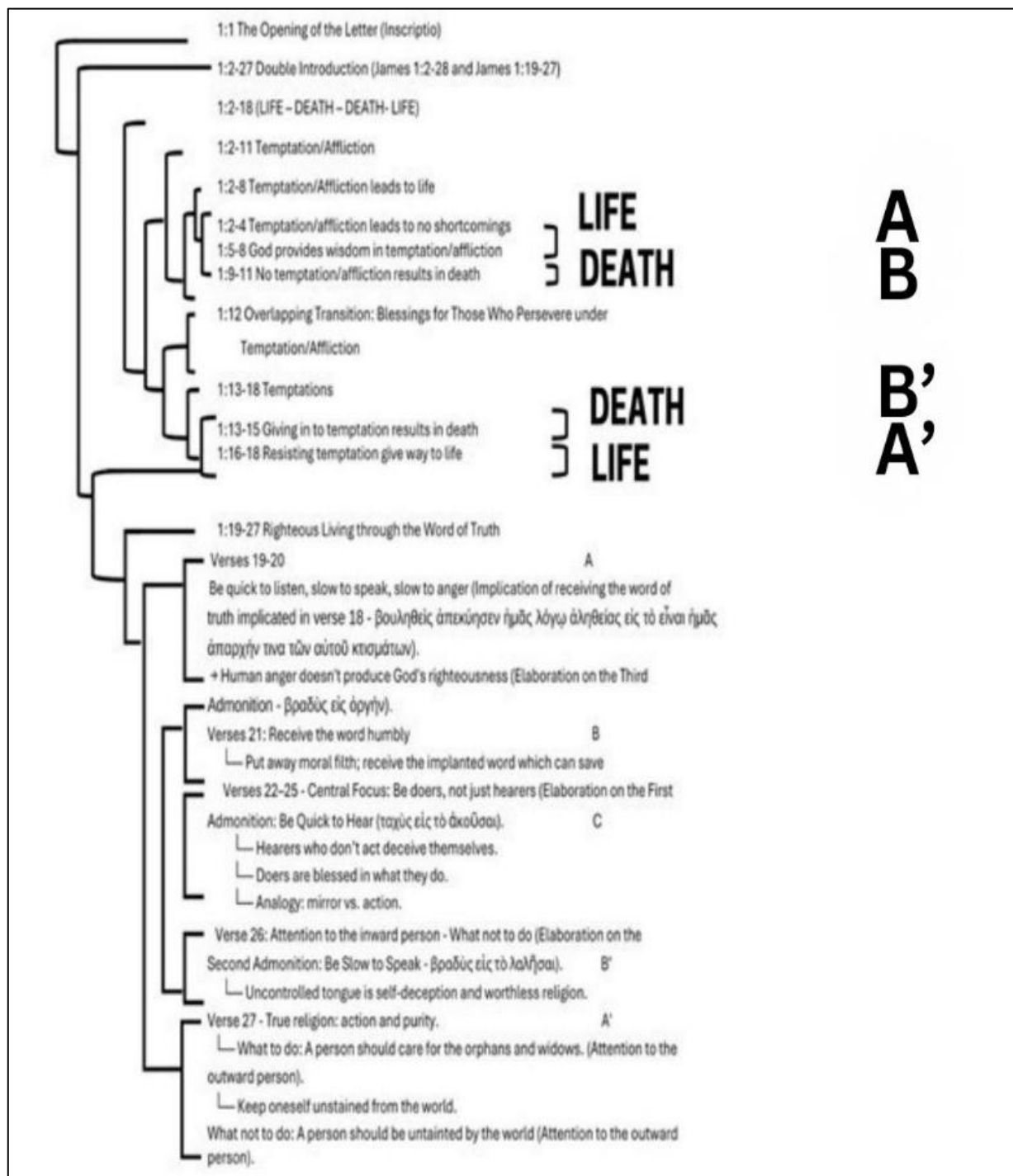


Figure 3.4: A provisional structure of James 1:1–27

Source: Author's own illustration.

3.4 Research chapters

The analysis of the structure of James 1:1–27 underpins the subsequent chapters of this thesis. **Chapter 4** examines James 1:1, the inscription of James' epistle. **Chapter 5** discusses James 1:2–4, explaining how affliction results in no shortcomings. **Chapter 6** analyses James 1:5–8, illustrating that God provides wisdom in times of trial. **Chapter 7** covers James 1:9–11, emphasising that no affliction leads to death. **Chapter 8** explores James 1:12–15. James 1:12, which pronounces a blessing upon those who persevere under temptation or affliction, serves as a transitional verse between James 1:2–11 and 1:13–15. In this study, it is interpreted alongside James 1:13–15. **Chapter 9** focuses on James 1:16–18, highlighting righteous living through the word of God. **Chapter 10** reflects on James 1:19–27, a pivotal exhortative unit in the Epistle of James. While verse 1:19 introduces a threefold admonition — being quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger — this chapter examines how these imperatives are unfolded and embodied across the passage, revealing their central role in James's integrated vision of faithful hearing, speech, and action.

Finally, **Chapter 11** synthesises the preceding analyses into dialogue by proposing a multidimensional, embodied rhetorical perspective on the Epistle of James. Drawing on insights from embodied cognition, carnal hermeneutics, chiasmus typologies, and Robbins's socio-rhetorical textures, the chapter develops an interpretative model that accounts for the complex interplay of bodily, rhetorical, structural, and social dynamics within the text. In this way, the chapter advances the study's primary aim: to move beyond reductive either–or dualisms and to establish a comprehensive hermeneutical framework for interpreting James.

Chapter 4 provides an analysis of James 1:1, focusing on the sender's identity, the intended recipients, and the nature of the greeting.

CHAPTER 4 THE SENDER, ADDRESSEES AND SALUTATION (JAMES 1:1)

The embodied mind is not some disembodied computer. The very structure of reason itself comes from the details of our embodiment. Reason is not universal in the transcendent sense; rather, it is shaped by the body, and so is mostly unconscious, metaphorical, and tied to emotion.

(Lakoff and Johnson 1999:4)

τιμῆς ἠγοράσθητε· μὴ γίνεσθε δοῦλοι ἀνθρώπων

"You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings."

(1 Corinthians 7:23)

4.1 Introduction: surface remarks

The greeting formula in James 1:1 is carefully constructed. Wolmarans (1994:60) notes that the nominal part of the opening sentence (Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος) identifies the sender, while the verbal part⁵⁵ (ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορά), referring to the addressees, consists of precisely the same number of syllables, namely, fifteen. This rhetorical figure, *isokolon*,⁵⁶ places the sender and addressees on an equal footing. The inscription thus implies a sender, addressees, and a greeting.⁵⁷ Cheung and Yu (2019:87–98)⁵⁸ identify James

⁵⁵ According to Blass, Debrunner and Funk (1961 §389), ellipses of verbs may appear, for instance, "the repetition of 'he said' can be omitted as superfluous and cumbersome in reports of conversations."

⁵⁶ The rhetorical device *isokolon* refers to the use of clauses or phrases that are grammatically parallel and approximately equal in length or structure. It is a subcategory of parallelism (Blass, Debrunner and Funk, 1961 §458–496; Jordaan, 2014:171).

⁵⁷ The epistolary classification of James as a letter is debated due to the absence of a formal letter ending, which typically includes at least a farewell wish, a health wish, secondary greetings, and an autograph (Cheung and Yu, 2019:88). Nonetheless, the letter opening of James is recognisable, consisting of a prescript (1:1) and a prologue (1:2-18). The prescript provides information regarding the sender and the addressee of the letter. James opens with the customary Greek formula of address: the sender and the recipient. The use of the salutation *χαίρειν* as the opening formula aligns with the common convention of the Greek letter (2 Maccabees 1:10; Acts 15:23, 23:26).

⁵⁸ Scholars, such as Jackson-McCabe (1996), Allison (2013) and Vlachos (2013), identified the Epistle of James as belonging to the genre of Jewish diaspora letters. Diaspora letters are didactic letters sent by authoritative leaders in religious centres (such as Jerusalem) to communities in the Jewish diaspora. These diaspora letters share standard features, including composition in Greek, strong didactic or paraenetic elements, pronounced prophetic features, messages of consolation and encouragement during challenging circumstances, an appeal to God's generosity and mercy, the hope and promise of a divinely wrought salvation, and the judgment of the unrighteous. James, however, also exhibits characteristics in accord with Jewish wisdom writings (Cheung and Yu, 2019:91–98).

as a diaspora letter. The function of such letters is to guide diaspora communities living away from the land of Israel to remain loyal to the Lord of the covenant and to strive for the unity of God's people. It has been observed that letter literature is more closely connected to speech than to narrative literature, as the letter serves as a stand-in for the writer's physical presence (Dormeyer, 2004:59). This concept is encapsulated in the well-known paradox of "absent (ἀπὼν) – present (παρὼν)": "ἐγὼ μὲν γάρ, ἀπὼν τῷ σώματι παρὼν δὲ τῷ πνεύματι (For though I am absent in body, I am present in spirit" [1 Corinthians 5:3]).

Recognising that letter writing indicates the absence of physical presence (ἀπὼν), the sender must find ways to compensate for this absence and establish a sense of presence (παρὼν). Therefore, a multidimensional hermeneutic focus on how the sender conveys his bodily existence to persuade the audience of his presence, even if only in spirit. The act of letter writing alone implies a gap or distance between "your body over there as flesh and my body here as flesh" (Kearney, 2015:54). Total integration is impossible. Within this gap, hermeneutic mediation is at work. Treanor (2015:73) states, "Where there is a gap, there is a surplus: something more to be understood. The movement or transition back and forth across these gaps constitutes the work of hermeneutics."

This chapter examines how the author creates a sense of presence and establishes a connection with the recipients. How does the author bridge the gap between himself and his audience – "your body over there as flesh and my body here as flesh"? This research question is crucial, since the author's embodiment, the presentation of his flesh, becomes essential to interpreting and understanding the flesh of the text.⁵⁹ The author also personifies his audience. In what ways does he give substance to the recipients? To this day, no research on James has approached the epistolary introduction from this perspective, making this approach a unique contribution to the field. This investigation explores the nuances of the text by focusing on the author's introduction, the portrayal of the recipients, and the greeting's structure.

⁵⁹ A multidimensional hermeneutic does not aim to uncover the so-called "intention of the author", thereby revealing his significant voice. Kristeva (1980:65) described a literary text as a dynamic concept, focusing on relations in analysis rather than on static structures and products. "The literary word is an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings. Each word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read. Any text is a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another..." Texts ultimately mirror other texts, and the author, as text, serves as a conduit for these intersections. Considering that an embodied cognition perspective, informed by carnal hermeneutics, acknowledges "flesh" as the physical medium for interpreting the world and vice versa, examining how an author portrays him/herself will offer a viewpoint through which the literal text can be understood.

4.2 The embodiment of the author

4.2.1 The structure of the author's introduction — an exploration of the inner texture

The identification of the author unfolds in an arranged chiastic structure: Ἰάκωβος (A) θεοῦ (B) καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (B') δοῦλος (A') (see **Figure 4.1**).

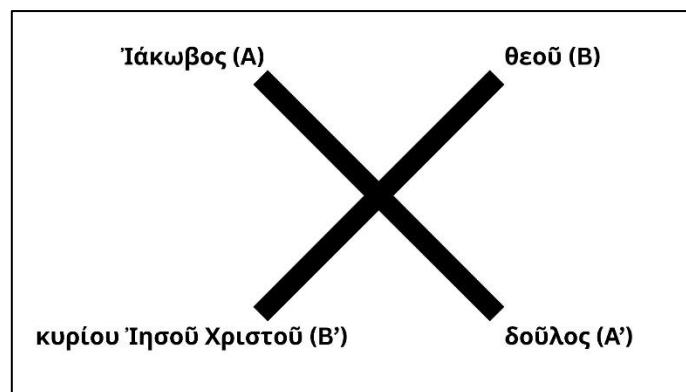


Figure 4.1: Chiastic structure of the author identification in James 1:1

Source: Author's own illustration.

James's introduction is not widely recognised as a chiasmus. A chiasmus is typically described as a syntactic-rhetorical device that involves reordering elements in a sentence to create an A-B-B-A pattern. A classic example of chiasmus is the axiom "Winners never quit, and quitters never win" (Grausso, 2020:1). Chiasmus concerns the linguistic relationship among opposites, interacting conditions, and reversibility. The chiasmus presented by the sender of James to identify himself does not showcase a traditional opposite, since James (Ἰάκωβος, the **A**-part of the chiasmus) is not the opposite of slave (δοῦλος, the **A'**-part of the chiasmus), and God (θεός, the **B**-part of the chiasmus) is not the opposite of Lord Jesus (κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, the **B'**-part of the chiasmus). Nonetheless, a relationship is implied between A and A' and B and B'. Chiasmus is characterised by an "X" structure that presents two possible arrangements of elements A and B: AB and BA. This arrangement can serve as a straightforward means of comparing the two or of expressing the harmonious or disharmonious dynamics between elements A and B.

Grausso (2020:29–40) identifies eight types of chiasmi, one of which is classified as the multiple-effect type. This form features A and B elements that mutually influence or transform one another. To be recognised as this type, there must be bidirectional activity or interaction among the components involved. It is like Pelkey's argyle-and-diamond, which represents perspectives or entities that interact (Pelkey, 2017:193–225). Grausso (2020:51–52) states: "Chiasmus is a

powerful instrument of argumentation, as the X structure lends an opportunity to consider two arrangements AB and BA side by side." Exploring this relationship is important because it suggests an interaction between the components.

The introduction demonstrates a multiple-effect chiasmus, prompting an examination of the relationship between its A- and B-components.

4.2.2 The interrelation of the A and B parts of the implied chiasmus

The relationship between the A and B components of the multiple-effect chiasmus is analysed with respect to both their semantic and pragmatic dimensions. The semantic analysis investigates the relationship between these elements and the realities they signify, exploring how meaning is generated and apprehended through signs and their referents. The pragmatic analysis, by contrast, focuses on the relationship between signs and their users, highlighting the role of context, intention, and interaction in shaping interpretation and significance. In this integrative process, both a "listening ear" and a "spelling eye" are employed (Botha, 2018:1–18).

The analysis proceeds through the following interconnected questions:

- What is the semantic reference of the name Ἰάκωβος? This question is addressed through an examination of the text's intertexture.
- The semantic reference of θεός and κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, as well as the construction of their relationship, are central concerns. This inquiry engages both the intertextual and ideological dimensions of the text. Questions one and two align with phase 1, the textual-rhetorical phase, of the multidimensional hermeneutic employed in this thesis, which emphasises the text's structural and rhetorical features.
- What is the semantic reference of δοῦλος? Here, the analysis draws on the text's social and cultural textures. In addition, the question arises whether being described as a δοῦλος κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ should be understood as a metaphor or an appellation. This issue marks the beginning of phase 2, the embodied cognition stage of the investigation, which emphasises embodied and socio-cultural engagement and is further elaborated alongside the following question.

- How should the interaction between the A and B elements be described, and what is the significance of the chiasmus employed? This question analyses the typology of the chiasmus and its presumed rhetorical and practical effect on the audience.

These questions are subsequently addressed within the proposed multidimensional hermeneutic, which integrates semantic, pragmatic, embodied, and rhetorical perspectives.

4.2.2.1 Phase 1: structural and rhetorical mapping (textual-rhetorical phase)

In this section, the semantic reference of the name Ἰάκωβος is examined through an analysis of the text's intertexture and the semantic references of θεός and κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, together with the construction of the relationship between these terms, constitute central concerns of the discussion.

4.2.2.1.1 The semantic reference of Ἰάκωβος – exploring the intertexture of the text

Much has been discussed regarding the designation of the name Ἰάκωβος.⁶⁰ The prevailing view of authorship varies, with some asserting that it is an early letter written by James the Just, Jesus's half-brother.⁶¹ In contrast, others contend that it is a pseudepigraphical work attributed to him.⁶² This study agrees with scholars who argue that James was probably written by a pseudonymous author by the end of the 1st century CE.⁶³ This is due to the difficulties in establishing the authorship and date of biblical texts, with determining the authorship and dating of James being even more intricate. Although Johnson (2000:167) advocates for an earlier date and posits that the author of the epistle was an original and compelling witness, I am content with his words: "Finally, then, it is the voice of the composition with which we have to do. It may or may not come

⁶⁰ Ἰάκωβος is the nominative absolute, used with introductory material that is not part of a complete sentence, such as titles, headings, salutations, and addresses (Adam, 2013:1).

⁶¹ Kistemaker (1986:28); Kotze (1990:137); Martin (1988: lxvii); Pretorius (1988:31); Du Toit (2020:300–30).

⁶² Dibelius and Greeven (1976:65); Laws (1980:41); Ropes (1968:49); Wolmarans (1994:60–62); Allison (2015:1–9); Johnson (2000:166–167); Mongstad-Kvammen (2013:19–27) and Visser (2022:72–73).

⁶³ Lockett (2019:253–271) offers a detailed discussion of the reception history of James' epistle, including literary comparisons to 1 Peter, 1 Clement, and the Shepherd of Hermas. These similarities in themes and language are regarded as evidence of shared Christian traditions used independently, suggesting early common traditions, but they do not necessarily establish an early date before 62 CE or that James the Just is the actual author of the Epistle of James.

from James of Jerusalem.” In this thesis, the precise authorship of the Epistle of James is not decisive; what matters is the significance of the reference to Ἰάκωβος for a multidimensional reading of the text.

Allison (2013:120) suggests that the name Ἰάκωβος was familiar in the 1st century CE, and therefore the author did not need to elaborate beyond simply using the name. Ἰάκωβος is associated with Jesus's half-brother but is also linked to the biblical figure Jacob, the patriarch of the twelve tribes of Israel. The addressees, referred to as the “twelve tribes in the diaspora” (ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ), underscore this assertion. The prophets view Jacob as the representative of Israel, the father of the twelve tribes, and a servant of God (for example, Isaiah 41:8 [LXX])⁶⁴. The name James (Ἰάκωβος) lends authority to the text by employing the designation that connects it to the patriarch Jacob, who imparts wisdom and instructions to the twelve sons in Genesis 49 (Allison, 2013:120). The intertextual texture reveals the implied relationship between the terms Ἰάκωβος, θεός and δοῦλος. The Old Testament Jacob is the implied father of the twelve tribes, a servant of God, and possesses the authority to impart wisdom as Jacob did to his twelve sons.⁶⁵

However, Ἰάκωβος is also connected to Jesus's half-brother. Since the Epistle of James was most likely written by a pseudonymous author at the end of the 1st century CE, the legends surrounding James, the half-brother of Jesus and the first bishop of Jerusalem, particularly those concerning his martyrdom, provide insights into how the author conveys his authority. Josephus makes the earliest reference to the martyrdom of James in *Jewish Antiquities* 20.9.1, written around 93–94 CE, which briefly mentions James's execution by stoning in 62 CE, instigated by the high priest Ananus⁶⁶. Hegesippus (circa 180 CE), quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea in *Historia Ecclesiastica*

⁶⁴ σὺ δὲ Ἰσραὴλ παῖς μου Ἰακώβ ὃν ἐξελεξάμην σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ ὃν ἠγάπησα – But you, Israel, are my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. This verse emphasises the unique relationship between God and the Israelites, specifically the people of Jacob (also known as Israel), whom He has chosen and regards as His servants.

⁶⁵ James' strong link with the Old Testament and Jewish tradition is attested by many scholars, including Allison (2013, 2015), Du Toit (2020), Kloppenborg (1999), Mason (2019), and Davids (2019).

⁶⁶ ἄτε δὴ οὖν τοιοῦτος ὢν ὁ Ἄνανος, νομίσας ἔχειν καιρὸν ἐπιτήδειον διὰ τὸ τεθνάναι μὲν Φῆστον, Ἀλβῖνον δ' ἔτι κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν ὑπάρχειν, καθίζει συνέδριον κριτῶν καὶ παραγαγὼν εἰς αὐτὸ τὸν ἀδελφὸν Ἰησοῦ τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ, Ἰάκωβος ὄνομα αὐτῷ, καὶ τινες ἑτέρους, ὡς παρανομησάντων κατηγορίαν ποιησάμενος παρέδωκε λευσθησομένους. – So, he [Ananas] assembled the Sanhedrim of Judges and brought before them the brother of Jesus who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others; [or, some of his companions.] And when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned. Regarding the authenticity and historical correctness of Josephus's narration of James, as the brother of Jesus, Allen (2017:24) attests: “Apart from the JP [Josephus] we do not have any other extra-biblical evidence that James (the Just) even existed. Here, the Dead Sea Scrolls literature cannot serve as evidence for James's

II.23, delivers the earliest detailed Christian account of James' martyrdom. It portrays James as a highly revered figure and recounts his martyrdom, being thrown from the pinnacle of the Temple, stoned, and ultimately killed with a club. Suppose the Epistle of James is regarded as a later pseudepigraphical work; the name *Ιάκωβος* and the implied kinship with Jesus may have strengthened the oral tradition surrounding James' martyrdom for his faithfulness. Eusebius also cites James, the Nazarene, linking him to Jesus' birthplace and reinforcing his kinship with Jesus.⁶⁷ James reflects the key theme of perseverance in suffering (James 1:2–4; 1:12; 5:10–11), emphasising the association of the name *Ιάκωβος* with suffering and martyrdom.⁶⁸ This is a notable legend suggesting that, before James's public statement shortly before his death, some in Jerusalem were aware of him and even admired him, yet remained either ignorant of his Christian affiliation or regarded his beliefs about Jesus as harmless. In other words, until his execution, James, as this tale goes, successfully presented himself to many as a devout person, as the Gospel of Thomas (*Evangelium Thomae*) logion 12 suggests.⁶⁹ Therefore, this study agrees with Allison's (2015:9) suggestion that the same memory, or at least the same image, of the brother of Jesus is shared in the Epistle of James — *Ιάκωβος*, a devout person and a martyr who suffered for his belief in Christ.⁷⁰

existence. Based purely on the NT, it is possible to surmise that he was believed to be Jesus's sibling, favoured circumcision and held a senior leadership position in the Jerusalem church in the first century CE. However, it is solely Christian tradition that supplies details of his trial and death." This remark also complicates the idea that the writer of the Epistle of James is indeed James, the brother of Jesus.

⁶⁷ James, the brother of the Lord, succeeded to the government of the Church in conjunction with the apostles. All have called him the Just from the time of our Saviour to the present day, for there were many that bore the name of James. He was holy from his mother's womb, and he drank no wine nor strong drink, nor did he eat flesh. No razor came upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil, and he did not use the bath. He alone was permitted to enter the holy place, for he wore not woollen but linen garments. And he was in the habit of entering alone into the temple. He was frequently found upon his knees begging forgiveness for the people, so that his knees became hard like those of a camel, in consequence of his constantly bending them in his worship of God, and asking forgiveness for the people (Hegesippus, according to Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 2.23.4–6).

⁶⁸ In this context, the story of James' martyrdom, as told by a fragment from the 2nd-century writer Hegesippus, is particularly fascinating. It describes 'the Jews and the scribes and the Pharisees' asking James to control the people who have strayed by believing in Jesus as the Messiah: "Be good enough to make the facts about Jesus clear to all who come for Passover. We all accept what you say; we can vouch for it, and so can all the people, that you are a righteous man and do not show favouritism. So, make it clear to the crowd that they must not go astray as regards Jesus." Ultimately, James publicly confesses Jesus, leading the scribes and Pharisees to recognise their mistake. (Hegesippus, according to Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 2.23.7–18).

⁶⁹ According to the Gospel of Thomas (*Evangelium Thomae*) logion 12, James was referred to as *ὁ δίκαιος* (the devout): The disciples said to Jesus, "We are aware that you will depart from us. Who will be our leader?" Jesus said to him, "No matter where you come, it is to James the Just that you shall go, for whose sake heaven and earth have come to exist."

⁷⁰ Martin (1988: xxxv) states that *Ιάκωβος* was regarded in the early church as a suffering, righteous prophetic figure.

To explore this hypothesis, the multifaceted nature of the proposed chiasmus should be investigated further, i.e. the relation of *Ιάκωβος* with *θεός* and *κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός*.

4.2.2.1.2 The semantic reference of *θεός* and *κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός*. Exploring the intertexture and ideological texture

The combination of *θεός*, *κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός* and *δοῦλος* is unique to the Epistle of James. James refers to *ὁ θεός* (God) in 1:1, 5, 13, 20, 27; 2:5, 19, 23; 3:9; 4:4, 6, 7, 8, in apposition to *πατήρ* (Father), as seen in 1:17, 27 and 3:9. Several instances of *κύριος* (Lord) refer to God rather than Jesus (1:7; 3:9; 4:10, 11, 15; 5:4). In 108 verses, James includes at least 24 direct references to God (Johnson, 2000:164). The phrase Lord Jesus Christ (*κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός*) is also reiterated in James 2:1. However, James does not explicitly refer to Christ; only two references can be found in James 1:1 and 2:1. These two references are parallel: both begin the title with a Greek term for ruler, and both conclude the title with a Greek translation for “messiah (*Χριστός*)” (Davids, 2019:122–123). However, a careful examination of Christian parallels to James reveals a peculiar fact: he lacks Christological elements; there is no reference to the death and resurrection discourse (Allison, 2015:3). James’ first paragraph, 1:2–4, where the author encourages his readers to consider it all joy when facing various trials because the testing of faith produces perseverance, which results in being mature and lacking nothing, has very close parallels in Romans 5 and 1 Peter 1. Whereas the relevant verses in 1 Peter 1 and Romans 5 name Jesus Christ and are otherwise explicitly Christian, that is not the case for James (Allison, 2013:140–141). James adopts traditions that appear elsewhere in the New Testament in a Christological context. However, references to the “Lord Jesus Christ” (2:1), the “coming of the Lord” (5:7, 8), and “the name of the Lord” (5:10, 14) suggest that the addressees were believers and followers of Christ. Besides the common idea that the author bases much of his rhetoric on Jesus’s teachings that predate the gospel formulations (e.g., Hartin, 1991; Kloppenborg, 2001), the Christian nature of the letter is further indicated by references to faith (1:3, 6; 2:1; 5, 14–26, 15), love (1:12; 2:5, 8), the word (1:18–23), and mercy (2:13; 3:17; 5:11). Similarly, addressing the readers as brothers (1:2, 9, 16, 19; 2:1, 5, 14, 15; 3:1, 10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9, 10, 12, 19) and sisters (2:15) probably emphasises their shared faith and relationship.⁷¹

⁷¹ Botha (2006:115) asserts that James reflects a dynamic faith that is in the process of developing a distinct identity. This faith is gradually shedding some of its Jewish elements and becoming a more widely accepted and valuable way of achieving salvation. James represents an early stage of this development and should

Wolmarans (1994:64) suggests that the phrase θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος was codified as part of a letter salutation and served as a legitimising formula. However, the chiasmic structure of the introduction implies something more profound. Examining the text's *ideological texture* may help clarify this.

Regarding references to both God and the Lord Jesus Christ, it is vital to identify the audiences implied by the terms θεός and κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός. While many recent interpreters of the Letter of James understand the letter as representing “Jewish” Christianity (e.g., Davids, 1983:112–118⁷²; Laws, 1980:79–85⁷³; Du Toit, 2020:275–305⁷⁴), there exists a growing tendency to see the author as well as the audience of the letter as representing a form of Judaism (e.g., Johnson, 1995:238–240⁷⁵) or Messianic Judaism (e.g., Kloppenborg, 2001:458–462; Bauckham, 1999:33–49; Allison 2015:1-9)⁷⁶. Key Jewish concepts in the Epistle of James are identified, demonstrating how James reflects a deeply Jewish worldview rooted in Second Temple Judaism, Wisdom literature, prophetic traditions, and Torah piety.

Recent research on ancient Judaism and Christianity has shown that the two entities were not as clearly separate as previously thought. The Epistle of James aligns with these findings. Rather than focusing on whether the audience comprised Jewish converts to Christianity or was

be read as a book that reflects that. In James, we do not have a fully developed soteriology; it is still under construction.

⁷² Davids (1983:112–118) reflects on James’ reference to 1:25 (the perfect law of liberty) and “You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (2:8), echoing Leviticus 19:18. James uses Torah language, but radicalises it around ethical fulfilment, especially love and justice. The Torah is thus interpreted in consideration of Jesus’ moral teachings (possibly the Sermon on the Mount).

⁷³ Laws (1980:79–85) discusses James 1:27: “Pure and undefiled religion... is this: to care for orphans and widows... and keep oneself unstained from the world.” This verse reflects the prophetic tradition (Isaiah 1:17; Micah 6:6–8) that true worship is ethical, not ritualistic. This Jewish concept is reinterpreted within a Christian framework, where holiness encompasses compassionate action rather than just cultic purity.”

⁷⁴ Du Toit (2020:275–305) discusses James’s connection to the Mosaic Law and suggests that the kingdom principle of freedom in Christ is contrasted with a likely tendency among these Judaeans Christ-believers to focus on the Torah, especially in judging others by the Mosaic law. In this context, the author is identified as James, Christ’s half-brother, who does not strictly adhere to the Torah. In his rhetorical approach to law, he frames his message to align with the recipients’ perspective on law. This strategy aims to influence them to see the law from a different point of view and to present.

⁷⁵ Johnson (1995:238–240) identifies Monotheism and the echo of the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4) in James 2:19: “You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.” This verse echoes the Shema, the central Jewish confession: “*Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one.*” According to Johnson, a strict monotheism underlies James’ faith and ethics.

⁷⁶ Kloppenborg (2001:458–462) emphasises that the phrase “the Judge is standing at the door” (James 5:8) reflects a clear Jewish apocalyptic expectation of divine judgment and vindication typical of Second Temple religious hope. He argues that this phrase evokes ancient eschatological motifs in which God or an eschatological figure stands at the threshold, ready to deliver justice. This symbolism links James to wider Jewish traditions that anticipate God’s imminent intervention as the vindicator and judge of the faithful. Therefore, James’s call for patient endurance is rooted in apocalyptic urgency and divine presence rather than abstract moralism. Bauckham (1999:33–49) and Allison (2015:1-9) also emphasise this view.

predominantly Jewish, this analysis follows Robbins' (1996:341–351) assertion that James exemplifies the development of Christian culture. This perspective is supported by the epistle's language, which reflects Jewish discourse of the Hellenistic era.⁷⁷ Jewish discourse did not address death and resurrection, which explains the lack of so-called *kerugma* references in James. The epistle demonstrates how early Christians reinterpreted Jewish practices and narratives during the first century, adapting these traditions with new terminology and establishing new guidelines to foster group formation across the Mediterranean region. This explanation depicts James's Jewish worldview, rooted in Second Temple Judaism, Wisdom literature, prophetic traditions, and Torah piety, with an emphasis on Mosaic law. These elements are seen as prominent in the community's identity and ethics, without necessarily categorising the community as part of "Judaism" or explicitly identifying it as a form of Messianic Judaism. Although I disagree with Du Toit's claim that the author might indeed be Jesus's brother (Du Toit, 2020:301), I agree that James likely did not engage in cultic or ritual practices such as circumcision, Sabbath observance, or purity laws, and his silence on these issues may serve as a subtle rhetorical strategy to convey his view on the Mosaic law (Du Toit, 2020:302). Suppose the recipients truly valued the Mosaic Law; his rhetorical approach might suggest that by subtly criticising their beliefs about the law, he also aimed to accommodate their perspective, much like the strategy Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23, where he is "all things to all people."

The preceding discussion has examined the semantic significance of the key references in James 1:1 and their role within the Epistle's opening framework. Building on these observations, the following section considers the interconnections among *Ἰάκωβος*, *θεός*, and *κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός*, as well as the theological and rhetorical dynamics established by these references.

4.2.2.1.3 Summary of the semantic references to *Ἰάκωβος*, *θεός*, and *κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός*: establishing their interrelated connections

This discussion explores how the semantic references to *Ἰάκωβος*, *θεός*, and *κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός* function not merely as isolated designations, but as interconnected markers that shape the theological orientation and rhetorical structure of James 1:1. Particular attention is given to the

⁷⁷ Robbins (1996:349) explains that recent research into how people create culture shows that followers of Jesus in different places and times during the first two centuries redefined Jewish practices as Christian, subtly or not so subtly altered the rules, and introduced new phrases and nuances to express new understandings of their identity and actions.

relational and conceptual links established between these references, demonstrating how they contribute to the identity, authority, and communicative purpose of the Epistle's opening address.

Ἰάκωβος and θεός: Jacob, the implied father of the twelve tribes and a servant of God, with the authority to impart wisdom to his twelve sons, exemplifies how early Christians redefined Jewish practices in the first century. They adapted traditional customs and narratives using new terminology and established new guidelines to facilitate group formation across the Mediterranean region. This implied reference to Jacob can be seen as references to Old Testament figures such as Abraham (2:21–24), Rahab (2:25), as examples of faith; Job (5:11), as an example of endurance; and Elijah (5:17), as an example of persistence and the power of prayer.

Ἰάκωβος and κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός: James, the supposed half-brother of Jesus and a devout follower who was martyred for Christ, exemplifies Christian endurance.

The designation δοῦλος further deepens the relational dynamic between Ἰάκωβος, θεός, and κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός. Accordingly, this term is examined through an analysis of its social and cultural textures. The discussion thus transitions to phase 2, which focuses on embodied and socio-cultural engagement, marking the shift to the embodied–cognitive phase of the study.

4.2.2.2 Phase 2: embodied and socio-cultural engagement (the embodied-cognitive phase)

Phase 2 of the investigation, referred to as the embodied cognition stage, focuses on embodied and socio-cultural engagement within the text. The analysis elaborates on the semantic reference of δοῦλος by examining the passage's social and cultural dimensions. This framework also evaluates whether the designation δοῦλος κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ functions primarily as a metaphor or as an appellation. Furthermore, this phase examines the relationship between the A and B elements within the text, with particular attention to the typology of chiasmus and its expected rhetorical and practical effects on the audience.

4.2.2.2.1 The semantic reference of δούλος: exploring the social and cultural texture of the text

Much has been said about the semantic significance of the term δούλος, particularly regarding its implications for social status and the meanings it conveys. Vlachos (2013:9) notes that the genitives θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ clarify the term by indicating a possessive relationship. Martin (1988:4) further reinforces this perspective, noting that δούλος conveys privilege and honour. The notion of being termed a slave of God is prominent in early Christian, Jewish, and broader Greek and Roman literature (Martin, 1988:4). Martin (1990:49) notes that a slave of the emperor held a significant social position and wielded power, primarily interpreting the phrase within the context of Greco-Roman slavery, especially in terms of managerial slavery. Martin aims to explain why Christians regard the term 'slave of God' positively, suggesting that some managerial slaves seized opportunities for social mobility, which sometimes granted them considerable authority. Therefore, it was not simply about being a slave, but about who one's master was and where one's slavery was located within the social ladder. Being a slave is not shameful by default, especially as seen in the Greco-Roman context. Martin (1990:32) provides further insight on this when he argues that, even after slaves received their *manumissio* (emancipation) and became *liberti*, they still retained a dependent position in the patron-client system. These status differences are particularly evident in Roman epigraphic evidence, where *liberti* were often required to maintain their patron's name as a sign of loyalty (Martin, 1990:65). The term ἀπελὲφηρεως (freed slave) is used in tomb inscriptions to preserve a person's identity as an ex-slave, rather than to regard them as entirely free (Martin 1990:64–65).

Supporting Martin's viewpoint, Allison (2013:123–124) argues that the title of God's slave relates to concepts of 'leaders or righteous figures' in Jewish writings, alongside the motif of an enslaved leader present in Greek and Roman texts. Moreover, referring to oneself as a slave of God reflects an ancient tradition, as illustrated by Jacob being termed 'God's slave.' The phrase 'slave of the Lord' frequently appears in the LXX, evident in verses such as Psalm 134:1 and 135:22 (LXX); Isaiah 49:3 (LXX); and Ezekiel 28:25 (LXX). This designation consistently appears in a religious context throughout the LXX, often in the Psalms, typically within a devotional framework (Psalms 118:38, 76; 122:2; 133:1; 135:1; 142:12 [LXX]). The author positions himself alongside higher-ranking slaves in ancient Greek and Roman cultures, where masters wielded power, status, and influence (Allison, 2013:124). Martin (1988:4) and Allison (2013:123–124) assert that the author's self-reference as 'slave of God and Jesus Christ' is an assertion of exaltation, emphasising and affirming the author's authority. Wolmarans (1994:65) highlights this idea, suggesting that the author's self-identification as a slave of God and Jesus Christ will captivate an audience.

Scholars including Laws (1980:46), Kistemaker (1986:29), Ropes (1968:118), Tamez (1994:382–391), Maynard-Reid (1987:98), Martin (1988:4), Batten (2019:177–192), and Visser (2022:100–103, 193–196) analyse the term δούλος through the lens of the assumed socio-economic context of its audience, associating it with references to the poor (πτωχός in James 1:9–11; 2:1–13; 4:13–5:6) and to orphans and widows (ὀρφανοί καὶ χήραι in James 1:27). James employs this term to establish a social connection with his audience. Visser (2022:193–196) suggests that the concept of servanthood may be part of a rhetorical strategy related to masculine identities. While being a slave often carries a connotation of shame, in James, this idea serves as a rhetorical tool associated with authoritative behaviour. The discourse on servanthood intertwines with concepts of power. Though viewed as unmanly, servanthood is equated with the masculine God of perfection, portraying it as a “figure of authority” or “office holder.” The designation of being a ‘slave of God’ implies both literal constraint and personal liberty. James identifies religiously with slaves, indicating that followers of Jesus have a distinct relationship with God, living under His rule while worshipping Him. By contrasting servanthood with God and the Lord Jesus Christ, it can be argued that being a slave of God confers honour upon the believer, suggesting true masculinity⁷⁸ lies in servitude to God. By calling himself a slave of God and Jesus Christ, James navigates his masculine and socio-economic position by yielding to the authority of the masculine God of perfection, which in turn affords him masculine status and respect. Visser (2022:194–196), building on Martin (1990), observes that in a society characterised by patron-client relationships, the expressions “slave of God” and “master Jesus Christ” would denote power and authority rather than humility. Therefore, the metaphorical status of the letter’s author as a slave would depend on the standing of God and Jesus Christ as his masters.

The epistle examines vulnerable figures in the socio-cultural landscape of Greece and Rome, particularly widows, orphans, and slaves, focusing on their portrayals regarding masculinity, poverty, and perfection. It demonstrates how the author of James challenges the prevailing norms of ancient Greece and Rome, fostering a new understanding of honour and status for the vulnerable within the Jesus-following community. Widows, orphans, and slaves are interpreted alongside the poor as marginalised individuals. The depiction of the poor and vulnerable in James’s epistle, amid their socio-economic and gendered inequality in ancient society, excludes

⁷⁸ Visser (2022) explores the relationship between three key themes: masculinities, poverty, and perfection, using the metaphor of a cord of three strands. The first strand, masculinities, is based on the ideal masculinity discourse of the 1st-century CE. In James, followers of Jesus are encouraged to embody the idealised images of masculinity prevalent in the Greek and Roman worlds. James’ exhortations include exercising self-control over one’s own body and desires, as well as those of others; demonstrating endurance and steadfastness; persevering through trials; and striving for perfection. The author of the Epistle of James urges Jesus’ followers to be perfect believers in the context of ancient masculinity.

them from recognition as honourable or prestigious figures. They are viewed as outcasts within the hierarchical, power-driven, and masculine context of Greece and Rome. However, the author of James subverts this societal viewpoint, affirming the poor and vulnerable — specifically widows, orphans, and slaves — while bestowing honour upon them and himself in the Jesus-following community by instructing believers to care for widows and orphans, positioning himself as a slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The title θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος is widely recognised for asserting authority and honouring vulnerable members of society. However, this designation may have additional dimensions warranting further scholarly investigation. Although many scholars interpret it as a metaphor, it remains uncertain whether it functions solely in this capacity or should also be considered an appellation.⁷⁹

4.2.2.2 θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος: metaphor or an appellation?

What is a metaphor, and how does it work? From an embodied cognition perspective, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) introduced the idea of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. This theory is essential in cognitive linguistics, redefining metaphor not just as a linguistic feature but as a way of thinking and understanding. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) suggests that our thoughts are mainly metaphorical, helping us understand complex or abstract ideas by relating them to simpler, tangible experiences. Metaphors are not just decorative language; they are vital cognitive tools that influence our perceptions, emotions, and interactions with reality. We understand abstract ideas by linking them to bodily experiences we can perceive. Metaphors result from mapping a *source domain* (a familiar experience) onto a *target domain* (an abstract or complex idea). For example, the phrase 'Time is money' demonstrates this. In this case, the *target domain* is time (an abstract idea that's hard to measure or control), while the *source domain* is money (a concrete object that can be counted and exchanged). This metaphor allows us to express ideas such as “I am spending too much time on this” or “Do not waste my time.”

Within Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the expression “slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ” operates through a structured mapping between domains. The *source domain*, slavery, is some concrete, experientially grounded social reality defined by ownership, lack of legal autonomy, and exclusive allegiance. This source domain is mapped onto the *target domain*, God and the Lord

⁷⁹ An appellation is a descriptive title, designation, or name by which a person or entity is identified or addressed. In literary and rhetorical studies, an appellation often functions as a formal or honorific designation that conveys identity, status, authority, or relational significance (See De Wet, 2018:22–23).

Jesus Christ, an abstract theological reality associated with authority, lordship, and patronage. Meaning emerges through this cross-domain mapping, whereby embodied and socially embedded experiences of slavery shape the conceptualisation of devotion, obedience, and belonging in relation to God and Christ.

Interpreting this metaphorical designation, therefore, requires situating it within the socio-cultural logic of patron–client relations, alongside other contextual factors that inform how the metaphor would have been understood by its original audience. Such an approach recognises that the metaphor does not merely function rhetorically but draws upon shared embodied knowledge to structure ethical identity and relational allegiance (Batten, 2019:177–192; Visser, 2022:100–103, 193–196).

Considering the phrase θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος from the perspective of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, De Wet (2018:9–31) contends that this phrase is so closely linked to embodied experience that it can be understood as an appellation rather than merely an abstract metaphor. The researcher argues that distinguishing the metaphorical elements of slavery in early Christian literature can be a complex task, as the distinction between being a slave of God and Jesus Christ in a metaphorical sense and living as a slave of God and Jesus Christ as *habitus* appears blurred. His description of serving God and the Lord Jesus Christ aligns with an embodied cognition perspective. He contends that this is not merely a cognitive abstraction; rather, it represents a profoundly embodied experience, manifested through ritual, posture, behaviour, and naming. This underscores the interdependence of belief and the body. Slavery to God and Jesus Christ is perceived as a *habitus* that shapes early Christian identity. Being God’s slave implies that one is no longer a slave to the devil or sin, and this position within the cosmos carries implications for one’s identity and behaviour. De Wet (2018:28) references the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to elucidate the notion of *habitus* in its sociological sense. De Wet explains that Bourdieu argued that societies seldom operate within the boundaries of explicit, verbally articulated rules. Social groups function according to their *habitus*. Bourdieu (1990:52) defines *habitus* as “a system of embodied dispositions, ways of being that individuals employ to structure and comprehend their position in the world.” The most basic set of dispositions is bodily ones, which Bourdieu (1977:93) termed *hexis*: “Bodily *hexis* is political mythology realised, embodied, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable manner of standing, speaking and thereby of feeling and thinking.” *Habitus* also encompasses more abstract dispositions, such as mentalities, attitudes, and habits of perception, feeling, and action, among others, but even these remain deeply ingrained in the body. Concerning the reconstruction of bodily dispositions, De Wet (2018:22) states:

... dictated rules do not represent social realities. This does not mean that we cannot reconstruct elements of early Christian habitual dispositions from the literary texts. But it means that, in our process of reconstruction, we may have to read against the grain of the texts and also acknowledge that our reconstruction is not a fact, but a pointer, or a guideline. Some early Christians may have identified more closely with the notion of being a slave of God than others. The image is not an identity in itself, but carries the potential to shape and structure individual identities in particular, but also different, ways.

By carefully reading and analysing texts such as 1 Peter and The Shepherd of Hermas, De Wet (2018:29–31) concludes that the enslavement of the self to God involves adopting and engaging in bodily practices that are *doulological* in nature, namely, renunciation, humiliation, and self-control. Humility and humiliation fundamentally define one's identity as a slave of God. This could involve performing tasks considered servile, such as hands-on care for the sick and the poor, or menial yet symbolic tasks, such as foot washing or serving at a table. The practice of fasting, which evokes the hunger experienced by the slaves of others and the poor, was part of this. Being a slave of God meant living a life of simplicity, akin to many secular slaves. Suffering is a component of this *habitus*. The concept of suffering played a crucial role in the formation of early Christian identity. Here, De Wet (2018:30) refers to 1 Peter 2:16–20⁸⁰. Being a slave of God is also an imitative process, as shown in 1 Peter 2:21 (εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ἐκλήθητε, ὅτι καὶ Χριστὸς ἔπαθεν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ὑμῖν ὑπολιμπάνων ὑπογραμμὸν ἵνα ἐπακολουθήσητε τοῖς ἰχνεσιν αὐτοῦ. [For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps]). Similar commands of imitation are found in 1 Corinthians 11:1 and Philippians 2:5. This depends on the assumption that there are exemplars that one could reference to imitate.

Alongside the importance of humiliation and suffering, slavery to God also involves adopting a virtue ethic that emphasises *self-control*. The framework of moral teaching in Shepherd of Hermas is based on the believer's identity as a slave of God. The author warns of dangers that “bring ruin to the slave of God”, such as sexual immorality (Herm.mand. 29.4.1), anger (Herm.mand. 34.5.2), bitterness (Herm.mand. 36.6.2), lying, slander, hypocrisy (Herm.mand. 38.8), double mindedness (Herm.mand. 39.9.9, 43.11), grief (Herm.mand. 40.10.1), and luxury (Herm.mand. 45.12.2, 51.2). The *Shepherd of Hermas* urges its audience to perceive themselves as God's servants, just as

⁸⁰ ὡς ἐλεύθεροι καὶ μὴ ὡς ἐπικάλυμμα ἔχοντες τῆς κακίας τὴν ἐλευθερίαν ἀλλ’ ὡς θεοῦ δοῦλοι – Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves (θεοῦ δοῦλοι). The slaves of God are told to fear and honour those who are appointed over them, including God himself, but also the emperor, and to love the brotherhood of Christ (1 Peter 2:17; see also verses 13–14). Shortly after this command, in 1 Peter 2:18–20, the author addresses the domestic slaves (οἰκέται). These slaves are told to be obedient to their masters, not only to those who are kind but also to those masters who are harsh: ἀλλ’ εἰ ἀγαθοποιῶντες καὶ πάσχοντες ὑπομενεῖτε, τοῦτο χάρις παρὰ θεῶ – But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval (1 Peter 2:20).

Hermas does. De Wet (2018:31) further states that some of the first Christians associated the image of being a slave of God in such an intense and physical way that it sparked a movement that would ultimately define the fundamentals of early Christian monasticism.

Considering De Wet's argument, the phrase Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος is understood as an appellation rather than merely an abstract metaphor, gaining new depth through embodied cognition. While notions of a slave belonging to their master may be involved, and the idea of patron-client relationships is relevant, it is far from a purely metaphysical or verbal identity. It signifies an embodied, performed, and lived experience.

The reasons for considering the phrase as an appellation are presented as follows:

- The author's name, Ἰάκωβος, connected to θεός, suggests a reference to Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes, who served God by imparting wisdom, much like Jacob did with his sons. Furthermore, Ἰάκωβος is linked with κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, subtly hinting at James, Jesus' half-brother, a devoted person and martyr for Christ. The author describes himself as θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος, emphasising his role as a servant of God with wisdom to share, paralleling Jacob's relationship with his sons, and as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. This indicates that suffering, humility, and humiliation are central to the identity of a slave of God. As a committed servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, James, Jesus' half-brother, became a martyr for Christ. Therefore, the author embodies the dual themes of wisdom and suffering as a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. In this context, referring to James as the servant of God serves multiple purposes; it enhances the author's authority and conveys the suffering and dedication that a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ is expected to exhibit. However, the authority of the author does not depend on his exaltation as a servant of God and the honour of his master, as noted by Martin (1990) and Visser (2022), but rather on his servitude, suffering, and martyrdom. This complex self-image of the author emphasises his rhetorical strategy to reach Judean Christ-believers, as Paul outlines in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23: to become everything to everyone, as Du Toit (2020:302) suggests. The author identifies himself as a slave or servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, guiding the ancient audience into a space where a long-established Jewish tradition (θεοῦ δοῦλος) and a more recent early Christian literary tradition (καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος) intersect. Depending on the letter's dating, this name was likely associated with many traditions, stories, and images linked to James of Jerusalem (e.g., Acts 15; Gospel of Thomas [*Evangelium Thomae*], logion 12), which contributed to this figure's authority among ancient audiences.

- The Epistle of James exhibits themes and literary connections with the Shepherd of Hermas and 1 Peter (Lockett, 2019:253–271; Allison, 2013:23, 68). These connections suggest shared Christian traditions that were utilised independently and reflect early communal beliefs. Therefore, it is likely that the Epistle of James interpreted the notion of being a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ in a manner like these texts. The themes of suffering (James 1:2–4; 5:7–11), renunciation (1:5–8, 12–15; 3:13–18; 4:1–9), humiliation (1:9–11, 27; 4:1–9; 5:14), and self-control (1:19; 3:1–12) are echoed throughout this writing, underscoring the notion of being a slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ as *habitus*, an embodied, enacted, and lived experience. Being and acting as a slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, among others, entails performing tasks considered subservient, such as hands-on care for the sick (James 5:14) and caring for marginalised individuals, including widows, orphans (James 1:27), and the poor (James 2:1–26). Subservience is also highlighted by praying (1:5–8; 5:13–18).

Given that the phrase Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος is regarded as a title and the intricate nature of the chiasmus has been recognised, what does the chiasmus imply, and what is its practical function? In what manner is the title presented to the audience? Consequently, the typology of the chiasmus and its expected influence on the audience are examined.

4.2.2.2.3 The significance and typology of the chiasmus used in James 1:1

The author of James presents himself through a multiple-effect chiasmus, employing chiastic (inverted parallel) patterns to convey various layers of meaning, emphasis, or interpretative resonance simultaneously. This chiastic form features A and B elements that mutually influence or transform one another. A recognised example of this type involves bidirectional activity or interactivity between the components involved. Chiastic sentences or words of this kind reveal mutually influencing or reciprocal relationships (Grausso, 2020:104). Schematically, this chiasmus appears in James (**see Figure 4.2**).

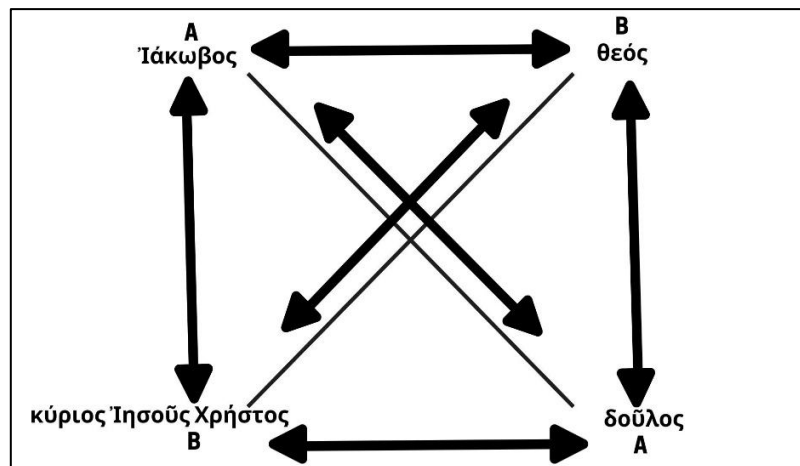


Figure 4.2: Reciprocal chiasmic structure in James

Source: Author's own illustration.

4.2.2.2.4 Utilising Pelkey's typology of chiasmus

A multifaceted chiasmus relates to a rhombic chiasmus, which is a four-part structure reminiscent of a rhombus or diamond, emphasising symmetry and transformation about a central axis (Pelkey, 2017:213). According to Pelkey, this diamond- or rhombic-shaped chiasmus positions two “X”-figures around a common middle ground. The diamond arises in this interspace, and Pelkey (2017:213) suggests that this form illustrates the communion of one and the other in awe over a third other. The resulting *mode* fosters *insight*, with an overall *mood* tied to *wonder*. This type is marked by elements that progress and mirror one another, emphasising not only inversion (typical in traditional chiasmus) but also the relational development between inner and outer components. A rhombic chiasmus includes four elements (A, B, B', A') arranged so that A mirrors A' and B mirrors B'. This entire framework forms a symmetrical, diamond-like relational unit. It transcends mere reversal of elements; it uncovers a transformative relationship between opposing or symmetrical pairs, highlighting continuity and contrast. The rhombic shape symbolises the dynamic interaction between these units, often implying a third space or an emerging meaning at the centre where A and B elements converge. The rhombic chiasmus in James 1:1 is illustrated in **Figure 4.3**.

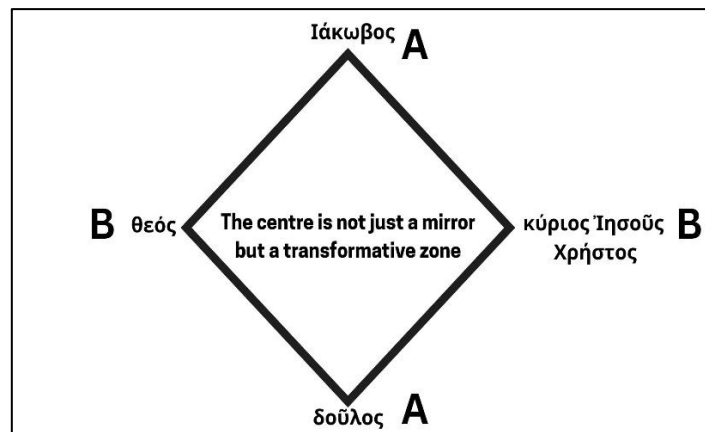


Figure 4.3: Rhombic chiasmus illustrating convergence of A and B elements in James 1:1

Source: Author's own illustration.

A rhombic chiasmus is not just about visual symmetry; it represents a transformation that is both experienced and perceived. Jamin Pelkey views the central space of a rhombic chiasmus not merely as a gap or axis, but as a semiotic and ontological threshold. Transformation takes place within this generative, mediating space.

4.2.2.2.5 Interpreting the rhombic chiasmus

The embodied meaning and explanation of a multifaceted chiasmus is applied to James's self-introduction. The chiasmus found in James 1:1 reflects the author's self-presentation and identity, demonstrating that James (Ἰάκωβος) is defined by his connection to God and the Lord Jesus Christ, from whom he derives his identity. There is an implied reference to Jacob, the patriarch of the twelve tribes, known for his wisdom in serving God, which illustrates James' relationship with the divine. Ἰάκωβος is also linked to κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, referring to James, the half-brother of Jesus, a devout person and martyr for Christ. The author identifies himself as θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος, underscoring his role as a servant of God who possesses wisdom to share, paralleling Jacob's relationship with his sons and his service to the Lord Jesus Christ, which implies suffering and martyrdom. Therefore, James' identity is firmly rooted in serving both God and the Lord Jesus Christ. He addresses Judean Christ-believers, including both those who are still closely connected to the Mosaic law and those who are not. The core of the chiasmus (referring to God and the Lord Jesus Christ) is thus generative, mediating, and transformative, contributing to the development of the author's identity. By articulating his identity and introducing James, the author establishes a model of faithful servanthood to God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The central segment of the diamond-shaped chiasmus functions as a “third space”, symbolising the emergence of a new identity situated relationally between God, Christ, and the audience. This structural and conceptual pivot not only underscores the interconnectedness of author and audience but also actively engages the reader, highlighting avenues for ethical formation, spiritual growth, and embodied imitation.

Since the chiastic centre mediates and transforms meaning, the analysis shifts from structural and literary focus to phase 3 of the multidimensional hermeneutic approach: the theological and ethical synthesis. In this phase, the text's formal patterns shape its ethical and theological meanings, illustrating how literary structure, embodied experience, and ontological understanding converge to influence practical interpretation.

4.2.3 Phase 3: theological and ethical synthesis (theological-ethical phase)

4.2.3.1 The ideological and theological implications of the appellation

Since the phrase Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος is regarded as an appellation, the author emphasises the concept of imitation, encouraging his audience to reflect on his martyrdom for Christ and to consider their struggles as integral to their dedication to God and Jesus Christ. This title highlights the author's emphasis on perseverance in the face of trials (πειρασμός) and tribulations (πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἡγήσασθε, ἀδελφοί μου, ὅταν πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις in James 1:1–4), as well as on resisting temptation (πειρασμός in 1:12–15). It sets the stage for the call to pray for wisdom (James 1:5–6), underlining the caution against double-mindedness (ἀνὴρ δίψυχος in 1:7) and lack of self-control (ἀκατάστατος in 1:8). Additionally, it stresses the importance of humility (ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινὸς in 1:9) and elucidates the author's hostile stance towards the rich (πλούσιος in 1:10). It also explains the author's call to exercise self-control in James 1:19 (ἔστω δὲ πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ταχὺς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι, βραδὺς εἰς τὸ λαλῆσαι, βραδὺς εἰς ὀργήν). It addresses the appeal to care for marginalised individuals, specifically the orphans and widows in their affliction (ἐπισκέπτεσθαι ὀρφανοὺς καὶ χήρας ἐν τῇ θλίψει αὐτῶν in 1:27). Therefore, the expression θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος not only establishes and reinforces but also sustains a religious identity that resonates both cognitively and within the tangible realities of daily life. This concept will be explored in greater detail throughout the study.

4.2.4 A summary of the author's embodiment presented from a multidimensional hermeneutic perspective

The material presented above synthesises the key elements of the investigation. Within a multidimensional hermeneutic framework, James 1:1 serves as a textual, embodied, and theological introduction to the letter. At the textual and rhetorical level, the verse exhibits a carefully constructed, multifaceted chiasmus in which the name “James” (Ἰάκωβος) is symmetrically framed by the designation “a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος). This chiastic structure not only demonstrates rhetorical craftsmanship but also positions James's identity between two divine referents, indicating that his authority and self-understanding derive entirely from his relationship to both God and Jesus Christ. The centre of the chiasmus thus becomes a generative and mediating space — a “third space” of identity that transcends conventional religious categorisation.

From an embodied-cognitive perspective, this introduction articulates a lived and practised identity. The name Ἰάκωβος evokes Jacob, the patriarch of the twelve tribes, remembered for wisdom, struggle, and covenantal faithfulness. At the same time, it recalls the historical James, the brother of Jesus, known for his piety, leadership in the early Jerusalem church, and a traditional association with martyrdom. The title δοῦλος foregrounds an embodied posture of submission, endurance, and allegiance, shaping a *habitus* in which suffering, wisdom, and faithful service are integrally linked.

The theological-ethical dimension further intensifies this portrayal. By explicitly identifying himself as a servant of both God and Christ, James models a faithful identity for his audience — Christ-believing Jews in the diaspora who are negotiating inherited covenantal traditions alongside emerging Christological commitments. His self-presentation functions not merely as a formal title but as an implicit summons to imitation. Through the language of servanthood, James invites his audience to embrace a transformed identity in which suffering, renunciation, and wisdom are constitutive of life in Christ. The chiastic structure thus serves as a transformative invitation, offering a theological and ethical orientation that guides its hearers from dislocation to wholeness, from exile to belonging, and from self-definition to divine redefinition.

To fully understand why the author crafts and communicates his message in a particular way, it is essential to consider how he perceives his audience. How does he make their situation meaningful and relevant?

4.3 The embodiment of the addressees

4.3.1 Phase 1: structural and rhetorical mapping (textual-rhetorical phase)

4.3.1.1 The inner texture of the address

The address is crafted to unveil a striking semantic contrast:

ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς (A) VERSUS ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορά (B): *(To) Twelve tribes (implying wholeness) versus (in) the diaspora (implying disparity/partiality).*

The address phrase is unique and absent from similar texts, raising questions about its meaning. Using a multidimensional hermeneutic approach, it remains unclear whether James refers to specific individuals in the diaspora or uses the phrase metaphorically. Does it identify Jewish-Christian believers dispersed across nations, or is it a symbolic reference to Jewish Christians — or possibly the entire Church — as a dispersed, covenantal community? Both literal and symbolic meanings will be briefly analysed. This involves exploring the text's social and cultural layers to clarify the intended audience and rhetorical impact, while also considering how the original readers would have experienced and understood these references.

4.3.2 Phase 2: embodied and socio-cultural engagement (embodied cognitive phase)

4.3.2.1 ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορά: a literal or metaphorical interpretation?

A literal reading of the phrase ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ suggests that the “twelve tribes” (ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς) refers to the historical tribes of Israel,⁸¹ while “diaspora” (διασπορᾷ) typically refers to Jews living outside the land of Israel, particularly in regions such as Asia Minor and in Roman provinces such as Bithynia, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Galatia. Tamez (2019:195–196) argues that James is addressing migrant Jews living beyond Syria-Palestine, like those

⁸¹ In Acts 26:6, Paul testifies before King Agrippa, testifying that: εἰς ἣν τὸ δωδεκάφυλον ἡμῶν ἐν ἐκτενεῖα νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν λατρεῖον ἐλπίζει καταντῆσαι, περὶ ἧς ἐλπίδος ἐγκαλοῦμαι ὑπὸ Ἰουδαίων, βασιλε ... – to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! In this context δωδεκάφυλον refers to the Jews. The Apostle Paul is on trial before King Agrippa, where he defends himself by sharing his life story. This includes his earlier persecution of Christians, his meeting with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, and his later mission to spread the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. Verse 7 supports Paul's argument that his teachings do not betray the Jewish faith; instead, they fulfil the Jewish hope rooted in God's promises.

mentioned in 1 Peter 1:1,⁸² who are followers of Jesus and are identified as the “twelve tribes in the dispersion.” These individuals likely faced social marginalisation, political exclusion, and discrimination due to their religious convictions, cultural distinctiveness, and ethnic identity. Laws (1980:51) notes that such communities endured significant suffering for their faith in Jesus Christ (cf. James 1:2–4; 5:7–11). Their monotheism and rejection of Greco-Roman religious customs often led to ostracisation, as seen in Acts 16:20–21.⁸³

However, the nature of this address is debated. Johnson (2000:166) concludes that the reference to the “twelve tribes of the dispersion” could suggest a more symbolic or generalised audience. He argues that nothing in the epistle requires the readers to be ethnically Jewish, nor does it exclude that possibility. As seen in 1 Peter, a Gentile audience may also be described as the diasporic people of God, and Paul’s letters demonstrate that Gentile Christians can meaningfully engage with the symbolic world of the Torah. Moreover, James does not mention circumcision or ritual observance, suggesting either that the audience already accepts these or that such issues are irrelevant to the author’s concerns. Johnson maintains that the letter is written from within the Christian movement. Davids (1983:64), Dancy (2021:9) and Kistemaker (1986:29) support this view.

In contrast, Allison (2015:8) suggests that James addresses a broader Jewish audience, which includes both Christian Jews and Jews who do not yet share the author’s convictions. In this sense, the letter serves a dual purpose: to edify believing Jews and to engage or persuade non-believing Jews. Allison (2015:4) argues against interpreting the address figuratively:

Many believe that this is a figurative way of speaking about Christianity throughout the world. I prefer to take the address at face value. Unlike the opening of 1 Peter, the first verse in James contains no hint that it should be given figurative sense or applied to the churches. Nor does any other part of the letter, from which all allegorical interpretation is absent, contain such a hint. James 1:1 does not explicitly refer to Christians as its addressees. It rather, on its face, addresses Jews in the diaspora. Those who understand this as a letter addressed to Christians must read into the first verse what is not there.

Robbins (1996:341–351) offers a socio-rhetorical interpretation, suggesting that the Epistle of James shows how early Christians reinterpreted Jewish traditions and narratives, reshaping them

⁸² Πέτρος ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς Πόντου, Γαλατίας, Καππαδοκίας, Ἀσίας καὶ Βιθυνίας – Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

⁸³ καὶ προσαγαγόντες αὐτοὺς τοῖς στρατηγοῖς εἶπαν· οὗτοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἐκταράσσουσιν ἡμῶν τὴν πόλιν, Ἰουδαῖοι ὑπάρχοντες, καὶ καταγγέλλουσιν ἔθνη ἃ οὐκ ἔξεστιν ἡμῖν παραδέχεσθαι οὐδὲ ποιεῖν Ῥωμαίοις οὖσιν. – And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, “These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe.”

with new terminology and ethical frameworks to maintain group identity and cohesion across the Mediterranean world. This process of reinterpretation did not necessarily define the community as solely Jewish or Christian; rather, it revealed a hybrid identity. From this perspective, the reference to ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ expresses the dual identity of Judean Christians — deeply rooted in Jewish heritage yet reoriented towards a renewed communal identity in Christ.⁸⁴

In conclusion, although a literal interpretation might suggest Christian Jews living outside Palestine, the reference to the “twelve tribes” is not entirely clear if taken only at face value. Whether understood literally or symbolically, the phrase serves as a powerful rhetorical device that affirms the audience’s covenantal heritage while inviting them into a new, redefined identity shaped by faith in Jesus Christ.

Wolmarans (1994:65–66) explains that James’ address aligns with intertexts such as Galatians 4:26, Philippians 3:20, and Hebrews 11:13; 13:14, which emphasise Christians’ alienation. He refers to Philo *De Cherubim* 120⁸⁵, which notes that every individual arrives in the world as a stranger, indicating that man’s stay here is temporary. The idea of diaspora serves as a metaphor for both exile and pilgrimage, suggesting that the audience lives as outsiders in a hostile environment. James shows that his audience feels disconnected from their identity, which needs nurturing, and alienated from their surroundings, which impose political, legal, social, and religious restrictions on them. In James 1:2–18, their sense of estrangement is expressed through external trials (1:2–11) and internal temptations (1:12–18).

Bauckham (1999:105–106) suggests that when James writes to the twelve tribes, he addresses the Jewish Christian communities as central to the ongoing Messianic renewal for Israel. By invoking the hope of restoration, he integrates them into the Messianic redemption programme initiated by Jesus, who appointed twelve apostles. This supports the view that James uses the metaphor of the twelve tribes to evoke a theme of restoration and renewal rooted in Jewish

⁸⁴ Botha (2006:111) aligns with this notion: “James is addressed to a community, a fictive kinship group, a kind of New Israel, and this New Israel already stands in a certain faith relationship with God. They are the reconstituted Israel, already a kind of first fruit of the new creation. The assumption is that there is faith. Their faith is taken for granted, but this is not enough to ensure that this social group can delineate themselves over and against others”.

⁸⁵ πρὸς μὲν γὰρ ἀλλήλους οἱ γενόμενοι πάντες αὐτοχθόνων καὶ εὐπατριδῶν ἔχουσι λόγον, πάντες ἰσοτιμίαν καὶ ἰσοτέλειαν καρπούμενοι, πρὸς δὲ θεὸν ἐπηλύτων καὶ παροίκων· ἕκαστος γὰρ ἡμῶν ὥσπερ εἰς ξένην πόλιν ἀφίκεται τόνδε τὸν κόσμον, ἧς πρὸ γενέσεως οὐ μετεῖχε, καὶ ἀφικόμενος παροικεῖ, μέχρις ἂν τὸν ἀπονεμηθέντα τοῦ βίου χρόνον διαντλήσῃ — For all mortals, being compared with one another, are looked upon as natives of the soil, and nobly born persons, all enjoying equal honours, and equal rank; but by God they are looked upon as strangers and sojourners; for each of us has come into this world as to a new city, in which he had no share before his birth, and having come into it he dwells here, until he has completed the period of life allotted to him.

eschatological hope. His emphasis on trials and perseverance may represent themes of exile and endurance. This mirrors the New Testament's use of language about Israel in relation to the church (cf. Galatians 6:16: "Israel of God"; 1 Peter 2:9–11).

However, a strict metaphorical interpretation does not fully clarify the reference to ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ, which highlights the Judean Christians' "dual" identity — valuing Judaic traditions while also seeking something new. The audience felt disconnected and under pressure. Therefore, the text considers real people in authentic social contexts.

4.3.2.2 Applying a multidimensional hermeneutic: blending literal and metaphorical interpretation

From the multidimensional hermeneutic perspective used in this study, conceptual metaphors arise from everyday human experiences and are shaped by cultural and historical contexts. Human thought and conceptualisation are grounded in the body's interaction with the physical world, where meaning develops through sensorimotor experiences — such as spatial orientations (up/down, in/out), movement, and equilibrium. Within this framework, the debate over whether James' audience should be understood literally or metaphorically becomes less important. An either-or interpretation is reductive and unnecessary.

When interpreting the phrase ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ as a conceptual metaphor, attention must be given to the visual texture of the text, what Robbins (2008:81–106) refers to as "rhetography." Rhetography involves textual features that evoke mental imagery for the reader or listener.

The phrase ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ, when viewed as a conceptual metaphor and through its rhetography, is interpreted as summarised in **Table 4.1**.

**Table 4.1: Conceptual and rhetographic interpretation of the phrase ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς
ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορά**

PHRASE: CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR	TARGET DOMAIN	SOURCE DOMAIN	EMBODIED EXPERIENCE	RHETO- GRAPHY
Twelve Tribes (δώδεκα φυλαί)	Christians, still embracing Jewish traditions, living beyond Syria and Palestine.	The phrase 'twelve tribes' evokes Israel's tribal organisation, a collective identity rooted in shared ancestry, land, and a sacred covenant.	Humans feel a sense of connection, legacy, and belonging through authentic, physical interactions. This metaphor stems from family experiences, providing a foundation for identity and security.	This phrase evokes an image of completeness or wholeness, conveying a sense of home and warmth associated with being with one's family. This image might evoke feelings of satisfaction and belonging.
Diaspora (διασπορά)	Diaspora means 'scattering,' rooted in spatial imagery. It suggests themes of displacement, dislocation, and a yearning for one's homeland.	Life is an ongoing journey: Believers are portrayed as being away from their rightful place. They embark on a path of restoration after losing connection to their identity. The notions of exile and pilgrimage are suggested, indicating that James' audience finds themselves in a hostile environment, regarded as outsiders.	The emotional and physical experiences associated with displacement — such as disorientation, vulnerability, and a desire for stability — are closely linked to the audience's spiritual state.	The phrase depicts seeds scattered everywhere, with no potential to take root, grow, or bear fruit. Building on the earlier imagery of being at home, it suggests a detachment from one's sense of groundedness and belonging. It evokes feelings of vulnerability and dislocation.

Source: Author's own summary.

The metaphor describing James' audience communicates a sense of unity and belonging (δώδεκα φυλαί – **A**), in contrast to feelings of disparity and disorientation (διασπορά – **B**). The phrase δώδεκα φυλαί evokes an image of completeness or wholeness, suggesting a sense of home and warmth linked to being with one's family. It may inspire feelings of satisfaction and belonging.

These feelings and images are contrasted with the image of a seed scattered freely (διασπορά) without the potential to take root, grow, and bear fruit. Building on the earlier imagery of being at home, this implies a detachment from one's sense of groundedness and belonging.⁸⁶ It evokes feelings of vulnerability and dislocation. Green (2022:300) describes the audience's detachment as follows:

Where are James's brothers and sisters, those to whom he addresses this letter? It is tempting to reply that they are "betwixt and between", using an Old English phrase with Germanic roots signifying "neither here nor there." In fact, this is his diagnosis of the problem: Friend of God or friend of the world? Within the community of Christ-followers or outside of it? Embracing heavenly wisdom or earthly? Neither here nor there — betwixt and between. James uses his own language for this when he refers to the double-minded (1:8; 4:8): the self at variance with itself, the self-wavering between competing allegiances and alliances, the self-tugged in different directions. Betwixt and between, double-minded — in contemporary parlance, James sketches a situation marked by hybridity.

Thus, the juxtaposition of δώδεκα φυλαί and διασπορά functions as a complex rhetorical and conceptual device. It highlights the dialectic between covenantal wholeness and existential dispersion, framing James' audience as inhabiting a liminal, ethically charged space in which identity, allegiance, and communal belonging are continually negotiated.

4.3.3 Phase 3: theological and ethical synthesis (theological-ethical phase)

4.3.3.1 The ideological and sacral texture of the address

James contrasts images of wholeness — conveying satisfaction and belonging — with the image of the seed scattered in the διασπορά, symbolising rootlessness, vulnerability, and dislocation. He grounds his own identity in servitude to God and Jesus Christ, presenting himself as a faithful and wise servant whose example his audience is invited to follow. By framing his introduction with a

⁸⁶ The Letter to Diognetus 5:5 (written around the late 2nd century CE, in Holmes 2007) also expresses the idea that Christians lack a homeland and are strangers wherever they dwell, conveying feelings of displacement and vulnerability. Πατρίδας οἰκοῦσιν ἰδίας, ἀλλ' ὡς πάροικοι· μετέχουσι πάντων ὡς πολῖται, καὶ πάνθ' ὑπομένουσιν ὡς ξένοι· πᾶσα ξένη πατρίς ἐστὶν αὐτῶν, καὶ πᾶσα πατρίς ξένη — They dwell in their own countries, but only as sojourners; as citizens, they share in all things with others and yet endure all things as if foreigners. This idea is also reflected in 1 Peter 2:11, stating: Ἀγαπητοί, παρακαλῶ ὡς παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν αἵτινες στρατεύονται κατὰ τῆς ψυχῆς· — Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul). The idea of being a sojourner or outsider is deeply rooted in early Christian identity.

formal title, James asserts his identity. He engages his audience, offering pathways for growth, transformation, and resilience, particularly for those facing displacement and disorientation.

Themes of suffering (1:2–4; 5:7–11), renunciation (1:5–8, 12–15; 3:13–18; 4:1–9), humiliation (1:9–11, 27; 4:1–9; 5:14), and self-control (1:19; 3:1–12) recur throughout the epistle, underscoring that servanthood to God and Christ is a lived, embodied *habitus*. The rhetoric of alienation and disorientation thus becomes the link between identity formation (“slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”) and the lived experiences of trial and discipline. The opening formula functions as an overture, anticipating and encapsulating the themes later developed in the letter.

4.3.4 Summary of the addressees’ embodiment analysed through a multidimensional hermeneutical lens

Read through a multidimensional hermeneutic lens, the opening of James functions as both a rhetorical and theological overture, introducing themes developed throughout the letter. Textually, James contrasts images of wholeness and rootedness with those of diaspora and dislocation, invoking the metaphor of the twelve tribes scattered in the *διασπορά*. His own firmly grounded identity counters this image of alienation through the self-designation “a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,” framed chiastically to reinforce authority through servitude and to signal the letter’s central concern with wise and faithful living.

From an embodied-cognitive perspective, the contrast between scattering and rootedness evokes both spatial and emotional resonance. The audience is invited to imagine themselves as seeds dispersed yet still capable of growth, transformation, and fruitfulness. James’ embodied identity as a servant, enacted through practices of suffering, wisdom, renunciation, and self-discipline, provides a lived model of resilience and perseverance, forming a distinct *habitus* of servanthood.

Theologically and ethically, these rhetorical and cognitive patterns come together in urging identity formation: to be a servant of God and Christ means embodying disciplined perseverance, divine wisdom, and communal faithfulness. Therefore, the greeting serves not just as a standard salutation but as a transformative gateway, motivating dispersed believers to reconnect with belonging, purpose, and holiness through active servanthood.

4.4 The greeting formula

Adopting a multidimensional hermeneutic perspective, the greeting formula in James 1:1, which employs the verb *χαίρειν* (present active infinitive of *χαίρω*, “to rejoice”), reflects a Hellenistic

rhetorical convention that is both theologically and rhetorically reappropriated within the epistle (Wolmarans 1994:63; Cheung and Yu, 2019:87–91). The term *χαίρειν* functions as a formal greeting frequently found in Greek letters (see Acts 15:23, 23:26; 2 John 10, 11), appearing in both infinitive forms (cf. Acts 15:23, 23:26; 2 John 10–11) and imperatival forms, such as *χαῖρε* (e.g., Matthew 26:49, 27:29; Mark 15:18; Luke 1:28; John 19:3) and *χαίρετε* (Matthew 28:9; Barnabas 1:1). Although it serves as a conventional opening, its semantic range — “to rejoice,” “to be glad,” “to be well” (Louw and Nida, 1996: 25.123, 25.150) — imparts significant emotive and theological weight. This is especially evident in James 1:2 (Πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἡγήσασθε [“consider it all joy...”]), where the concept of joy is recontextualised within the context of suffering.

From an *embodied-cognitive perspective*, the use of *χαίρειν* orients the audience affectively. The language of joy evokes bodily experiences associated with wellness, celebration, and emotional uplift. Following the author’s chiastically structured self-introduction, this greeting repositions the reader, preparing them to receive the paradoxical message of joy amid trials. The rhombic or diamond-shaped chiasmus in James’s self-identification (δοῦλος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) centres on references to God and Christ, thereby creating a conceptual and embodied ‘third space’ of identity transformation in which servanthood becomes a path to spiritual growth.

The *theological-ethical aspect* of the greeting becomes evident in the term *χαίρειν*, which anticipates the ethical appeal in James 1:2–4: joyful perseverance in suffering. The greeting functions as both a promise and an exhortation — inviting the audience on a transformative journey characterised by growth, endurance, and communal identity in God and Christ. In this way, the greeting not only complements the chiasmus of the introduction but also situates the audience within a broader theological narrative in which rejoicing is redefined as a moral and spiritual act rooted in faith and servanthood.

4.5 Conclusion

The following structured table highlights the key ideas presented in James 1:1 and connects them to the research objectives (**see Table 4.2**).

Table 4.2: Structured summary of James 1:1 in relation to research objectives

ASPECT	OBSERVATION	INTERPRETATIVE INSIGHT	EMBODIED COGNITION INSIGHT
Author's self-designation.	Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος.	Employs a multiple-effect type of chiasmus to shape identity and authority.	The embodied <i>habitus</i> of suffering, wisdom, and servitude reflects a slave who gains authority through wisdom and martyrdom.
Allusion in the author's name (Ἰάκωβος).	Jacob, the implied father of the twelve tribes and a servant of God, has the authority to impart wisdom like Jacob to his twelve sons. James, the implied half-brother of Jesus and a devout person who suffered martyrdom for Christ, serves as an example of Christian endurance.	Suggests the conveyance of wisdom and suffering for a divine purpose.	Frames James as a wisdom-giver and devoted servant, embodying spiritual and communal authority through suffering.
Reference to slave as an appellation or title.	δοῦλος = servant/slave; the title functions rhetorically and theologically.	Establishes James's authority through divine allegiance and suffering.	Reflects a paradox: authority through obedience and faithful endurance.
Audience description.	ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ.	Conceptual metaphor: unity (δώδεκα φυλαί) versus disorientation (διασπορά). Rhetography: Being at home evokes feelings of warmth, belonging, and groundedness, whereas being scattered like seeds unable to grow and bear fruit. Feelings of alienation and vulnerability are evoked.	Engages the audience as diasporic and fragmented, inviting them to reintegrate their identity through shared servanthood.

ASPECT	OBSERVATION	INTERPRETATIVE INSIGHT	EMBODIED COGNITION INSIGHT
Central themes in the epistle.	Throughout the Epistle of James, themes such as suffering (James 1:2–4; 5:7–11), renunciation (1:5–8, 12–15; 3:13–18; 4:1–9), humiliation (1:9–11, 27; 4:1–9; 5:14), and self-control (1:19; 3:1–12) recur, emphasising that being a servant to God and Jesus Christ is a lived, embodied experience, a <i>habitus</i> .	Highlights servanthood as a <i>lived, embodied experience</i> (a <i>habitus</i>).	The audience is invited to participate in the <i>path of the wise and suffering servant</i> — a new identity is proposed, marked by endurance.
Embodied Function of the Chiasmus Structure.	James 1:1 uses a chiasmic structure to define the author's identity as θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος — a servant rooted in both Jewish tradition and Christian faith. The chiasmus centres on God and the Lord Jesus Christ, symbolising a transformative, hybrid identity that unites wisdom, service, and devotion, and invites the audience to emulate this embodied faith.	Focusing on God and Christ helps shape identity in a balanced and transformative way.	The core of the chiasmus is a creative third space that signifies a new identity through servanthood and transformation.
Greeting: χαίρειν	Traditional Hellenistic greeting with profound theological significance.	Introduces joy amidst trials, aligning with later exhortation (1:2).	Establishes emotional and spiritual tone; connects to joyful endurance (James 1:2) as a hallmark of the suffering servant.

Source: Author's own summary.

Chapter 5 examines James 1:2–4, where the motif of believers as suffering slaves of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ is proposed.

CHAPTER 5 SUFFERING SLAVES OF GOD AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (JAMES 1:2–4)

Ignis aurum probat, miseria fortes viros.

Fire tests gold, suffering tests brave men.

(Seneca, *De Providentia* 5.10)

5.1 Introduction

James 1:2–4 links with the inscription by introducing the noun *χαρά* (joy, gladness), which relates to the greeting *χαίρειν*. The argument in James 1:2–4 is structured in a climactic manner; therefore, a graduated stylistic pattern⁸⁷ is evident. On a semantic level, this structure aligns with what Grausso (2020:103-104) describes as a *multiple-effect type of chiasmus*, in which sentences of this type reveal mutually influencing or reciprocal relationships. The relationship between the A and B elements of the presumed chiasmus is discussed in the *structural-rhetorical* phase of this research's multidimensional hermeneutic investigation, with particular focus on the text's inner texture.

Several commentators, including Davids (1983:70–72), Wolmarans (1994:69), Allison (2013:66–68), and Johnson (1995:174–175), have identified a metallurgical metaphor in James 1:2–4. This is especially clear in the noun *δοκίμιον* (1:3), which refers to testing metal for authenticity or to refining it to remove impurities (Louw and Nida, 1988:27.45). The metaphor is emphasised by the term *ὑπομονή* (endurance), which Louw and Nida (1988:25.174) relate to what remains after metals withstand heat, a meaning supported by Liddell and Scott's (1987:845) lexical entry. Together, these suggest a context of metallurgical refinement. A multidimensional hermeneutic approach thus attends not only to this conceptual metaphor but also to its rhetorical power, the vivid visual imagery or rhetography, that shapes the reader's interpretation. The embodied impact of this metaphor and the multi-effect chiasmus is further explored in the *embodied-cognitive* phase

⁸⁷ Blass, Debrunner and Funk (1961 §460:4) mention climactic or ascending structure as a stylistic device used in Koine Greek, including in the New Testament. They describe it as a rhetorical form in which the thought proceeds in ascending steps — i.e., each clause or idea builds upon the previous in intensity, weight, or importance. Examples include Romans 5:3–5 and 2 Peter 1:5–7, both of which illustrate this stepwise progression. Romans 5:3–5 states: suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, character produces hope. 2 Peter 1:5–7 demonstrates a classic ascending list: faith → virtue → knowledge → self-control → steadfastness → godliness → brotherly affection → love (Jordaan, 2014:170).

of the multidimensional investigation, which focuses on the text's intertexture and its social and cultural textures.

As outlined in Chapter 4, the author of James describes himself as a servant (δοῦλος) of God and Jesus Christ, using this title to motivate his audience to emulate his example as suffering and wise servants. Recurring themes, such as tests (James 1:2–4; 5:7–11), renunciation (1:5–8, 12–15; 3:13–18; 4:1–9), humility (1:9–11, 27; 4:1–9; 5:14), and self-control (1:8, 19; 3:1–12), highlight serving God and Jesus as an active, continuous way of life. This frames the author as embodying James, the martyr of Christ.

James 1:2–4 should be interpreted through the lens of this servant-*habitus*, which urges the audience to see themselves as slaves of God and Jesus by emulating the author. The author's embodiment of servanthood serves as the guiding perspective for the audience's self-view.

In connection with the author's embodiment is the question of James's view on suffering bodies. Kearney (2015:53) emphasises vulnerability as crucial to embodiment, connecting the body's ability to experience pain, pleasure, and touch with ethical understanding. Our embodied existence creates a sense of belonging; the flesh is both the location of suffering and the means of action. It also signifies otherness, being "most mine and most other" (Kearney, 2015:51). Kearney contends that genuine empathy and intersubjectivity demand both the intimate, lived body (*Leib*) and the shared, physical body (*Körper*). These ideas are examined further in the theological-ethical section of this multidimensional hermeneutic study, which explores the ideological and sacral textures of the text.

5.2 Phase 1: structural and rhetorical mapping (textual-rhetorical phase)

5.2.1 The flow of the argument presented in James 1:2–4

Although James 1:2–4 does not display a strict or highly formal chiasmus, it shows a rhetorically arranged and mirrored sequence, especially when interpreted semantically. This sequence suggests growth and progression. On a semantic level, this structure aligns with what Grausso (2020:103-104) describes as a multiple-effects type of chiasmus, in which sentences of this type reveal mutually influencing or reciprocal relationships. It shows what Grausso (2020:56) describes as the inherent nature of chiasmus: "Chiasmus works when 'A' and 'B' elements are somehow comparable, whether because they are similar in constitution and easily interchangeable, or otherwise on the opposite end of a spectrum of difference. The similarities and differences are all spatially construed." Although James 1:2–4 does not show a formal chiasm, it does exhibit a

rhetorically arranged and mirrored sequence: Joy in trials (**A**) → response to trials (joy), (**B**) → purpose of trials, (**B'**) → endurance amidst trials, (**A'**) → the outcome of a faithful response – maturity/perfection. The structure demonstrates a one-way, cause-and-effect progression.⁸⁸ At a surface level, the chiasmus operates as outlined in **Table 5.1**.

Table 5.1: One-way cause-and-effect chiastic structure

ELEMENT	TEXT	THEME
A	Πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἡγήσασθε, ἀδελφοί μου, ὅταν πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις, (James 1:2)	Response to trials (joy)
B	γινώσκοντες ὅτι τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν (James 1:3)	Purpose of trials
B'	ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ ἔργον τέλειον ἐχέτω (James 1:4a)	Endurance amidst trials
A'	ἵνα ᾗτε τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι. (James 1:4b)	Outcome of faithful response

Source: Author's own summary.

The single-direction, cause-and-effect sequence of the argument in James 1:2–4 is illustrated schematically in **Figure 5.1**.

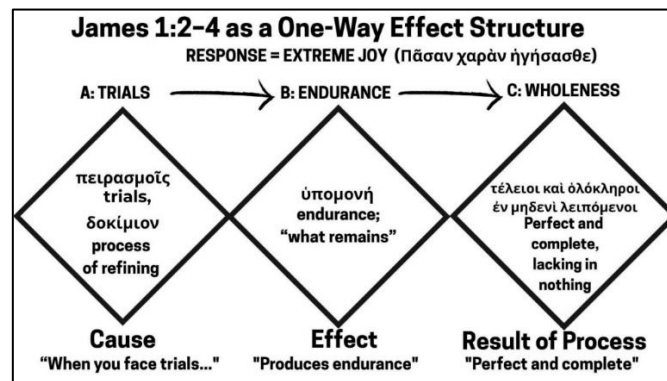


Figure 5.1: One-way cause-and-effect argument in James 1:2–4

Source: Author's own illustration.

⁸⁸ Cheung (2003:110-1) notes: "The opening exhortation in 1:2–4 forms a compact literary unit that introduces key themes of the epistle: testing, endurance, and perfection. The logical progression — trial leads to testing, testing produces endurance, and endurance results in completeness — exhibits a deliberate rhetorical structure. The repetition of terms and the symmetry between the beginning and end of the unit suggest a tightly constructed paragraph, possibly with chiastic features. This passage functions not only as an introduction but also as a theological thesis for the entire letter."

The cause-and-effect structure shows growth – an upward progression. Considering that this text reflects the character of orality (Botha, 2018:1–18; Wendland, 2024), the climax of the process is emphasised by the phenomenon of *homoiooteleuton*, or end rhyme, in 1:4, with τέλειοι, ὀλόκληροι, and λειπόμενοι. Furthermore, the alliteration and assonance in verse 1:2 emphasise the oral nature of 1:2–4 – Πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἡγῆσασθε, ἀδελφοί μου, ὅταν πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις.

This phase of the multidimensional hermeneutic methodology (the structural and rhetorical mapping of the text) examines the connections between the **A** and **B** elements, helping the reader understand the argument's logic from a syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic perspective.

5.2.2 Exploring the inner texture of the text: the implied relationship between the A and B-parts of the chiasmus

A paradox⁸⁹ is exemplified in James 1:2 (the **A**-section of the chiasmus): the audience is called to experience joy (πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἡγῆσασθε), an emotion linked to goodness, success, and pleasure, in a situation that usually does not evoke joy but involves pain, suffering, or hardship, namely, trials (πειρασμός).⁹⁰ This statement appears paradoxical because it juxtaposes two typically opposing ideas: rejoicing in what one fears most. The verb περιπέσητε (aorist subjunctive active second person plural from περιπίπτω following ὅταν) means ‘to fall in’ or, more specifically in James's context, ‘fall into’ unfavourable or unexpected situations, (Louw and Nida [1988:90.71] suggest a sense of suddenness for περιπίπτω), or as in Luke 10:30, ‘to fall among thieves’ (Johnson, 1995:172; Allison 2013:169–170). The trials faced by James's audience are beyond their control, unpredictable, and unavoidable. Allison (2013:168) clarifies that the verb ἡγέομαι

⁸⁹ A paradox is a statement or idea that appears self-contradictory or absurd, but upon closer inspection, reveals a more profound truth or insight. For example, Matthew 16:25 states, “Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.”

⁹⁰ Louw and Nida (1988) examine the term πειρασμός within two semantic domains: Domain 27.46 – Testing, Trial, Temptation. Here, πειρασμός is described as “to try to understand the nature or character of someone or something by subjecting them to thorough and extensive testing.” In Domain 88.308 – Temptation to Sin, πειρασμός is defined as “the enticement to sin, i.e., ‘temptation’ in the ethical or moral sense.” They clarify that, in this context, the word signifies “testing” or “trial” intended to foster endurance (ὑπομονή) and maturity in believers. It thus refers to the external hardships believers face that refine and develop them. In the context of James 1:2-4, this translation appears more plausible. Green (2022:302) states that “πειρασμός can signify trials (a morally neutral term) but also testing (which promotes human development and flourishing) and tempting (which hinders human growth and destroys life). All experiences in the diaspora are trials; when responses are poor, they become temptations. James emphasises this by asserting that temptations originate in human craving, not in God. Moral failure cannot be solely attributed to external pressures.” Scholars such as Davids 1983:70-72; Wolmarans 1994:69; Allison 2013:66-68; and Johnson 1995:174-175 also highlight that πειρασμός refers to trials encountered in the diaspora.

(think, consider) is not an emotional response but signifies a cognitive act: the audience is encouraged to consciously judge and evaluate their trials. The imperative does not urge them to feel happiness but to interpret suffering as an opportunity for joy through understanding. From an embodied perspective, the audience is encouraged to perceive their experiences in a specific manner. Consequently, their bodies act as “experiencing and thinking vessels” that facilitate understanding and interpretation of their experiences. The command reframes suffering as an interpreted experience rather than merely an instinctive emotion.

The audience is addressed as ἀδελφοί μου (my brothers). The vocative serves two purposes: to mark shifts in discourse and to introduce a ‘dramatic pause’ that emphasises upcoming important information (see James 1:16, 19; 2:1, 5, 14; 3:1; 4:11; 5:7, 12, 19). James uses ἀδελφοί μου to signal a break in his argument, drawing attention to the exhortation to rejoice despite the trials faced by believers (Adam, 2013:4). Adam further states that ἀδελφοί μου, the vocative plural form, should be understood in a gender-inclusive sense⁹¹ and used as such here since James does not intend for only men to consider their trials as joy. He cautions, however, that readers should be careful when employing inclusive language to replace masculine forms, as some passages suggest the author distinguishes between believing men and women (James 2:15). If the reference to the brother and sister (James 2:15) is interpreted from a feminist perspective instead of as a statement of gender inclusivity, it suggests that impoverished women are part of the communities James addresses. Mentioning both sister and brother could imply that many of the poor members in the church were women (Tamez, 1994:384; 386).

Johnson (1995:165) concludes: “The address ἀδελφοί μου ('my brothers') is inclusive of all the members of the community, men and women alike, as the term commonly functions in early Christian usage.” This view is supported by Allison (2013:167) and Davids (1983:66). Visser (2022:105-106) challenges this interpretation, asserting that the use of ἀδελφοί μου indicates the Epistle of James's androcentric nature and reinforces the construction of ancient masculine discourse. James 1:27 refers to ὀρφανοὶ καὶ χήραι (“fatherless children and widows”) experiencing afflictions, tribulations, or oppression (θλίψις), suggesting that females may also be included in the experience of πειρασμός. However, fatherless children and widows are recipients of charity, not the subjects. The context of James 1:2–4 will determine the audience. Do the characteristics

⁹¹ The question of whether ἀδελφοί μου should be interpreted gender-inclusively or not is vital to a multidimensional hermeneutical approach to the text, since the relationship between genders is stated as one of the research questions guiding this study.

of τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι⁹² also apply to females, or do they refer to typical male characteristics, considering the intertexture of the text? This question will be addressed in the examination of the outcome of πειρασμός, as stated in James 1:4.

Aligned with one of this research's goals, which is to explore and develop sensitivity to the space between seemingly opposing concepts, the question arises: what resides in the space between these opposites (joy amidst trials – the **A**-part of the presumed chiasmus)? What factors contribute to finding joy amidst challenges? The argument following the comma in 1:3 (the **B**-part of the chiasmus) fills this space – γινώσκοντες ὅτι τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν (“while you know that the refining process of your faith produces endurance”). Closely related to the imperative ἡγήσασθε (consider), the verb γινώσκοντες (present active participle, masculine, nominative, plural, of γινώσκω) introduces the justification for the imperative, explaining the reasoning behind presenting the paradox, joy in trials. The noun τὸ δοκίμιον (nominative subject of κατεργάζεται) can be interpreted as “the means of testing⁹³, the refining process, which brings about refinement⁹⁴ or the result of testing⁹⁵, referring to quality. The context suggests a refining *process* aimed at endurance (ὑπομονή) as the product. The means of testing was already stated in 1:2 as πειρασμός. The process has a goal, but here it is likened to ore, a naturally occurring solid from which a metal or valuable mineral can be profitably extracted. The final product is the metal or mineral, but obtaining it involves examining and refining the ore to extract and reveal the valuable resource. A process of refining is thus implied. The *method and process* of refining is subjecting the metal or valuable mineral to heat.⁹⁶ The metaphor of refining

⁹² Visser (2022:183–184) asserts: “The author of the Letter of James uses the example of continuously being on trial and competing against the desires of the world and turns it into a virtue of self-control and self-accomplishment. By referring to trials and hardships that had to be endured, even if it just regards morality and self-control, the text of James echoes moral philosophers of his time by viewing the temptations and trials as a sign of virtue, or, in the case of the Letter of James, as perfect faith. By phrasing the idea of trial as a masculinising phenomenon, the text is exhorting the Jesus followers to a life of endurance in striving for masculine perfection.” This assertion will be considered when discussing James 1:4.

⁹³ Suggested by Dibelius and Greeven (1976:72-73) and Adams (2013:5).

⁹⁴ Suggested by Allison (2013:169–170), Wolmarans (1994:71) and Laws (1980:53). Louw & Nida (Vol. 1, §27.46) support this interpretation: “The process of testing, often with the implication of approval through testing.”

⁹⁵ Suggested by Davids (1983:67): “The noun δοκίμιον appears only here, and in 1 Peter 1:7 in the New Testament, and in both places, it seems to mean not so much the process of testing as the **result**: the tested or approved quality. The stress is not on the process of being tested, but on what the testing reveals—**genuineness** and **integrity** of faith.” Johnson (1995:174), Kistemaker (1986:34), and Pretorius (1988:34) support this interpretation.

⁹⁶ Wisdom of Solomon 3:5–6 (LXX) mentions: καὶ ὀλίγα παιδευθέντες μεγάλα εὐεργετηθήσονται ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἐπείρασεν αὐτοὺς καὶ εὗρεν αὐτοὺς ἀξίους ἑαυτοῦ, ⁶ ὡς χρυσὸν ἐν χωνευτηρίῳ ἐδοκίμασεν αὐτοὺς καὶ ὡς ὀλοκάρπωμα θυσίας

and trials, particularly for testing, purifying, and affirming virtue or faith, is a well-known motif in Jewish wisdom texts, Stoic philosophy, and early Christian writings. It depends on the image of refining gold or silver with fire to symbolise the spiritual or moral growth attained through suffering (Allison, 2013:169–172; Johnson, 1995:174; Davids, 1983:67).

The object of τὸ δοκίμιον (the refining process, which brings about refinement) is stated as ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως (objective genitive, thus, faith is ‘the object of testing’) and the result of the refining process of faith is indicated as ὑπομονή (accusative direct object of κατεργάζεται – endurance, patience, perseverance). The verb κατεργάζεται (achieves, produces, accomplishes) accentuates the causative or teleological character of τὸ δοκίμιον, underlining growth and transformation, not just survival (Allison, 2013:170).

5.2.3 Exploring the inner texture of the text: the implied relationship between the B’ and A’ parts of the chiasmus

The B’-part of the chiasmus is introduced by the repetition of the final word from the B-part, namely ὑπομονή (“endurance”)⁹⁷, in the phrase ἡ δὲ ὑπομονή ἔργον τέλειον ἐχέτω (“let endurance

προσεδέξατο αὐτούς – And having been disciplined a little, they will receive great benefits, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself. Like gold in a furnace, he proved them, and like a whole burnt offering, he accepted them. 1QH V,16 (Vermes, 2004), commonly called the Thanksgiving Hymns from the Dead Sea Scrolls, offers poetic insights into suffering, testing, and divine shaping. This reference, also numbered as 1QHa V,16 in some editions, is part of a hymn traditionally linked to the Teacher of Righteousness. This intertext states: “For You have tested me in order to purify me from all guilt, and a spirit of scorn and contempt has come upon Your servant.” In both intertexts, God is mentioned as the author of πειρασμός. Seneca in *De Providentia* (On Providence) 5.10 attests: Ignis aurum probat, miseria fortes viros. – Fire tests gold, misfortune tests brave men. Sirach 2:5–6 (LXX) states: ὅτι ἐν πυρὶ δοκιμάζεται χρυσὸς καὶ ἄνθρωποι δεκτοὶ ἐν καμίνῳ ταπεινώσεως πιστεύουσιν αὐτῷ καὶ ἀντιλήμψεται σου εὐθυνον τὰς ὁδοὺς σου καὶ ἔλπισον ἐπ’ αὐτόν – For gold is tested in fire, and acceptable people in the furnace of humiliation. Trust in him, and he will help you; make your ways straight and hope in him. 1 Peter 1:6–7 also attests to the refining metaphor: ἐν ᾧ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, ὀλίγον ἄρτι εἰ δέον [ἐστίν] λυπηθέντες ἐν ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς, ἵνα τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως πολυτιμότερον χρυσίου τοῦ ἀπολλυμένου διὰ πυρὸς δὲ δοκιμαζομένου, εὕρεθῇ εἰς ἔπαινον καὶ δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν ἐν ἀποκαλύψει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, which is more precious than gold that perishes, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ). This metaphor implied in James 1:2–4 will be analysed in detail as a conceptual metaphor in Phase 2 of the multidimensional hermeneutical methodology. Comparisons will be drawn between 1 Peter 1:7, Solomon 3:5–6 (LXX), 1QH V,16, Sirach 2:5 (LXX), Seneca *De Providentia* (On Providence) 5.10, and James 1:2–4 to understand how James employs this metaphor.

⁹⁷ This stylistic device is called anadiplosis, in which a sentence begins with the word that the previous one ends with, thereby emphasising the repeated word (Jordaan, 2014:166). ὑπομονή/ὑπομονή (perseverance/patience) appears at the end of 1:3 and at the start of 1:4. The anadiplosis of ὑπομονή serves as both a conceptual and mnemonic pivot, ensuring the reader follows the continuity between the cause

have a perfect work”). The imperative ἐχέτω (present imperative active, third person singular from ἔχω, “let it have” or “it should have”) governs the meaning of this statement. It indicates that perfect works are to accompany the audience’s endurance. Allison (2013:172), Johnson (1995:178), and Davids (1983:69) recognise that this expression refers to a complete outcome or mature result, employing teleological language. For them, the purpose of testing is moral and spiritual maturity. Endurance is therefore not only the capacity to withstand hardships, but the process by which believers become whole, free from moral deficiency. However, these interpretations do not address the imperative force of ἐχέτω, nor do they define precisely what constitutes a “perfect work” (ἔργον τέλειον).

Wolmarans (1995:73) clarifies that the imperative implies the active pursuit of “endurance with perfect works,” meaning that good works should be inseparable from endurance. He draws on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book II, Chapter 1, 1103a14–b25), where Aristotle argues that virtue is cultivated through repeated action: building houses makes a builder, playing the lyre makes a lyre player, and practising virtue forms virtuous character. For Aristotle, moral excellence (ἔξις) is not innate but developed over time through embodied, habitual practice. James’s exhortation aligns with this principle; virtue is realised in action and shaped through experience. Thus, for Aristotle, justice is learned by doing just deeds, and for James, spiritual maturity is achieved by enduring trials while performing good works. Both frame virtue as a teleological process: a progression toward completion, whether in moral excellence (Aristotle) or spiritual wholeness (James). This explains James’ persistent emphasis on deeds (James 1:27; 2:14–26) as the fruit of perseverance and as contributors to spiritual formation.

Following this imperative to persevere in doing good works, the **A**’-part of the chiasmus presents the outcome of endurance and the reason for joy: ἵνα ᾗτε τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι (so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing). Wolmarans (1995:73) contends that τέλειοι clarifies ὁλόκληροι ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι; thus, the clause should be read as τέλειοι καὶ (ὁλόκληροι ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι) rather than as (τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι), ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι. Given

(testing) and the effect (perseverance leading to maturity). This method enhances the educational effect of the passage.

the preceding focus on perseverance in good works, which produces moral integrity, this reading is persuasive.⁹⁸

In this context, perfection (τέλειος) does not mean sinlessness or flawlessness but rather maturity, completeness, and the fulfilment of purpose — the ability to bring a process to its proper conclusion. Here, τέλειος suggests that endurance has led to the creation of perfect works, which in turn shape moral character. Within the Jewish wisdom tradition, the term refers to a person who is fully developed, steadfast, and whole, rather than to someone who is ontologically perfect. Trials and endurance, therefore, aim at ethical wholeness, the hallmark of the “perfect person” (Laws, 1980:64–65; Johnson, 1995:178–180; Allison, 2013:172–173; Davids, 1983:68–69).

The adjective δλόκληροι reinforces the notion of achieving this state. Visser (2022:176) notes that the construction rhetorically links the perfection of “faith” with its “work” (James 1:4; 2:22), and associates perfection also with the law (James 1:25; 2:8, 10) and with wisdom (1:5, 17). Wolmarans (1994:73) interprets τέλειος through the metaphor of refining precious metals, where impurities are removed. Completeness implies freedom from being a “double-minded man” (ἀνὴρ δίψυχος, James 1:8) who lacks self-control (ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ). Davids (1983:69) highlights the paradox of ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι: trials, which appear to create a lack, produce moral and spiritual wholeness, if endurance is allowed to complete its work.

Endurance (ὑπομονή) assumes a time frame: endurance until when? James 1:12 answers: the person (ἀνὴρ) who endures trial (ὃς ὑπομένει πειρασμόν)⁹⁹ and is approved will receive the crown of life promised to those who love God (λήμψεται τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς ὃν ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν). This aligns with the eschatological outlook in other sections of James (2:5; 4:12; 5:1, 6, 7, 9, 12), and with Paul (Romans 5:25) and Peter (1 Peter 1:6–7), who interpret trials in light of the coming reward. In James, endurance is ultimately aimed at the return of Christ, the lawgiver and judge (4:12).¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Matthew 5:28 also suggests this notion: ἔσεσθε οὖν ὑμεῖς τέλειοι ὡς ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τέλειός ἐστιν. — You, therefore, must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. The term τέλειοι (perfect) here, as in James 1:4, does not refer to moral perfection but to wholeness, completeness, or maturity in love and mercy. This verse highlights Jesus’ call to radical love. Matthew 5, which introduces the Sermon on the Mount, stresses the importance of doing good deeds such as making peace with others (5:21–26), avoiding sexual misconduct (27–30), refraining from divorce (31–32), not taking oaths (33–37), resisting revenge (38–5:42), and loving your enemies (5:43–48), resulting in being τέλειοι (perfect).

⁹⁹ The reference of πειρασμόν in this context will be discussed in Chapter 8 of this research.

¹⁰⁰ Penner (1993) emphasises the eschatological framework of the Epistle of James.

Regarding the address ἀδελφοί μου (“my brothers”) in 1:2, Visser (2022) argues that the concept of τέλειος is continually negotiated and redefined throughout James, and that it reflects Greco-Roman ideals of perfection when read through the lens of ancient masculinity discourse. In James 1:8, the double-minded man (ἀνὴρ δίψυχος) without self-control stands in sharp contrast to the perfect and complete man (τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι). These rhetorical and cultural associations imply that James mainly targets a male audience, presenting endurance, perfection, and self-control as masculine qualities that characterise male bodies.

5.2.4 Summary of Phase 1: structural and rhetorical mapping (textual-rhetorical phase)

The type of chiasmus in James 1:2–4, which suggests multiple effects and mutually influencing relationships (Grausso, 2020:103–104), is schematically presented in **Figure 5.2**:

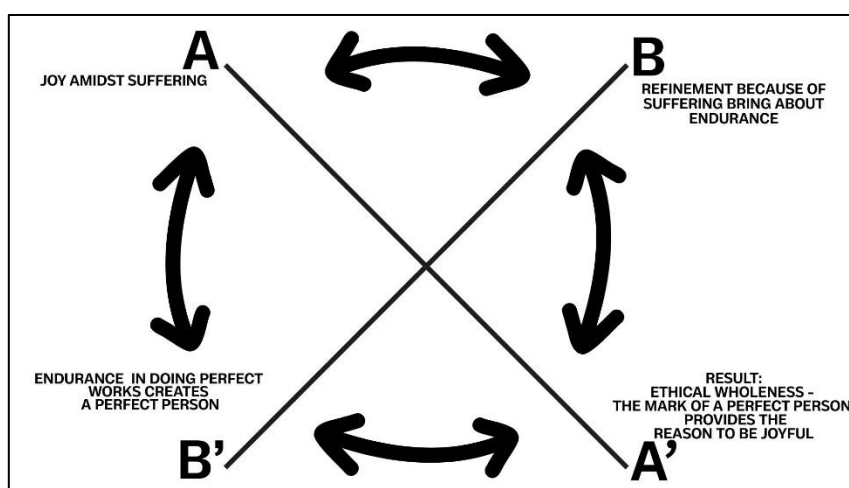


Figure 5.2: Multiple-effect chiastic structure in James 1:2–4

Source: Author’s own illustration.

As in James 1:1, the chiasmus in 1:2–4 operates on multiple levels, weaving together symmetry and progressive movement into a single rhetorical structure. Its pattern combines chiasm with climax: the opening call to joy amid trials culminates in maturity and completeness. The inversion is significant, as what begins with external hardship ends in internal wholeness. The mirrored elements are deliberate: trials (**A**) foster joy, endurance (**B**) shapes moral character, and the return to completeness (**A'**) fulfils the movement’s course. Testing (1:3) and endurance (1:4) serve as reflective counterparts, each highlighting the other’s role. Framed by the call to rejoice and the vision of perfection, the structure transitions from the disruptive reality of suffering to the

harmonious goal of moral and spiritual integrity, embodying in its very form the transformation it advocates.

The address ἀδελφοί μου (“my brothers”) in 1:2 signifies not only fraternal closeness but also positions the audience within a moral-ethical ideal closely associated with ancient Greco-Roman masculinity. According to Visser (2022), James’s concept of τέλειος is dynamic, continually negotiated and reframed in relation to classical ideals of moral perfection and completeness. Within this framework, the contrast between the ἀνὴρ δίψυχος of James 1:8, characterised by instability and lack of self-control, and the τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι of James 1:4, highlights a cultural script in which endurance, self-control, and perfection mark masculine virtue. James thus establishes a rhetorical tension: the double-minded man serves as a cautionary counter-image, while the perfected man represents the *telos* of the epistle’s exhortation. This dynamic enables the discourse to function as moral instruction, a means of identity formation, and a redefinition of manliness under the lordship of Christ.

In the Epistle of James, endurance (ὑπομονή) is characterised as a temporally bounded, eschatologically oriented perseverance that anticipates the return of Christ as lawgiver and judge. This endurance promises the “crown of life” to individuals who faithfully withstand trials, thereby integrating moral steadfastness with the assurance of divine vindication.

5.3 Phase 2: embodied and socio-cultural engagement (embodied cognitive phase)

5.3.1 The metallurgical metaphor implied by James 1:2-4

As noted in paragraph 2.1.2, 1 Peter 1:6–7, Song of Solomon 3:5–6 (LXX), 1QH V,16, Sirach 2:5 (LXX), Seneca’s *De Providentia* 5.10, and James 1:2–4 all employ the metaphor of refinement, especially gold tested by fire, to depict how trials expose, strengthen, or purify a person’s character, faith, or virtue. This comparative analysis examines six passages in terms of their metaphorical imagery, theological or philosophical aims, and test outcomes. These intertexts, drawn from Jewish, Christian, and Stoic traditions, employ the image of a refining fire to depict the intensifying pressure of trials that purify and reveal the core of one’s inner life — whether faith, virtue, or righteousness (**see Table 5.2**).

Table 5.2: Comparative analysis of testing imagery in Jewish, Christian, and Stoic texts

SOURCE	TRANSLATION	METAPHOR	WHAT/ WHO IS TESTED?	PURPOSE	OUTCOME
Seneca, De Providentia 5.10	Ignis aurum probat, miseria fortes viros. (Fire tests gold; adversity tests strong men.)	Fire is the test of gold.	Strong men.	Suffering exposes the virtue and bravery of the wise.	Ethical nobility, Stoic resilience, and self-mastery.
1QH V,16 (Thanks-giving Hymns from Qumran)	צרפתי בכור נסיד כזהב באש (You have refined me in the crucible of Your testing, like gold in the fire).	Crucible and fire as divine instruments.	A person before God.	God tests the faithful servant's heart and loyalty.	Purity, covenantal faithfulness, and a deeper intimacy with God.
Sirach 2:5 (LXX)	Ὅτι ἐν πυρὶ δοκιμάζεται χρυσίον, καὶ ἄνθρωποι δεκτοὶ ἐν καμίνῳ ταπεινώσεως. (For gold is tested in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation).	Metallurgical imagery: gold in fire, people in humiliation.	Acceptable people.	Testing acceptable men (ἄνθρωποι δεκτοί).	Proven character and divine favour.
Wisdom of Solomon 3:5–6 (LXX)	ὥς χρυσὸς ἐν χωνευτηρίῳ ἐδοκίμασεν αὐτούς. (He tested them like gold in a furnace and accepted them as a whole burnt offering).	God tests the righteous like gold in a crucible.	The righteous.	Divine approval and cleansing are achieved through suffering.	Acceptance by God and the promise of future reward.

SOURCE	TRANSLATION	METAPHOR	WHAT/ WHO IS TESTED?	PURPOSE	OUTCOME
1 Peter 1:7	ἵνα τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως πολυτιμότερον χρυσίου τοῦ ἀπολλυμένου διὰ πυρὸς δὲ δοκιμαζομένου, εὐρεθῇ εἰς ἔπαινον καὶ δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν ἐν ἀποκαλύψει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. (So that the genuineness of your faith — more precious than gold that perishes, though refined by fire — may result in praise, glory and honour).	Refinement of gold through fire (χρυσίον διὰ πυρὸς).	Faith	To demonstrate the genuineness (δοκίμιον) of faith.	Eschatologi- cal honour and glory at Christ's revelation.
James 1:3	δοκιμάζεσθαι ὑμῶν τὴν πίστιν κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν. (The testing of your faith produces endurance).	Not explicitly metallurgical, but “testing” (δοκιμή) implies a sense of proving like metals.	Faith	Formation of steadfastness (ὑπομονή) and spiritual maturity.	Wholeness and perfection (τέλειος καὶ ὁλόκληρος).

Source: Author's own summary.

Across Jewish, Christian, and Stoic traditions, the refining fire serves as a shared metaphor for the intensifying pressure of trials, which both purify and expose the essence of one's inner life — whether faith, virtue, or righteousness. Jewish writings such as Wisdom, Sirach, and 1QH frame testing as divinely initiated, carrying covenantal or eschatological weight. New Testament texts like James and 1 Peter shift the focus to faith as the element under trial, presenting endurance (ὑπομονή) and spiritual maturity as the desired outcomes. At the same time, they refrain from naming the source of testing, but they affirm its eschatological value. In contrast, Seneca removes the divine agent yet retains the metaphor's moral force, portraying trials as the crucible in which the virtuous character is formed.

5.3.2 The metallurgical metaphor interpreted as a conceptual metaphor

The metaphor of refinement through fire functions by translating experiential knowledge from the physical process of metal purification into the abstract process of human moral, spiritual, or existential development. According to Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory of conceptual metaphor, the source domain of this implied metaphor is the smelting and refining of metal in fire, while the target domain is human suffering, spiritual testing, or moral growth. The conceptual structure of the metaphor implied in James 1:2–4 is summarised in **Table 5.3**.

Table 5.3: Source–target domain mapping of the refining-fire metaphor in James 1:2–4

SOURCE DOMAIN (REFINING METAL)	TARGET DOMAIN (HUMAN EXPERIENCE)
Unrefined gold or silver	Unpolished faith
Furnace/fire	Suffering, trials
Dross and impurities	Sin, doubt (James 1:6), weakness, moral flaws
Refiner or metalworker	? Not discussed in James 1:2–4. James 1:13 explicitly states that God tempts no one and is not tempted by anyone (Μηδεὶς πειραζόμενος λεγέτω ὅτι ἀπὸ θεοῦ πειράζομαι· ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἀπείραστός ἐστιν κακῶν, πειράζει δὲ αὐτὸς οὐδέν).
Purified, shining metal	Proven character, mature faith, divine approval.

Source: Author's own summary.

The metaphor of refining fire resonates cognitively because it is rooted in embodied experience: humans understand, through sight, touch, and memory, the intense heat, transformation, and purification that fire produces. This physical schema, which transforms and strengthens metal through heat, easily maps onto emotional and spiritual life, helping audiences grasp the transformative power of adversity. Within the cultural and social frameworks of Jewish, Christian, and Greco-Roman thought, fire becomes a naturalised symbol of purposeful suffering rather than random affliction. Endurance through trials signifies ethical completeness: steadfastness, loyalty, and integration into the moral order. This mapping, embedded in shared material practices and social values, aligns with the ancient ideal of the *teleios* person (Laws, 1980:64–65; Johnson, 1995:178–180; Allison, 2013:172–173; Davids, 1983:68–69). The metaphor of refining fire is further enhanced by its effective rhetography.

5.3.3 The rhetography of the metallurgical metaphor

While conceptual metaphor theory describes the mapping, rhetography investigates how metaphor functions as a form of visual and symbolic communication. The rhetography of the refinement metaphor not only suggests that suffering leads to growth but also allows the audience to see and experience it. When James 1:2–4 (and related texts) invoke imagery of testing and refining, they draw on a visually rich schema grounded in embodied experience. This embodied image schema may be outlined as follows in **Table 5.4**.

Table 5.4: The rhetography of the refinement metaphor

A furnace or crucible, glowing hot with fire.
A smith or refiner observes and manipulates the process of refining raw gold or silver, impure and unrefined.
Smoke, heat, and the transformation of material under pressure.
The separation of dross from pure metal.
The final product: shining, tested, and valuable.

Source: Author's own synthesis.

The sensory immersion includes feeling the fire's heat and glow, smelling the smoke, sensing the danger inherent in the refining process, and experiencing the pain that can accompany the transformation of material under pressure. The audience might imagine themselves inside the crucible, undergoing trials, suffering, and purification; however, James 1:2–4 does not explicitly mention the smith or the refiner. The theological message indicates that trials and suffering serve a purpose rather than occur randomly. Such imagery goes beyond logical reasoning to evoke an embodied, emotional understanding of trials as essential to purification and transformation. Therefore, rhetography allows the metaphor to function not only as an explanation but also as a means of spiritual growth.

5.3.4 The embodied effect of the chiasmus presented in James 1:2-4

The multi-effect chiasmus evident in James 1:2–4 corresponds with Jamin Pelkey's concept of a rhombic, or combined, chiasmus, in which multiple rhetorical layers converge around a central developmental axis. In this passage, that axis is *endurance* (ὑπομονή), which functions as the generative centre through which the surrounding elements mutually influence one another. This rhombic configuration is illustrated in **Figure 5.3**.

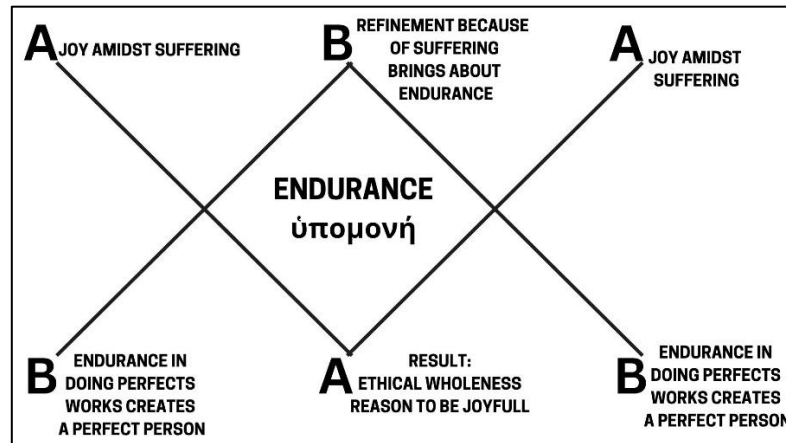


Figure 5.3: Rhombic (multi-effect) chiasmus in James 1:2–4

Source: Author’s own representation.

Pelkey (2021:30–54) identifies three defining features of a rhombic chiasmus. First, it assumes a geometrical form that can be bodily perceived, moving inward and outward through patterns of contraction, expansion, and release (Pelkey, 2021:33–35). Second, it generates a “third space,” in which the diamond’s centre produces a new term that holds apparent opposites in creative tension while enabling their convergence (Pelkey, 2021:39–41). Third, the rhombic chiasmus performs a cognitive function: rather than serving as a purely decorative device, it carries conceptual weight by guiding audiences from disorientation or alienation toward reflective and engaged participation (Pelkey, 2021:46–48).

This framework sheds light on the structure and role of James 1:2–4, where the rhombic chiasmus functions as a “mirroring progression.” It shifts the view of suffering — usually seen as negative — into a reason for joy, guided by the interpretative command *ἡγέομαι* (“consider,” 1:2). Instead of instinctively resisting or despairing, believers are encouraged to reflect on trials, seeing endurance (James 1:3–4) as a key process shaping spiritual maturity, described as being “perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (*τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι*). Through this mirrored movement, perception is transformed: trials are not seen as pointless disruptions but as deliberate experiences aimed at an ethical and theological purpose.

The centre of the chiasmus serves as the generative “third term,” inviting constructive engagement with suffering that fosters perseverance and sustained ethical action despite hardship. In this way, the chiasmus is not merely a structural feature but a rhetorical and transformative mechanism. It embodies the wholeness it proclaims, drawing readers into a reframing of adversity within a theological horizon of meaning.

Against this backdrop, a further question emerges: how does the emphasis on endurance amid adversity in James 1:2–4 relate to the implied figure of the “suffering slave” introduced in James 1:1? Exploring this connection allows for a more profound articulation of the passage’s theological and ethical coherence, which is taken up in the discussion that follows.

5.4 Phase 3: theological and ethical synthesis (theological-ethical phase)

5.4.1 The ideological and sacral texture of James 1:2–4

Perkins (1995:214) stresses the importance of the discourse of suffering¹⁰¹ in the formation of early Christianity, identity formation:

The production of this subjectivity, the recognition and acceptance of a self-definition of sufferer, was essential for the growth of Christianity as an institution. Christianity offered itself as a community of sufferers and could not have developed had it lacked subjects present to respond to its call...Christianity did not produce its suffering subject alone... this subjectivity was under construction and emerged from multiple locations in the Graeco-Roman world.

As argued in Chapter 4, the author identifies himself as a *servant* of God and Jesus Christ. By calling himself a slave (δοῦλος) and presenting his introduction as a title, he seeks to motivate his audience to follow him as suffering and wise servants of both. James 1:1 begins with the δοῦλος-title, and the rest of the epistle encourages perseverance through trials, self-control, and humble submission to God. Although not explicitly about slavery, James’s ethical approach aligns with this motif.¹⁰² In James 1:2–4, it is stated that enduring trials foster spiritual growth, that submission to God leads to exaltation (4:7–10), and that patience in suffering, like that of the prophets and Job (5:10–11), is emphasised. The rhetoric of alienation and disorientation (stated in James 1:1) is further reiterated in the letter, serving as a link between identity formation (to be a slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ) and experiences of suffering. James presents a δοῦλος (slave) as one who endures the process of testing with joy, trusting that the refining process leads to spiritual

¹⁰¹ Carr (2014:2) also emphasises that suffering and trauma have been crucial in shaping the identity of Biblical writers: “The accident, combined with my reading on trauma, allowed me to see the Bible with fresh eyes. It sensitized me to ways that both the Jewish and Christian scriptures were formed in the context of centuries of catastrophic suffering.”

¹⁰² The idea of the suffering slave is clear and central in 1 Peter 3:17 and 4:12–19. Throughout the letter, it is emphasised that suffering for righteousness aligns believers with Christ and will be rewarded at the end of time. This servant role evolves into a Christ-centred identity: believers are not only imitators of Christ but also active participants in His suffering (see 1 Peter 4:13). The letter develops a typology in which literal slaves, and by extension, all believers, reflect Christ’s suffering. The moral reasoning is that suffering for righteousness is honourable, spiritually shaping, and of great eschatological importance (De Wet, 2013:5–24).

wholeness and reward (Μακάριος ἄνθρωπος ὃς ὑπομένει πειρασμόν, ὅτι δόκιμος γενόμενος λήμψεται τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς ὃν ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν – Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial/temptation¹⁰³, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him [James 1:12]). James develops a theological view of humanity that emphasises servanthood, in which suffering, when rightly endured, is not shameful but a sign of divine connection and moral resilience. The discussion of the flow of the argument presented in James 1:2–4 has revealed that the author of James has a masculine audience in mind. Endurance, perfection, and self-control are portrayed as masculine traits that define male bodies (Visser, 2022).

Unlike 1 Peter, however, the reference to Christ as the model of suffering (1 Peter 4:13–17) is absent. In this sense, James reflects the rich tradition of being a suffering servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, without specifically emphasising Christ's suffering as Paul and Peter do.¹⁰⁴

Since one of the aims of this study is to investigate the theoretical framework that carnal hermeneutics provides for an embodied understanding of James 1:1–27, the concept of the suffering slave and James 1:2–4 will be briefly examined.

5.4.2 The theological and ethical implications of the suffering slave-concept: exploring the sacral texture of the text

Kearney (2015:53) sees embodiment as more than biology; it is the nexus of ethical relation, agency, and vulnerability. His distinction between *Leib* (the lived body, felt from within) and *Körper* (the visible, acted-upon body)¹⁰⁵ frames the body as both a site of suffering and connection, “most mine and most other” (Kearney, 2015:51). It is where one acts and is acted upon, a threshold open to injury, touch, and ethical encounter.

¹⁰³ The translation and interpretation of this verse are explained in Chapter 8 of this research.

¹⁰⁴ In this regard, the research works of Martin, D.B. (1990) *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity*. New Haven: Yale University Press and De Wet, C.L. (2018) *The unbound God: Slavery and the formation of early Christian thought*. London and New York: Routledge are noteworthy.

¹⁰⁵ Kearney (2015:120) notes: “In order for my flesh to engage in the work of “transfer by analogy,” whereby I can enter an intersubjective world with others and empathize with them, I must have both an intimate body for me (*Leib*) and a physical natural body among other bodies (*Körper*). This involves a complex intertwining (*Verflechtung/entrelacs*) whereby I experience myself as someone in a shared world.” Kearney thus builds on this phenomenological distinction to argue that all interpretation is mediated through the flesh (*Leib*), not despite it. Whereas *Körper* reduces the body to objecthood, *Leib* highlights the body as the locus of lived experience, vulnerability, and encounter with the Other. In his view, hermeneutics must therefore attend to the carnal dimension of meaning: how truth is disclosed in touch, suffering, compassion, and desire.

Read through this lens, James’s self-designation as “a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (James 1:1) embodies both *Leib*, an interior *habitus* of obedience, humility, and surrender, and *Körper*, exposure to shared persecution, scrutiny, and possible martyrdom. This servanthood models moral authority grounded in shared endurance rather than dominance. Addressing “the twelve tribes in the diaspora” (ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ) unites a dispersed community in mutual vulnerability: trials (πειρασμός) touch the *lived body* through inner alienation¹⁰⁶, and the *visible acted upon and shared body* through social exclusion and hardship¹⁰⁷. Nevertheless, by reframing adversity as a refining fire, James links testing (δοκίμιον) to endurance (ὑπομονή), which yields mature wholeness (τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι) culminating in eschatological reward (τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς) implied in James 1:12.

James employs a rhombic chiasmus, described as a “mirroring progression” that returns, alongside the implied metaphor of refining metal and sensory rhetography, to immerse the audience in the heat, danger, and painful transformation of the forge. According to Kearney, bodily fragility serves as the means for ethical and spiritual development: endurance transforms vulnerability into resilience, rendering the “suffering slave” not only a metaphor but also an embodied theological reality in which weakness becomes the forge of divine maturity. From an embodied-cognitive perspective, shared suffering provides a foundation for forming habits through which ethical tendencies are expressed and reinforced, ultimately leading to ethical and spiritual completeness that anticipates the promised eschatological reward.

5.5 Conclusion

The following structured table summarises the key ideas presented in James 1:2–4 and links them to the study's research objectives (**Table 5.5**).

Table 5.5: Key themes in James 1:2–4 and their relation to the research objectives

ASPECT	SUMMARY
Type of chiasmus	Multiple effects, mutually influencing relationships; combines chiasmus with climax; symmetry and progression are intertwined.

¹⁰⁶ The factors which cause alienation will be discussed further in this study.

¹⁰⁷ The factors which cause exclusion and hardship will be further discussed.

ASPECT	SUMMARY
Pattern and movement	Joy in trials (A) leads to endurance (B), which results in completeness (A'); testing (1:3) reflects endurance (1:4); the progression moves from hardship to wholeness.
Rhetorical function	Represents the transformation from suffering to moral and spiritual integrity; form reflects content.
Audience positioning	Addressing “my brothers” frames hearers within a moral-ethical ideal rooted in Greco-Roman masculine discourse.
Eschatological dimension	Endurance (ὕπομονή) as steadfast perseverance over time, awaiting Christ’s return; “crown of life” promised to the steadfast.
Metaphor of refinement through fire and rhetography	Converts experiential knowledge of metal purification into the abstract process of moral and spiritual development. In Lakoff & Johnson’s (1980) conceptual metaphor theory, the source domain is the smelting or refining of metal in fire; the target domain is human suffering, spiritual testing, and moral growth. Given the embodied experience of heat and transformation, this mapping resonates cognitively and aligns with Jewish, Christian, and Greco-Roman ideals of purposeful suffering. Endurance becomes ethical completeness — steadfast, loyal, and integrated into the moral order — thereby embodying the ancient <i>teleios</i> ideal. Rhetorically reinforced for persuasive impact.
Embodied rhombic chiasmus, the pragmatic effect	The rhombic chiasmus transforms suffering into meaningful joy, using mirrored progression to guide the audience from trials through endurance to spiritual wholeness, thereby embodying the completeness it promotes.
Theological-ethical aspect	From Kearney’s perspective, James 1:1–4 presents servanthood as an embodied paradox enacted through the integration of <i>Leib</i> (internally experienced, affective obedience) and <i>Körper</i> (externally visible, socially shared vulnerability). Trials function as repeated embodied encounters that engage sensorimotor experience, emotional appraisal, and practical response, thereby cultivating resilience over time. This process is rhetorically structured through rhombic chiasmus and concretised through the imagery of refining fire, enabling readers to mentally simulate transformation through endurance.

Source: Author’s own synthesis.

In Chapter 6, James 1:5–8 is examined within a multidimensional hermeneutical framework, emphasising the figure of the wise servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 6 THE WISE SLAVE OF GOD AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (JAMES 1:5–8)

Wisdom is not a remote, aloof abstraction, but a presence embedded in the world, delighting in its complexity, groaning in its suffering, and calling us to justice.

(Johnson 1992:91)

6.1 Introduction

A new pericope is introduced in James 1:5. In James 1:2–4, the second person is addressed (ἀδελφοί μου), while the third person is introduced in James 1:5. James 1:4 is linked to vers 1:5 by the repetition of forms of λείπω (λειπόμενοι in 1:4 and λείπεται in 1:5)¹⁰⁸. James 1:5–8 displays various surface rhetorical and stylistic features that enhance its persuasive and memorable quality. The passage is built around a conditional appeal (Εἰ δέ τις ὑμῶν λείπεται σοφίας ... [If any of you lacks wisdom]), followed by an encouragement to petition God (αἰτείτω παρὰ [τοῦ διδόντος] θεοῦ ... [ask from God]) and whose generous nature is highlighted through an asyndetic pleonasm¹⁰⁹ [τοῦ διδόντος] πᾶσιν ἀπλῶς καὶ μὴ ὀνειδίζοντος. [who gives to all generously and without reproach]).

It uses vivid metaphorical language, especially in verse 6, where the doubting petitioner is compared to a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind (κλύδωνι θαλάσσης ἀνεμιζομένῳ καὶ ῥιπιζομένῳ)¹¹⁰, a metaphor evoking chaos, instability, and external influence. This theme is reinforced by the *hapax legomenon*¹¹¹ δίψυχος ("double-minded") in verse 8, suggesting a fractured or duplicitous inner state. The passage's rhythm and oral impact are reinforced by

¹⁰⁸ This is an example of anadiplosis. It creates cohesion, emphasis, and often a sense of progression or intensification (Jordaan, 2014:166).

¹⁰⁹ A pleonasm (πλεονασμός, meaning "excess") is a stylistic device where more words are used than necessary to convey a message, often by restating an idea with different wording. There are two main types: 1. Intentional pleonasm—used for emphasis, rhythm, or stylistic effect, such as in "I saw it with my own eyes," where the phrase "with my own eyes" is redundant but adds emphasis. In biblical Hebrew and Greek, pleonasms often serve to reinforce or clarify meaning (e.g., "He answered and said..."). 2. Unintentional pleonasm—considered tautological or redundant, like "free gift," because a gift is inherently free (Blass, Debrunner and Funk, 1961 §484; Jordaan, 2014:172).

¹¹⁰ Another example of pleonasm.

¹¹¹ In the context of the New Testament or Hebrew Bible, a *hapax legomenon* is a word that appears only once in the entire corpus. ῥιπιζομένῳ (ῥιπιζόμενος) in 1:6 and ἀκατάστατος (1:8) are also examples of a *hapax legomenon*.

alliteration, assonance and *homoioleuton*¹¹² in James 1:6, κλύδωνι θαλάσσης ἀνεμιζομένῳ καὶ ῥιπιζομένῳ.

Chapter 6 investigates the ring-structure chiasmus in James 1:5–8 and elucidates the progression of the argument within phase one of the multidimensional hermeneutic approach, specifically the structural and rhetorical mapping (textual–rhetorical investigation). The analysis addresses both the internal texture of the passage and its intertextual relationships. Attention is given to the continuity between James 1:2–4 and 1:5–8, with a focus on the semantic significance of wisdom (σοφία, 1:5) as the central thematic connection.

The chapter offers a detailed analysis of two central metaphors: the doubter, likened to a wave driven and tossed by the wind (1:6), and the double-minded person (δίψυχος in James 1:8), whose instability (ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ) illustrates divided loyalty. The study examines the origin and intertextual background of the *hapax legomenon* δίψυχος within the broader literary and theological context of the epistle. Furthermore, the chapter underscores the rhetorical impact of the ring-structure chiasmus, which intensifies the argument.

Finally, within the theological and ethical synthesis of the multidimensional hermeneutic approach, the chapter examines the concept of the “wise slave” introduced in James 1:1 and shows how this identity is further developed and implicitly framed in 1:5–8.

6.2 Phase 1: structural and rhetorical mapping (textual-rhetorical phase)

6.2.1 The flow of the argument

James 1:5–8 is a rhetorically sophisticated passage that lends itself to chiastic analysis. Based on its rhetorical flow, the passage may be mapped as a *ring-structure chiasmus*¹¹³, as illustrated in **Figure 6.1**.

¹¹² *Homoioleuton* refers to the repetition of similar endings in nearby words, often in sequence, producing rhyme-like or rhythmic effects.

¹¹³ In novels and epic poems, chiasmus frequently appears as a ring structure, characterised by a balanced pattern of recurring themes or episodes within the plot (Grausso, 2020:9). While a passage is read linearly from start to finish, it also involves a movement from the outer edges inward towards the centre (Brouwer, 2018:105–106). The text's central message is revealed at its core.

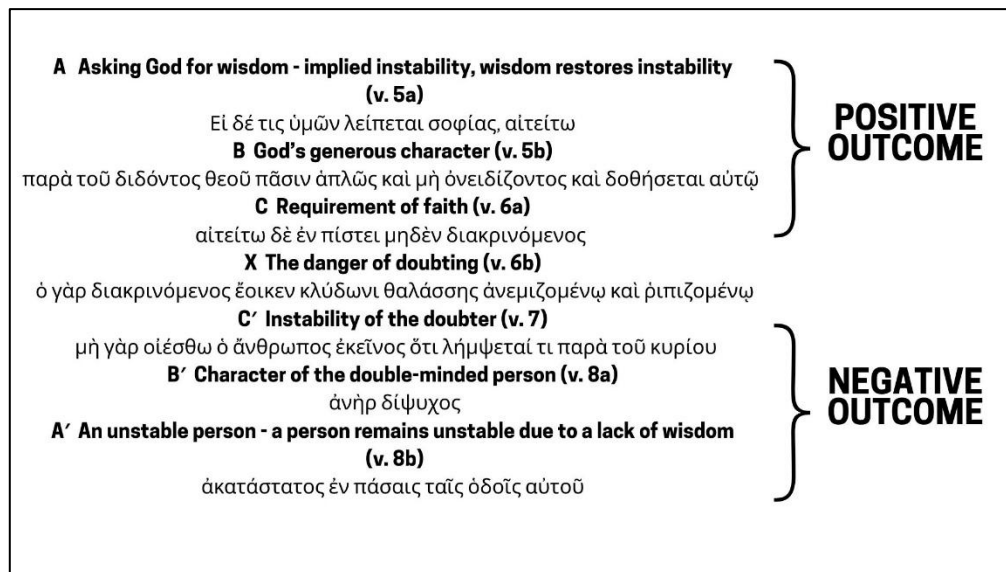


Figure 6.1: Ring-structure chiasmus in James 1:5–8

Source: Author's own representation.

The ring structure is explained as follows:

- The **centre (X)**, the image of the wave tossed by the wind, serves as the conceptual metaphor that anchors the admonition.
- The **outer layers (A/A')** describe a person's state, either lacking wisdom or exhibiting instability due to a deficiency in wisdom, either with a sense of hope for restoration or reflecting an unstable life caused by this deficiency.
- The **next layer (B/B')** contrasts God's generous character with that of the double-minded individual.
- The **middle layer (C/C')** connects asking in faith for wisdom to the impossibility of receiving without faith.

The ring structure demonstrates a shift from a positive to a negative outcome. It depicts the actions of a person seeking wisdom through faith, contrasted with the so-called doubter, portrayed as unstable and double-minded. The various sections of the ring are examined to clarify the presumed relationships between the parts.

6.2.2 The connection between James 1:2-4 and verse 5 (the A-part of the ring structure chiasmus: exploring the implicit semantic reference of σοφία (wisdom))

Wolmarans (1994:78) emphasises that the shift from endurance-focused trials to praying for wisdom reflects an associative connection. This is illustrated by *λειπόμενοι* (the final word of verse 4) being repeated as *λείπεται* in verse 5 through anadiplosis. Such repetition exemplifies James's associative style,¹¹⁴ in which repeated words do not necessarily imply that the argument's or narrative's logical flow depends solely on their meanings.

However, Davids (1983:28–34) and Johnson (1995:171) observe that the shift from verse 4 to verse 5 is not contradictory (“lacking nothing” versus “lacking wisdom”) but rather a rhetorical narrowing: the overarching goal of maturity is achieved by addressing specific needs along the way, with wisdom being the most urgent during trials. The juxtaposition suggests that spiritual maturity relies on God's generous giving; the “completeness” of verse 4 pertains not to human self-sufficiency but to the continual reception of what God supplies. Johnson (1995:171) affirms that this reinforces James's theme that Christian wholeness (*teleios*) is a dynamic process cultivated through divine-human interaction. Martin (1988:18) links the concepts of wisdom and perfection as they are presented in James 1:4. Martin quotes an example from Wisdom 9:6¹¹⁵ to illustrate the close connection between perfection and wisdom. Martin (1988:18) argues that it is also a familiar theme in wisdom literature to link wisdom with testing. Laws (1980:54) comments that wisdom is regarded as a virtue that must be achieved among all virtues.

Commentators frequently overlook James's associative style. As Wolmarans (1994:78) observes, the connection between verses 1:4 and 1:5 is implicit. It cannot be simply reduced to the repetition of *λειπόμενοι* and *λείπεται*, as argued by Davids (1983:28–34), Johnson (1995:171), Martin (1988:18), and Laws (1980:54). This study contends that the link is established through the meaning of *σοφία* (wisdom). Since no significant research has examined *σοφία* to uncover this implicit connection, the current analysis explores the text's inner and intertextual textures, focusing on the nature of Jewish wisdom within a multidimensional hermeneutic context.

¹¹⁴ The repetition of *χαίρειν* (1:1) and *χαρὰν* (1:2) is an example of James's associative style.

¹¹⁵ *καὶν γὰρ τις ἢ τέλειος ἐν υἱοῖς ἀνθρώπων τῆς ἀπὸ σοῦ σοφίας ἀπούσης εἰς οὐδὲν λογισθῆσεται* – For even if someone should be perfect among human beings, yet lacking the wisdom that comes from you, he will be accounted as nothing.

Researchers¹¹⁶ often note James's deep roots in the Jewish wisdom tradition. Wold (2019:74–75) points out that a central theme in James's teaching is wisdom, revealed by God (1:5) and bestowed "from above" (3:15). In James 3:13–15, this wisdom is inseparably linked to moral conduct. Wisdom "which does not come from above" (οὐκ ἔστιν αὕτη ἡ σοφία ἄνωθεν κατερχομένη) is described as earthly (ἐπίγειος), unspiritual or fleshly (ψυχική), and demonic (δαιμονιώδης), producing disorder (ἀκαταστασία) and every kind of evil (πᾶν φαῦλον πρᾶγμα). By contrast, "wisdom from above" (ἄνωθεν σοφία) is marked by purity (ἀγνή) and expressed through peace, gentleness, tolerance, obedience, mercy, good fruits, impartiality, and sincerity (εἰρηνική, ἐπιεική, εὐπειθής, μεστή ἐλέους καὶ καρπῶν ἀγαθῶν, ἀδιάκριτος, ἀνυπόκριτος; cf. James 3:16).

Chapter 5, paragraph 5.2.3, argues that the phrase ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ ἔργον τέλειον ἐχέτω ("let endurance have a perfect work") refers to the shaping of character through deeds, one becomes what one does. Luck (1984:22) identifies this as a hallmark of Jewish wisdom theology: "Für die jüdische Weisheitstheologie gilt: Der Mensch ist das was er tut. Das ἐργάζεσθαι macht das Sein des Menschen aus."¹¹⁷ Loader (1986:103–106) explains that the Jewish wisdom teacher seeks coherence and order in creation, guiding disciples to live in harmony with it and to recognise God as the creator of that order. Acting wisely means heeding this instruction, acknowledging God's authority, and aligning with creation's structure, an approach that brings success. By contrast, those who reject such instruction disrupt God's order and are branded as fools. Bauckham (1999:40) adds that wisdom is conveyed by the sage, whose authority rests on experience,

¹¹⁶ Mason (2019:27–44), Wold (2019:73–86), Cheung and Yu (2019:87–98), Bauckham (1999), Allison (2013), Davids (1983), Laws (1980), Dibelius and Greeven (1976), Johnson (1995), Lockett (2008:269–287), Hartin (1991, 1999), Botha (2006:100–118). In recent years, there has been a gradual consensus in favour of aligning James with wisdom literature. Hartin (1991, 1999) convincingly argues that, although James adopts the letter form, it belongs to the genre of wisdom literature. He further suggests that, beyond these formal wisdom features, James addresses traditional Jewish wisdom themes such as testing faith (James 1:2; Proverbs 27:21; Job 1–2), controlling the tongue (James 1:26; Sirach 5:13), and concern for the poor (James 1:27; Proverbs 19:17; 31:9). There are also notable thematic similarities between James and the Testament of Job, another Jewish wisdom writing. Wold (2019:73–86) discusses James's close relationship with Instruction (1Q26, 4Q415, 4Q416, 4Q47, 4Q418, 4Q423), emphasising God as the revealer of wisdom, a dualistic cosmology explaining the devil and demons as the origin of evil and sin, and a shared eschatological dimension. Bauckham (1999:99–101) compares James's wisdom sayings with those of Jesus to demonstrate the epistles' reliance on specific Jesus-sayings, asserting that Jesus has significantly influenced James's wisdom. The author distinguishes James, as a Jewish wisdom teacher, who continues the wisdom of Jesus (1999:40–42). Concerning James's source of Jesus-sayings, he states: "In conclusion, while James was acquainted with quite a wide range of sayings of Jesus relevant to his subject matter, it is probably not possible to know in what form he knew them" (Bauckham, 2019:26).

¹¹⁷ Translation: "For Jewish wisdom theology, a person is what he does. The ἐργάζεσθαι constitutes the very being of the human."

observation, insight, and reflection. The sage supports their teaching with reasons, analogies, and everyday examples, enabling listeners to see and interpret the world in a particular way.

James believes that a person's character is formed by their actions. This idea underlies his urging in James 1:25 to be a doer of the word, his statement that "faith without works is dead" (2:14–26), and his praise of Abraham and Rahab for their deeds (2:20–25). In line with the wisdom tradition, James sees σοφία as knowledge of proper behaviour, also reflected in James 3:13–18. The connection between James 1:2–4 and 1:5 lies in his call to persist in doing good works. Wisdom from above shows how to endure in doing what is right, leading to a state of being "perfect and complete, lacking nothing," (τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι)¹¹⁸. The implied reward for such wise action appears in 1:12: the "crown of life" (ὁ στέφανος τῆς ζωῆς)¹¹⁹ is promised to those who love God (λήμψεται τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς ὃν ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν). These principles, closely connected to σοφία, are illustrated schematically in **Figure 6.2**.

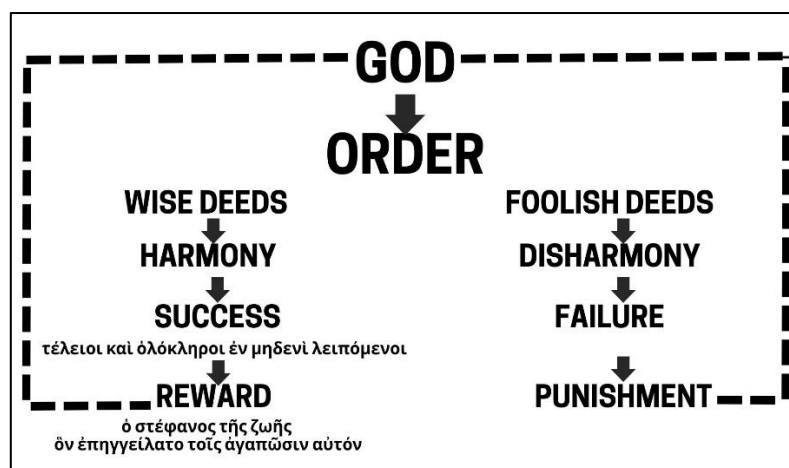


Figure 6.2: Principles associated with Σοφία in James 1:5–8

Source: Author's own representation.

¹¹⁸ Hartin (1999:60–91) argues that for James, this concept of perfection is crucial and that the whole letter should be interpreted with this in mind. There is a call to perfection through enduring trials (1:2–4, 12–15; 5:7–11). In James, wisdom and perfection are inherently connected (1:5–8, 17; 3:13–18; 4:1–10). The gift of wisdom is the key ingredient for a life of perfection. "Wisdom is the context for the attaining of perfection ... The wise are indeed 'the perfect' because they acknowledge their "exclusive" relationship with God and allow that relationship to influence all their actions" (Hartin, 1999:67).

¹¹⁹ In James 1:12, ὁ στέφανος τῆς ζωῆς is best interpreted as an *epexegetical* (appositional) genitive, meaning "the crown, which is life." See Jordaan (2014:115).

Building on the call for steadfast action and wise endurance in the **A**-part, the **B**-part of the chiasmus turns attention to God's nature. It describes divine wisdom as a generous gift openly given to anyone who asks, without reproach, which anchors human perseverance not in self-reliance but in God's sustaining generosity (James 1:5).

6.2.3 The B-part of the ring structure chiasmus – God's generous character

James 1:5 affirms God as the origin and revealer of wisdom (Wold, 2019:75). God's giving character is also emphasised (διδόντος θεοῦ παῖσιν ἀπλῶς καὶ μὴ ὀνειδίζοντος – God who gives generously and without reproach). The adverb ἀπλῶς¹²⁰ ("generously," "liberally," or "with singleness of purpose") conveys the idea of wholehearted¹²¹ giving without reservation. In Jewish wisdom tradition¹²² and echoed in the New Testament¹²³ God is the ultimate source of wisdom, and it is never rationed out sparingly. James assures readers that if they lack wisdom, they can confidently ask, because God's giving nature is abundant and consistent.

The phrase μὴ ὀνειδίζοντος ("without reproach" or "without finding fault") indicates that God does not scold, humiliate, or remember past failures when bestowing blessings. In human interactions¹²⁴, benefactors sometimes give grudgingly, impose conditions, or remind recipients of their mistakes. James contrasts this with God's nature, who gives generously without holding past shortcomings against the seeker. This expression functions rhetorically to remove barriers

¹²⁰ The adverbial form of the adjective ἀπλῶς is a *hapax legomenon* (Adam, 2013:8).

¹²¹ The adverb ἀπλῶς is explained by Louw & Nida (1988) as follows: Domain 57.13 (Generosity): ἀπλῶς means "pertaining to being open and generous, giving liberally, generously." Domain 88.16 (Simplicity/Singleness): ἀπλῶς can also mean "with sincerity, without pretence, with singleness of purpose." Therefore, depending on the context, ἀπλῶς conveys either the sense of liberal, generous giving (Romans 12:8) or the meaning of sincerity or singleness of motive (2 Corinthians 1:12, where it contrasts duplicity). In James 1:5, Louw & Nida clarify that the best translation is "generously", indicating that God grants wisdom abundantly and without hidden motives. This interpretation is supported by, among others, Dibelius-Greeven (1976:78), Davids (1983:72) and Wolmarans (1994:79).

¹²² ὅτι κύριος δίδωσιν σοφίαν καὶ ἀπὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ γνώσις καὶ σύνεσις - ὅτι κύριος δίδωσιν σοφίαν καὶ ἀπὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ γνώσις καὶ σύνεσις. – For the Lord gives wisdom, and from His presence come knowledge and understanding. (Proverbs 2:6). διὰ τοῦτο εὐξάμην καὶ φρόνησις ἐδόθη μοι ἐπεκαλεσάμην καὶ ἦλθεν μοι πνεῦμα σοφίας – For this reason I prayed, and understanding was given to me; I called upon [God], and the spirit of wisdom came to me. (Wisdom of Solomon 7:7).

¹²³ Αἰτεῖτε καὶ δοθήσεται ὑμῖν, ζητεῖτε καὶ εὐρήσετε, κρούετε καὶ ἀνοιγήσεται ὑμῖν. ... εἰ οὖν ὑμεῖς πονηροὶ ὄντες οἴδατε δόματα ἀγαθὰ δίδοναι τοῖς τέκνοις ὑμῶν, πόσῳ μᾶλλον ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς δώσει ἀγαθὰ τοῖς αἰτοῦσιν αὐτόν – "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you....If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in the heavens give good things to those who ask Him! (Matthew 7:7, 11).

¹²⁴ The notion that humans give to others with reproach is echoed in, for example, Sirach 18:18 – μωρὸς ἀχαρίστως ὀνειδιεῖ καὶ δόσις βασκάνου ἐκτῇκει ὀφθαλμούς. (A fool reproaches without gratitude, and a gift from a spiteful person blinds the eyes).

to approaching God. It also aligns with the wisdom tradition's view of God as a benevolent teacher eager to guide those who humbly pursue the right way (Loader, 1986:105-106; Bauckham, 2019:17). The character of God is further examined in the theological-ethical phase of this research.

6.2.4 The C-part of the ring structure chiasmus (James 1:6a): exploring the semantic references of πίστις (faith) and μηδὲν διακρινόμενος (without doubting/having two minds)

Verse 6 is introduced by repeating the imperative verb from 1:5, namely αἰτέω (ask, request). The verb is clarified by a prepositional phrase ἐν πίστει, which introduces a dative of manner that describes *how* the action of asking should take place, not simply the location (sphere) but the disposition or mode (Adam, 2013:8). A participle, namely διακρινόμενος¹²⁵ (present middle participle masculine nominative singular of διακρίνω), qualifies the dative of manner. What makes the sentence complicated is that διακρινόμενος lacks an object, which may be an action (having faith and not having two minds that God gives generous)¹²⁶ or an object (having faith and not having two minds concerning God's generous nature)¹²⁷. Once again, the answer is implied and relates to the semantic reference of πίστις (faith) in the context of James.

According to Jewish wisdom theology, proper behaviour is grounded in a system of beliefs about one's relationship with God, creation, and other people (Loader, 1986:105–106). Within James's framework, this system is encapsulated in πίστις (faith). For James, πίστις means holding *correct beliefs about God, creation, and humanity, beliefs that necessarily motivate right action*.

¹²⁵ Louw and Nida (1988) examine διακρινόμενος in 31.37, defining it as "to think that something may not be true or certain", essentially, "to doubt" or "to be uncertain". Adams (2013:8) states that, in the middle and passive voices, most scholars interpret it as "doubt," a meaning that is not commonly found outside early Christian texts. In Acts 10:20, διακρίνομαι reflects the meaning of "between two minds": πορεύου σὺν αὐτοῖς μηδὲν διακρινόμενος – go with them, with no doubt at all." The meaning of "between two minds" is also reflected in Romans 4:20 where the example of Abraham's faith is discussed: εἰς δὲ τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ θεοῦ οὐ διεκρίθη τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ ἀλλ' ἐνεδυναμώθη τῇ πίστει, δοὺς δόξαν τῷ θεῷ – But concerning the promise of God he did not have two minds in unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God. Louw and Nida further note that in various languages, "doubt" is often expressed through idioms, such as "to have two thoughts", "to believe only a little," or "to question one's heart about". This meaning explains the reference to a person with two minds, a δίψυχος (James 1:8).

¹²⁶ Dibelius and Greeven (1976:80), Kotzé (1990:78), Laws (1980:57) and Johnson (1995:180-1) support this interpretation.

¹²⁷ Davids (1983:73), Martin (1988:19) and Wolmarans (1994:80) support this interpretation.

The inner texture of the epistle supports this interpretation. In James 2:19, faith is expressed in the confession that “God is one.” In James 5:15, the prayer of faith brings healing, rooted in the conviction that God restores. Likewise, in James 2:1, faith in God is incompatible with judging others by outward appearance. Discrimination (2:1–13) violates the demand for justice in wisdom, and James grounds this ethic in theology: God judges impartially.

However, for James, faith without works is dead (1:26). Inconsistency within the community undermines salvation, whether double-mindedness (1:8), anger and immorality (1:19–20), empty profession without obedience (1:23), uncontrolled speech (1:26; 3:1–12), neglect of the vulnerable (1:27), worldliness (1:27), or favouritism (2:1). Sin, therefore, is the failure to embody one’s beliefs. Just as the wise attain perfection by walking the path of wisdom, so the wicked are judged not by their confessions but by their deeds. Salvation, for James, is realised through faithful action, while condemnation rests on works (Botha, 2006:113).

In this light, the semantic scope of πίστις (correct understanding of God, creation, and humanity) shapes the meaning of διακρινόμενος: It denotes “a doubtful or divided perception of God’s nature”, specifically, questioning his generosity in granting wisdom. Such inner division is then pictured through a sequence of images in James 1:6–8. The wavering believer (διακρινόμενος) is compared to a restless wave, tossed and driven by the wind (the X-part of the ring-structure chiasmus), and identified as a double-minded person (ἀνὴρ δίψυχος, the B’-part). Verse 1:8 then provides metaphorical amplification (A’-part), intensifying the imagery: the wave becomes a portrait of human instability, “unstable in all his ways.” This crescendo highlights how internal duality leads to behavioural disorder. These similes are analysed further in the embodied-cognitive phase of this chapter.

6.2.5 The C’-part of the ring structure chiasmus: the instability of the doubter

James 1:7¹²⁸ clarifies the metaphor in James 1:6, unlike the believer who asks for wisdom and sees God’s generosity clearly, the double-minded person, wavering between different opinions, will receive nothing from God. This individual (ὁ ἄνθρωπος) is specified using a demonstrative pronoun, namely ἐκεῖνος.

¹²⁸ Adam (2013:9) notes that the conjunction γὰρ, introducing James 1:7, “signals close continuity with what precedes,” but “introduces offline material that strengthens or supports what precedes.”

Dauids (1983:72–73) understands the reference to $\delta\ \kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$ (the Lord) in James 1:7 as pointing to God, in continuity with verse 5 and the Jewish wisdom tradition. Johnson (1995:177) acknowledges the ambiguity of the term, which may refer either to God or to Jesus Christ, as in 1:1 and 2:1. Nevertheless, he inclines towards interpreting it as God, drawing attention to the intertextual echo of Proverbs 2:6. Allison (2013:182–183), by contrast, views the expression as intentionally layered, reflecting the early Christian practice of applying YHWH-language to Jesus. However, given the chiasmic reversal between verses 5 and 7, it is most likely that $\delta\ \kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$ here refers to God, with the variation from $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ in verse 5 serving a stylistic purpose (Wolmarans, 1994:80).

6.2.6 Summary of Phase 1: the structural and rhetorical mapping (textual-rhetorical phase of the multidimensional hermeneutic investigation)

James 1:5–8 is organised as a ring chiasmus, highlighting contrasting responses from humans and the divine. The outer levels (**A/A'**) illustrate the human tendency toward a lack of wisdom and consequent instability. The next level (**B/B'**) compares God's generous giving with the divided attitude of the double-minded individual. The innermost levels (**C/C'**) emphasise faith as essential for receiving wisdom. At the centre (**X**), the wave metaphor vividly captures the instability caused by doubt.

This chiasmic movement traces a rhetorical transition from promise to warning: God freely grants wisdom to those who ask in faith, but the doubter ($\delta\ \delta\iota\alpha\kappa\rho\iota\nu\acute{o}\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$) remains unstable and ultimately receives nothing. The link between James 1:4 and 1:5 lies not in verbal repetition but in the shared concept of $\sigma\omicron\phi\acute{\iota}\alpha$. Within Jewish wisdom theology, wisdom serves as divine guidance that shapes conduct, fosters maturity (1:4), and culminates in the promised “crown of life” (1:12). James thus integrates faith, wisdom, and action into a unified account of ethical formation.

Faith ($\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$) entails a proper perception of God's generous character, expressed in consistent and integrated behaviour. Doubt, by contrast, reflects a divided understanding of God and results in instability. This condition is concretely rendered through the wave simile (1:6), the figure of the double-minded person (1:8a), and the depiction of instability in all actions (1:8b). These images, positioned at the rhetorical centre of the chiasmus, will be examined further in the embodied-cognitive phase of this study.

6.3 Phase 2: the embodied-cognitive phase (embodied and socio-cultural engagement) of the investigation

6.3.1 Introduction

In this phase of the multidimensional hermeneutic investigation of James 1:5–8, the focus is on the simile and metaphors, analysed as conceptual metaphors. Their rhetographical functions are also explored, together with their socio-cultural engagement, by examining the intertextual texture of the references. Closely connected to this is the analysis of the ring-structure chiasmus's embodied rhetorical impact.

6.3.2 The wave of the sea-simile as a conceptual metaphor

In James 1:6, the doubter is described as “like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind” (ἔοικεν κλύδωνι θαλάσσης ἀνεμιζομένῳ καὶ ῥιπιζομένῳ). This simile functions as a conceptual metaphor, where abstract human doubt or wavering between two opposing opinions is understood through the familiar physical experience of instability in nature.

The target domain of the conceptual metaphor is the doubter’s inner state, characterised by mental and spiritual instability, wavering convictions, and a lack of faith, while the source domain is a wave on the sea, physically unstable and driven unpredictably by external forces such as wind and currents. The mapping features of this conceptual metaphor are outlined in **Table 6.1**.

Table 6.1: Conceptual metaphor mapping in James 1:6 (wave on the sea)

Source Domain (Wave)	Target Domain (Doubter)	Conceptual Mapping
The wind pushes a wave.	External influences influence the doubter.	A lack of inner stability causes one to be influenced by external forces.
A wave lacks a fixed direction.	The doubter lacks consistent commitment.	Uncertainty in beliefs or decision-making.
A wave is turbulent and disorderly.	The doubter is troubled and uncertain.	Inner turmoil reflects external turbulence.
A wave cannot regulate its movement.	The doubter is lacking self-mastery.	External forces influence a person’s life beyond conviction.
A wave continually rises and falls.	The doubter fluctuates between belief and disbelief.	Inconsistency erodes trust and prevents action.

Source: Author’s own synthesis.

The conceptual metaphor, serving as the central image (**X**) in the ring-structure chiasmus, underpins the moral exhortation and contrasts with God’s steadfast kindness and the believer’s stability. It transforms an abstract ethical idea into a concrete reality, making internal wavering visible through a vivid natural image, and stimulates embodied cognition, as readers can physically imagine being tossed, connecting bodily sensation to spiritual reality.

Further amplifying the influence of the conceptual metaphor is the shared social-cultural understanding of the sea as a symbol of chaos. Allison (2013:179–183) considers the broader symbolic context of the sea image and emphasises the rich biblical and Jewish tradition in which the sea signifies chaos (Genesis 1:2 [LXX]¹²⁹; Job 38:8–11 [LXX]¹³⁰). He views James’s metaphor as aligning with this traditional idea: the doubter is not only unstable but also connected with the forces of chaos that oppose God’s created order. Allison, therefore, emphasises that James’s image might, for some readers, evoke the perception that doubt or duplicitous faith is not simply a weakness but also chaotic, destructive, and opposed to divine order.

6.3.3 The rhetography of the wave-simile

The rhetography of the wave image is equally powerful and may be explicated as follows in **Table 6.2**.

Table 6.2: Rhetography of the wave image in James 1:6

Rhetographic Element	Explanation
Imagery source	The sea (κλύδωνι θαλάσσης) is a vivid visual symbol in the ancient Mediterranean world, linked to unpredictability, chaos, and uncontrollable forces.

¹²⁹ ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος καὶ σκότος ἐπάνω τῆς ἀβύσσου καὶ πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος – The earth was invisible and unformed, and darkness was over the abyss, and the Spirit of God was moving over the water.

¹³⁰ ἔφραξα δὲ θάλασσαν πύλαις ὅτε ἐμαίμασεν ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς αὐτῆς ἐκπορευομένη. ἐθέμην δὲ αὐτῇ νέφος ἀμφίασιν ὁμίχλῃ δὲ αὐτὴν ἐσπαργάνωσα. ἐθέμην δὲ αὐτῇ ὅρια περιθεις κλεῖθρα καὶ πύλας. εἶπα δὲ αὐτῇ μέχρι τούτου ἐλεύση καὶ οὐχ ὑπερβήσῃ ἀλλ’ ἐν σεαυτῇ συντριβήσεται σου τὰ κύματα – When I shut up the sea behind doors, when it burst forth from the womb, I made a cloud its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness like a swaddling band. I prescribed bounds for it, set bars and doors, and said, ‘Thus far you shall come, and no farther; here shall your proud waves be broken.’ This passage portrays the sea as chaotic and uncontrollable, highlighting God’s sovereignty in restraining it. It is a common biblical motif where the sea represents chaos.

Rhetographic Element	Explanation
Movement and energy components	The participles ἀνεμιζομένῳ (driven by the wind) and ῥιπιζομένῳ (tossed) illustrate relentless, repetitive motion, visually and aurally emphasising instability. The alliteration and rhythm enhance oral impact.
Embodied perception	Hearers can see and feel the tossing sea, drawing on sensory memories of waves' sound, force, and movement. This bodily resonance transforms the inner instability of doubt into a vivid external experience.
Contrastive function	The chaotic wave sharply contrasts with the wisdom seeker's stability. The rhetography thus highlights the doubter's negative state.
Emotional effect	The image conveys insecurity, helplessness, and instability. It urges the audience to reject doubt by holding fast to faith.
Rhetorical amplification	The simile reinforces the warning, creating a strong echo in 1:8 (δίψυχος, ἀκατάστατος). It visually links the conceptual metaphor "doubt = instability."

Source: Author's own synthesis.

The rhetography of James 1:6 transforms an abstract inner state (doubt) into a vivid, sensory image of instability (a storm-tossed wave). This dramatisation not only persuades the listener cognitively but also evokes emotional and physical responses, making the warning memorable and impactful.

6.3.4 James 1:8 – ἀνὴρ δίψυχος, ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ (the intertextual texture of the phrase)

While the wave metaphor depicts instability as external and impersonal, the image of the double-minded man internalises it, making it a characteristic of the self. Since the word δίψυχος is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament, it is essential to examine its semantic reference by exploring both the inner and intertextual contexts. In James 4:8,¹³¹ the word is associated with cosmic

¹³¹ James 4:7-8 states: ὑποτάγητε οὖν τῷ θεῷ, ἀντίστητε δὲ τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ φεύξεται ἀφ' ὑμῶν, ἐγγίσατε τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐγγιεῖ ὑμῖν. καθαρίσατε χεῖρας, ἁμαρτωλοί, καὶ ἀγνίσατε καρδίας, δίψυχοι. – Submit yourselves therefore to God; resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

forces, God and the devil. James 4:7 states that submitting to God causes the devil to flee. It is implied that a person is either under God's control or the devil's control.

According to Davids (1983:74), the background of *δίψυχος* should be traced to Jewish theology. In Deuteronomy 6:5 (LXX)¹³², for example, it is stated that God must be served with an undivided heart. Although *δίψυχος* and its later variants appear in literature from the first half of the second century, such as Didache 4:4; 1 Clement 23:2; 2 Clement 11:5; and Hermas Visiones 2.2.7 (as the verb *δίψυχέω*), Davids believes that James's use of the term cannot be traced back to this later literature. According to Davids (1983:74)¹³³, *δίψυχος* is a term of Jewish origin, whereas later literature does not reflect a Jewish tradition. Davids largely neglects the Greek and Hellenistic influences evident in the Epistle of James, reducing his analysis to a primarily Jewish framework. Davids (1983:74) argues that the theology surrounding *δίψυχος* in James has been developed in Didache and Barnabas. This neglect overlooks the letter's deliberate integration of both Jewish and Hellenistic traditions, a feature more adequately recognised by interpreters such as Laws (1980), Johnson (1995) and Allison (2013), who emphasise James's ability to synthesise diverse intellectual and cultural currents.¹³⁴ Porter (1990:469–498) conjectures that *δίψυχος* is a Christian term coined by the author of James, since there are no traces of *δίψυχος* itself in earlier texts before James. Thus, Porter's (1990:469–498) hypothesis is that James had coined the term *δίψυχος* as a Christian word and later *δίψυχος* was broadly used in the earliest Christian texts such as I Clement, II Clement, Didache, Barnabas, Shepherd of Hermas, Clement of Alexandria, and texts by Origen, Ignatius, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Palladius, and others. Johnson (1995:181), Moo (2000:62–63)¹³⁵ and Batten (2004:257–272) also contend that James himself coined the term *δίψυχος*, which was subsequently adopted in later literature, but did not enunciate the concept. Allison (2013:186) attributes the term's origin to the first use of *δίψυχος*, which he believes is attested in the Greek version of Eldad and Modad. He mentions that this version was

¹³² καὶ ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς δυνάμεώς σου – You must love God with all your heart, all your soul and all your strength.

¹³³ Davids (1983:74) states: 'With this in view, we reject the need to read back the meaning of this term from the Didache or Hermas (Did. 4:4; Barn. 19:5; 1 Clem.9:2; 23:2; 2 Clem 11:3; 40 times in Hermas), for both have developed this theology beyond James (and away from Judaism, rather we look to the Jewish material for background.'

¹³⁴ On the interplay of Jewish and Hellenistic traditions in James, see Bauckham (1999:13–24), Allison (2013:145–150).

¹³⁵ Moo (2000:62–63) states: "James, who uses this same word again in 4:8, has probably coined the term to accentuate his concern that believers display a wholehearted, consistent, and integral faith commitment to God. However, while he may be the first to use this word, he is certainly not the first to enunciate the concept. The OT blesses those who pursue God with a "whole heart" (Ps. 119:2) and condemns the person who exhibits a "divided heart" (Ps. 12:2; Hos. 10:2).

Jewish rather than Christian. The affinities between James and other second-century texts, however, are more plausibly interpreted as reflecting traditional sayings characteristic of the broader milieu¹³⁶ rather than as evidence of direct literary dependence. Literature, such as Barnabas XVII¹³⁷ and Didache 1:1¹³⁸, also describes man's double-mindedness in cosmic terms as in James, but refers to two roads¹³⁹, indicating a person's way of doing. This idea of two roads is also implicitly suggested in James 1:8, where the double-minded person is described as “unsteady in all his ways” (ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ)¹⁴⁰. Thus, double-mindedness brings about unstable conduct.¹⁴¹ Double-mindedness and unstable conduct, mentioned in James 1:8 and again in 4:7–8, are closely linked. As the intertexts (Didache 1:1 and Barnabas XVII) suggest, both arise from a divided allegiance to two opposing cosmic powers: God and the devil. Yeo (2022:227–228)¹⁴², commenting on James 4:8, argues that “a divided psyche” (δίψυχοι) may itself be considered a sin. The command in James 4:8 calls for cleansing both outward behaviour (“wash your hands”) and inward disposition (“purify your hearts”). Similarly, Moo (2000:194) also notes that a divided psyche (δίψυχοι) belongs to a mindset of repentance since the person with a

¹³⁶ On parallels in Sirach (e.g. Sir 1:28; 2:12) and the Shepherd of Hermas (Mand. 9.11), see Lockett (2008:269–287).

¹³⁷ Ταῦτα μὲν οὕτως μεταβῶμεν δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ ἐτέραν γνώσιν καὶ διδαχὴν Ὅδοι δύο εἰσὶν διδαχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας ἢ τε τοῦ φωτὸς καὶ ἢ τοῦ σκότους διαφορὰ δὲ πολλὴ τῶν δύο ὁδῶν Ἐφ’ ἧς μὲν γὰρ εἰσὶν τεταγμένοι φωταγωγοὶ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ ἐφ’ ἧς δὲ ἄγγελοι τοῦ σατανᾶ – These things, then, being so, let us turn also to another knowledge and teaching. – There are two ways of instruction and authority: the one of light and the other of darkness. Furthermore, there is a significant difference between the two ways. For one is appointed as a guide, the angels of God, but over the other, the angels of Satan.

¹³⁸ Διδαχὴ κυρίου διὰ τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων τοῖς ἔθνεσιν Ὅδοι δύο εἰσὶ μία τῆς ζωῆς καὶ μία τοῦ θανάτου διαφορὰ δὲ πολλὴ μεταξὺ τῶν δύο ὁδῶν. – The teaching of the Lord through the Twelve Apostles to the nations: There are two ways, one of life and one of death; but there is a significant difference between the two ways.

¹³⁹ Lockett (2008:269–287) notes that James uses the “Two Ways” motif to encourage his readers to remain obedient to God throughout life. He urges his audience to maintain (and, if necessary, revise) their affections and loyalties. The “world’s” way of living and its view of reality are depicted as the path to eschatological “death,” while the route to eschatological “life” through obedience to God is glorified. James advocates for leading a life guided by a new understanding of reality and, consequently, a new moral system, a theologically integrated worldview.

¹⁴⁰ In James 3:8, the tongue is also described as “unruly” and associated with the work of the devil: τὴν δὲ γλῶσσαν οὐδεὶς δαμάσαι δύναται ἀνθρώπων, ἀκατάστατον κακόν, μεστὴ ἰοῦ θανατηφόρου – But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

¹⁴¹ In the Epistle of James, both the motif of the “two ways” and the theme of “double hearts” (a divided psyche) are evident. First, “way imagery” (ὁδός) appears in James 5:20, which contrasts two ultimate outcomes: a way that leads to life and a way that leads to death. Secondly, James 3:17 highlights virtues that stem from “wisdom from above,” placing them within the broader framework of the “virtue and vice” tradition, itself linked to the “two ways” *topos*. Finally, James 4:8 presents the theme of the “double heart” (a divided psyche), which stands in contrast to undivided devotion to God (Yeo, 2022:235; Lockett, 2008:269–287).

¹⁴² Yeo (2022) completed a PhD study, which investigated the origin and meaning of δίψυχος in the Epistle of James (Yeo, S. [2022] *Δίψυχος in the Epistle of James*. PhD thesis. University of Pretoria).

divided psyche (δίψυχοι) is a sinner: “They must repent of both this external behaviour, wash your hands, and the internal attitude that leads to such behaviour, purify your hearts”. Laws (1980:184) goes further, describing the double-minded as “the archetypal sinners,” since for James “doubleness is of the essence of human sin,” evident in divisive desires (4:1) and the “adulterous” attempt to combine prayer to God with friendship with the world (4:3f.). Taken together, these readings suggest that James regards a divided psyche (δίψυχος) as the very essence of sin, manifested in the attempt to serve two masters, God and the devil.

6.3.5 James 1:8 - ἀνὴρ δίψυχος ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ, interpreted as a conceptual metaphor

Following from the above discussion, the designation ἀνὴρ δίψυχος (double-minded man) is metaphorical rather than literal. It serves as a conceptual metaphor for inner division. Its source domain is the idea of two selves within one body; its target domain is divided loyalty, indecision, or duplicity of heart. Therefore, δίψυχος portrays spiritual instability as a fracture within the self.

This metaphor is supported by the phrase “unstable in all his ways” (ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς), which evokes the imagery from cause to effect: inner division (δίψυχος) leads to outward instability. Collectively, these terms form a metaphorical anthropology in which the doubter is depicted as self-divided and unable to follow a straight path.

In summary, δίψυχος denotes divided loyalty and a fragile self, sharpening the earlier wave imagery (1:6) into a clearer conceptual metaphor: the wavering person represents inner instability that results in unstable behaviour. Implicitly, this duality extends beyond the individual to the cosmic level; loyalty is divided between God and the devil, uniting anthropological and cosmic dualism.

6.3.6 The embodied rhetorical impact of the ring-structure chiasmus

Pelkey (2017:102–108) argues that a ring-structure chiasmus is not merely a stylistic device but an embodied semiotic strategy, enacting patterns of turning, inversion, and return that resonate with bodily posture (the so-called “X-pose”) and human cognition. The hourglass form of chiasmus is particularly potent, moving from a broad opening through a narrowed centre and back to a broad closing, creating a funnel effect that draws attention to the rhetorical pivot. The textual arrangement of James 1:5–8 may be represented accordingly, as shown in **Figure 6.3**.

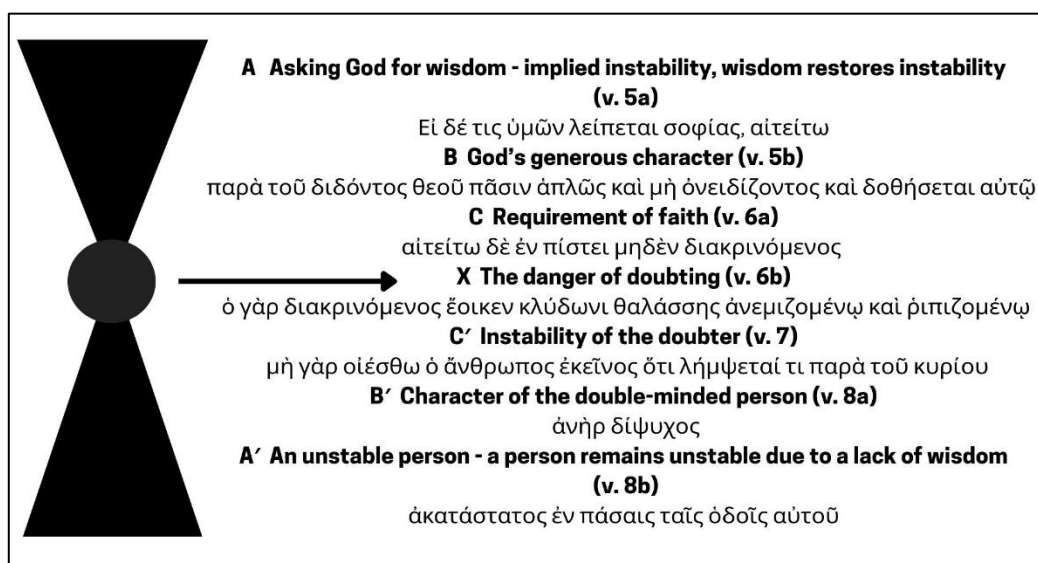


Figure 6.3: Hourglass (ring-structure) chiasmus in James 1:5–8

Source: Author's own representation.

The hourglass dynamics of James 1:5–8 unfold as follows:

- **Top Funnel (A–B–C):** The movement starts broadly with the call to ask God for wisdom. God, generous to all, grants wisdom to those who ask in faith. The scope then narrows towards the embodied image of instability, the wave simile.
- **Narrow Neck (X):** At the centre stands the wave simile, the decisive “pinch” where tension concentrates. Through its rhetography, the wave embodies the doubter’s wavering, functioning as the filter through which the argument passes.
- **Bottom Funnel (C’–B’–A’):** The image then expands in inversion: the doubter is warned not to expect anything from God and is described as double-minded and unstable. This reinterprets the wave metaphor anthropologically, showing that inner division causes outward disorder.

This hourglass structure embodies Pelkey’s concept of the ‘X-pose,’ illustrating its cycle of constriction and release: wide, narrow, wide. The text guides the reader through the chaos of doubt, pressing them into the constricted moment of impossibility in receiving (1:7), before expanding into a fuller depiction of instability (1:8). The conclusion, emphasising double-mindedness and instability, circles back to the initial tension between faith and doubt (1:5–6a), thus creating a ring composition that redefines what it means to “ask in faith.” The hourglass, therefore, is not merely decorative but rhetorical: it visually enacts the very danger it warns

against, distrusting God's generosity in granting wisdom. Pelkey (2017:102) argues that the hourglass chiasmus reflects the traits of a troubled psyche, where restriction cannot be overcome unless the structure itself is dismantled. The paradoxes it produces — "either/or," "neither/nor" "both/and" — evoke tension, torment, and the threat of collapse. The hourglass's narrow centre suggests imminent breakdown, while its shape recalls the body's "tortured spread-eagle" pose, stretched to the point of rupture.

As Pelkey (2017:107) observes, the power of the hourglass chiasmus resides at its centre, where meaning is condensed into a focal point of intense tension. He compares this to a grain of sand at the waist of an hourglass: all movement must pass through it, and reversal depends on it. To illustrate, Pelkey (2017:107) references James Franco's poster for the film *127 Hours* (Fox Searchlight, 2010), which closely reflects the structure of James 1:5–8. The film recounts the ordeal of Aron Ralston, who, trapped by a boulder while canyoneering, was compelled to amputate his arm to survive. The poster captures this agonising moment: Franco's figure is pinned beneath a massive rock lodged at the centre of the image. Pelkey interprets the boulder as a hyperbolic allusion to a grain of sand, evoking the viewer's recognition of the hourglass shape as a cultural symbol of crisis and mortality, especially in relation to the passage of time. In this interpretation, the trapped human body — poised "above the grain" — is the next to collapse. The tagline beneath the title, "Every second counts," emphasises the hourglass symbolism. Pelkey (2017:107) explains:

The blockages at the centre of [this image] suggest that the posture must be frozen; no momentary reconciliation of limbs with 'both/and'; no momentary relaxation of effort with 'neither/ nor' – only contradiction, negation, and difference separated at extreme angles. The longer the posture is frozen, the more discomfort shades into torture... To make sense of [the design], body memory is apparently at work, helping us feel the end is near. The centre will not hold.

In James 1:5–8, this essential element is symbolised by the wave metaphor, which balances the two halves of the hourglass chiasmus and supports the text's movement.

6.3.7 Summary of phase 2: the embodied-cognitive phase (embodied and socio-cultural engagement of the multi-dimensional hermeneutic investigation)

The central sea metaphor in James 1:6 anchors the ring-structured chiasmus by juxtaposing God's steadfast generosity with human instability. It externalises inner wavering through a vivid natural image, engaging embodied cognition and resonating with the widespread cultural association of the sea with chaos. As Allison (2013:179–183) observes, this tradition (cf. Genesis 1:2; Job 38:8–11) portrays the doubter not merely as weak but as aligned with forces that resist

divine order and creational stability. The rhetography of the wave metaphor thus engages cognition, emotion, and embodied experience simultaneously, ensuring the warning's rhetorical force and memorability.

The designation *ἀνὴρ διψυχος* functions as a conceptual metaphor for inner division. The source domain of “two souls” maps onto the target domain of divided loyalty and duplicity of heart. When linked with the description of instability (*ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς*), the metaphor establishes a clear cause-and-effect relationship: inner fracture manifests in wavering conduct. Drawing on the motif of the “Two Ways,” James exhorts his audience to remain obedient to God as they navigate life’s competing claims, urging them to examine — and, where necessary, reorder — their affections and allegiances. Together, these metaphors construct a theological anthropology in which the doubter is self-divided, unable to walk a straight path, and torn between competing masters.

From an embodied rhetoric perspective, Pelkey’s “X-pose” (2017:107) — wide, narrow, wide — reveals James 1:5–8 as an hourglass-shaped chiasmus symbolising both constriction and release. The structure invites the reader into the turbulence of doubt (1:5–7), sharpens focus at its narrow middle through the wave metaphor (1:6), and then widens again to illustrate double-minded instability (1:8). Like a grain of sand at the hourglass’s neck, the central image controls the flow of the entire passage. It dramatises the peril of doubting God’s generosity, turning abstract instability into a tangible, embodied experience.

6.4 Phase 3: theological and ethical synthesis (theological-ethical phase)

6.4.1 Framing the wise slave in James 1:5–8 through the concept of carnal hermeneutics

As discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis, James begins his epistle by describing himself as a *δοῦλος* (“slave” or “servant”) of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ (1:1), embodying both wisdom and suffering. This self-designation sets the pattern for his audience: they, too, are called to see themselves as God’s slaves, defined not by independence but by complete reliance. In James 1:2–4, this identity is expressed in terms of endurance under trial. A faithful servant of God endures suffering because testing develops perseverance, and perseverance, demonstrated through good works, leads to maturity and completeness.

In James 1:5–8, the slave’s identity is further clarified through the theme of wisdom. The slave’s attitude reflects a sense of deficiency and submission: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of

God” (1:5). Wisdom is not self-made but given by God, whose giving is marked by generosity (ἀπλῶς). The wise servant directs body and soul entirely towards God, trusting in wisdom demonstrated through good works. In contrast to the wise slave, the doubter is compared to a wave driven and tossed by the wind (1:6), a body without direction, at the mercy of external forces. This διψυχος (double-minded) person exemplifies instability in all their ways (1:8), trying to serve two masters at once, namely God and the devil.

Richard Kearney’s carnal hermeneutics (2015) offers a valuable framework for understanding the embodied nature of servanthood. Rejecting traditions that emphasise abstraction or disembodied rationality, Kearney emphasises that hermeneutics is always carnal: “word is flesh, text is body and body is text” (Kearney, 2015:16). Interpretation occurs through the senses, including touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing, through which the flesh mediates meaning and reveals otherness (Kearney, 2015:19–22). A key element of carnal hermeneutics is vulnerability. To interpret is to expose oneself, to be touched and transformed. Kearney describes this as a “hermeneutic wager of the flesh,” in which the body acts as both agent and recipient, reaching out even as it is impacted upon (Kearney, 2015:23–25). Through this perspective, wisdom is not an abstract cognitive idea but an embodied attitude towards the world and God.

Viewing James from this angle emphasises the theological–ethical understanding of the letter,¹⁴³ wisdom is not an intangible asset but a lived expression of servanthood. The wise slave interprets existence hermeneutically through the body: standing firm, enduring trials, staying loyal, and doing good works. This interpretation cannot be separated from *vulnerability*: to be a slave of God is to be fully exposed to divine generosity, to rely on God’s gift of wisdom, and to remain open to transformation through trial.

Therefore, the wise slave in James 1:5–8 shows wisdom through faithful obedience, combining proper belief, practical action, and vulnerability into a complete understanding of servanthood before God.

6.5 Summary

The following structured table highlights the key ideas in James 1:5–8 and connects them to the study’s research objectives (**Table 6.3**).

¹⁴³ By exploring the largely overlooked concept of the ‘wise slave,’ this research offers a unique perspective to the field, highlighting theological-ethical aspects that have not been extensively analysed by scholars.

Table 6.3: Key themes in James 1:5–8 and their relation to the research objectives

Layer and focus	Concept	Function	Rhetorical and embodied effect
Outer layers (A/A')	The human condition: lacking wisdom and seeking, contrasted with instability and double-mindedness.	Highlights the contrast between the need for wisdom and instability.	Establishes a moral and existential contrast, highlighting human vulnerability.
Subsequent layers (B/B')	God's generosity versus the doubter receiving nothing.	Highlights God's faithfulness despite human doubt.	Highlights the contrast between faith and doubt vividly to reinforce their consequences.
Middle layers (C/C')	Asking in Faith (πίστις) versus not asking in faith.	Serves as a conduit for divine wisdom.	Embodied orientation: directs the body and mind towards God.
Centre (X)	The wind buffets a wave.	Anchors the admonition, serving as the central conceptual metaphor.	Vivid natural imagery engages cognition, emotion, and bodily senses; a memorable warning.
Stylistic features	Pleonasm, anadiplosis, alliteration, assonance, homoioteleuton.	Improves oral flow and emphasis.	Improves memorability and the embodiment of wisdom teachings.
Conceptual metaphors and rhetography	ἀνὴρ δίψυχος ("two-souled man") ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ (unstable).	Figurative depiction of inner conflict.	Inner fracture associated with unstable behaviour; embodied cognition.
Embodied rhetorical effect of the ring-structure chiasmus	Pelkey's "X-pose"/hourglass.	Contraction → focus → contraction. The grain of sand in James's hourglass-chiasmus is the conceptual metaphor of the wave-image, which balances the top and bottom parts of the hourglass-chiasmus.	Draws the reader into turbulence (1:5–7), focuses on the wave (1:6), and explores double-minded instability (1:8).

Layer and focus	Concept	Function	Rhetorical and embodied effect
Theological-ethical synthesis: the wise slave	Loyal obedience; embodiment of wisdom.	Combines belief, action, and openness.	Hermeneutic through the body: standing firm, enduring trials, acting faithfully; transforms abstract teachings into lived experience.

Source: Author's own synthesis.

Chapter 7 explores James 1:9–11 through a multidimensional hermeneutic framework, focusing on how the text shapes the identity of the suffering and wise slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 7 THE SUFFERING AND WISE SLAVE (JAMES 1:9–11)

Be not anxious! Earthly possessions dazzle our eyes and delude us into thinking that they can provide security and freedom from anxiety. Yet all the time they are the very source of anxiety. If our hearts are set on them, our reward is an anxiety whose burden is intolerable. Anxiety creates its own treasures and they in turn beget further care. When we seek for security in possessions we are trying to drive out care with care, and the net result is the precise opposite of our anticipations. The fetters which bind us to our possessions prove to be cares themselves.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1959:158)

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 7 applies a multidimensional hermeneutic framework to James 1:9–11, analysing how the passage shapes the identity of the suffering and wise servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The analysis foregrounds the text's relational, rhetorical, social, and theological dimensions, with particular attention to the contrast between the lowly and the rich.

Building on the methodological foundations established in previous chapters, this discussion analyses the semantic, rhetorical, and experiential textures of James 1:9–11 to demonstrate how the passage addresses issues of status, suffering, wisdom, humility, and identity within the early Christian diaspora. The analysis also considers the symbolic and practical implications of exaltation and humiliation, as well as the transient nature of wealth depicted through the imagery of the fading flower.

7.2 Remarks based on the surface literary features of James 1:9–11

James 1:9 and 1:10a are structured in parallel, with each part consisting of a subject (ὁ ταπεινός, (the lowly) and ὁ πλούσιος, (the rich) followed by an adverbial phrase (ἐν τῷ ὑψεῖ αὐτοῦ, (in his exaltation), and ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει αὐτοῦ, (in his humiliation). The syntactical parallelism¹⁴⁴ emphasises a semantic contrast: the poor (those of low social status) versus the rich (those of high social status), and exaltation (high) versus humiliation (low). Together, 1:9 and 1:10a form an antithetical chiasmus. Notably, however, the verb καυχᾶσθω (let him boast) appears explicitly

¹⁴⁴ Parallelism (*isokolon*) occurs when two subsequent sentences or phrases follow the same syntactical pattern (and/or thought pattern). See Jordaan (2014:171).

in the first clause (1:9) but is omitted in the second (1:10a), leaving it to be implied through ellipsis. The phrase, ὁ ἀδελφός (1:9), is also omitted in 1:10a. The question then is whether the verb καυχάσθω is also implied in 1:10a or if it is the opposite of καυχάσθω, namely κλαίω (cry)¹⁴⁵, considering that an antithetical parallelism is suggested. The chiasmic structure of James 1:9–10a may be outlined schematically, as shown in **Figure 7.1**.

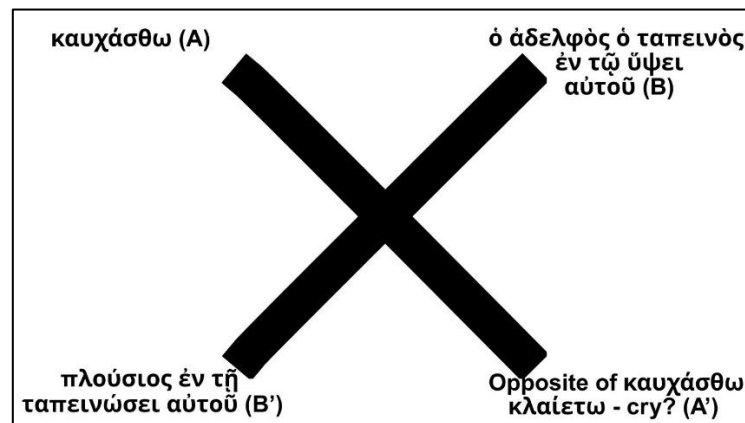


Figure 7.1: Chiasmic structure of James 1:9–10a

Source: Author's own representation.

This antithetical chiasmus is analysed in the initial phase of the multidimensional hermeneutic approach, the textual-rhetorical stage, which concentrates on structural and rhetorical mapping. Within this framework, the typology of the antithetical parallelism is assessed according to Grausso's classification of chiasmus. Furthermore, the development of thought between James 1:2–8 and 1:9–11 is scrutinised. Additionally, James 1:9–11 exhibits a layered compositional design. Verses 9–10a form an *antithetical chiasmus*, while verses 9–11 constitute a *ring-structured chiasmus*. This configuration may be described as a *chiasmus within a chiasmus* and will be examined in greater detail below. The ring-structure chiasmus is illustrated schematically in **Figure 7.2**.

¹⁴⁵ In James 5:1, the rich are addressed as follows: Ἄγε νῦν οἱ πλούσιοι, κλαύσατε ὀλούζοντες ἐπὶ ταῖς ταλαιπωρίαις ὑμῶν ταῖς ἐπερχομέναις – Come now, you rich, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming upon you. Considering that the wealthy are advised to weep and wail, the opposite of καυχάσθω may be understood as κλαίω.

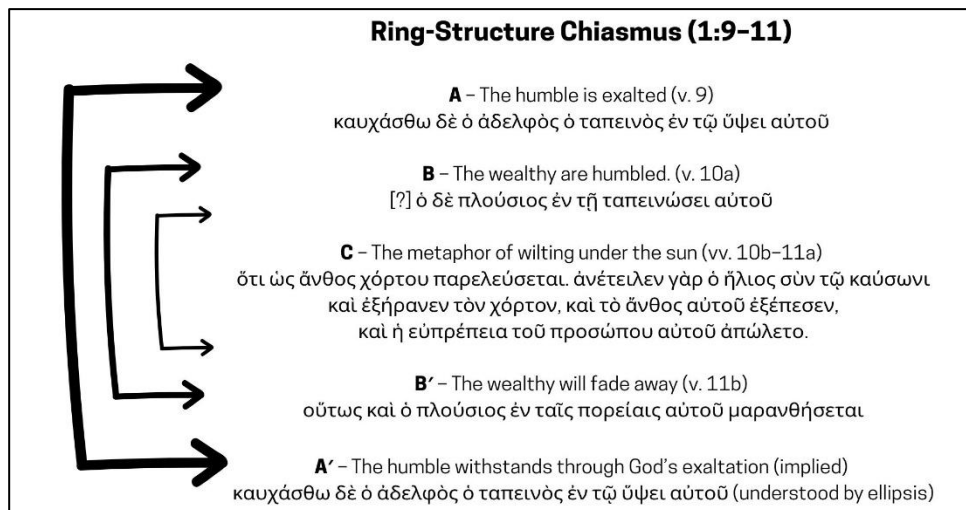


Figure 7.2: Ring-structure chiasmus in James 1:9–11

Source: Author's own representation.

The simile of the fading grass flower (the **C**-part of the ring-structure chiasmus) is emphasised through deliberate wordplay that suggests ephemerality: “withers” (ξηραίνω), “falls” (ἐκπίπτω), and “perishes” (ἀπόλλυμι). This triadic sequence produces an auditory rhythm that mirrors successive stages of decay. The simile is analysed within the framework of conceptual metaphor theory. Additionally, the intertextual context and the simile's rhetography are examined in phase two, the embodied-cognitive stage, of the multidimensional hermeneutic investigation. The pragmatic significance of the antithetical parallelism within the ring-structure chiasmus (the chiasmus within the chiasmus) is explored.

A clear contrast arises between the humble brother (ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινός) and the wealthy (ὁ πλούσιος). The ideological and theological significance of this opposition is examined within the framework of carnal hermeneutics in the third phase of the multidimensional hermeneutical analysis, alongside an exploration of the theme of the wise and suffering slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

7.3 Phase 1: structural and rhetorical mapping (textual-rhetorical phase)

7.3.1 Research questions considered in phase one

The discussion in phase one explores the semantic references of the A and B elements in antithetical parallelism, emphasising the text's inner and intertextuality. In this context, both the

“listening ear” and a “spelling eye” are utilised (Botha, 2018:1–18). The following research questions are considered:

- How does Grausso (2020) define an antithetical parallelism within her classification of chiasmus?
- What is the implied relationship between James 1:2–8 and James 1:9–11? As demonstrated in Chapter 3 of this study, applying a multidimensional, embodied rhetorical framework helps establish the passage's coherence. This interpretative approach highlights the composition's intentionality, showing how seemingly opposing motifs are united in a carefully crafted rhetorical and theological coherence.
- What is the semantic relationship between the **A** and **B**-elements of the antithetical chiasmus? The semantic references of ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινὸς ἐν τῷ ὕψει αὐτοῦ and ὁ δὲ πλούσιος ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει αὐτοῦ are discussed.

7.3.2 Defining the antithetical parallelism exposed in James 1:9-10a

As outlined in the opening paragraph of this chapter, the chiastic pattern in James 1:9–10a can be illustrated as follows: (a) the humble brother (low); (b) his exaltation (high); (b) the wealthy (high); (a) his humiliation (low). Grausso (2020:33–34) classifies this as an *exclusion-type* chiasmus, where the A and B elements are framed by a “never” condition or qualifier, ensuring they do not intersect or overlap. She compares this structure to first-order logic, in which an exclusion condition is imposed to prevent any middle ground. Criteria for inclusion in this category require a stipulated “never” condition or an equivalent qualifier that rules out overlap. These can all be expressed logically as: $p \vee \sim p = T$.¹⁴⁶ In other words, only one condition can be actual: either “p” or “not-p,” but never at the same time. The maxim, “Quitters never win, and winners never quit,” illustrates this principle: if one is a “quitter,” one cannot also be a “winner.” Within this framework, exclusion permits no shared centre or intermediate category. Grausso (2020:34) further observes that the *exclusion-type* chiasmus bears thematic resemblance to Pelkey’s hourglass type, with its narrowing at the centre. In James 1:9–10a, the A and B elements function as mutually exclusive: the humble (**A**) will be exalted (**B-high**), while the wealthy (**A'**), defined as

¹⁴⁶ This principle is known as the **Law of the Excluded Middle (LEM)** in classical logic (Smith, 2020:271–274, 285–286). It states that for any proposition, either the proposition is true, or its negation is true; there is no third alternative. The symbols are explained as follows: p = some proposition (e.g., “The sun shines”), $\vee$ = logical OR, $\sim p$ = NOT p, i.e. the negation of p, T = true. The formula says: **p or not-p is always true.**

the opposite of the humble, will be brought low (**B'-low**). The **A**-elements (the humble and the wealthy) and **B**-elements (their respective elevation or degradation) are arranged so that they cannot coexist within the same evaluative frame; this mutual exclusivity is emphasised by the “never” condition characteristic of the exclusion-type chiasmus.

Given the distinctive features of an exclusionary chiasmus, the key question is which verb should be taken as the verbal element referring to the rich in James 1:10. Identifying the chiasmus also helps in recognising the underlying ellipsis. It is often assumed that *καυχάσθω* (present imperative middle, third person singular, from *καυχάομαι*, “to boast”) serves as the verb applied to the rich.¹⁴⁷ However, in light of the defining characteristic of an exclusionary chiasmus, namely, that it employs either “p” or “not-p,” but never both simultaneously, the more plausible reconstruction would be the antonym *κλαίετω* (present imperative middle, third person singular, from *κλαίω*, “to weep”). This reading is further reinforced by the intensification with *ὀλολύζω* (to wail), as used in James 5:1.¹⁴⁸ Accordingly, the *exclusionary chiasmus* in James 1:9–10a may be represented schematically, as shown in **Figure 7.3**.

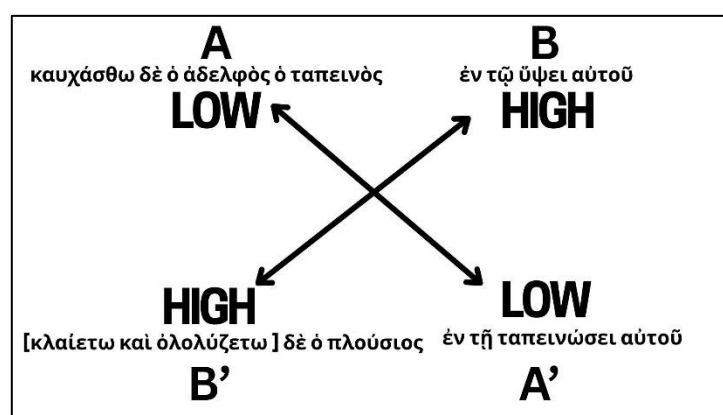


Figure 7.3: Exclusionary chiasmus in James 1:9–10a

Source: Author's own representation.

Before analysing the semantic relationships between the A– and B–elements of the exclusion-type chiasmus, this study will first examine the connections between James 1:2–8 and James

¹⁴⁷ See, for example, Adam (2013:11), who explains *ὁ πλούσιος* as the nominative subject of an implicit *καυχάσθω*.

¹⁴⁸ In James 5:1, the wealthy are advised to cry (*κλαίω*) and wail (*ὀλολύζω*) here and now concerning their imminent fate. Davids (1983:175) and Martin (1988:177) note that the eschatological hour is so vivid in the mind of the author that the crying of the wealthy is seen as immediately relevant. Therefore, the prophetic perfect is used in James 5:2–3 (*σέσηπεν, γέγονεν, κατίωται*).

1:9–11, as these passages establish the broader framework in which the chiasmic structure operates.

7.3.3 The implied relationship between James 1:2–8 and James 1:9–11

While Dibelius-Greeven (1976:83) sees no connection to the previous verses, Martin (1988:24) and Laws (1980:62) interpret a link with James 1:2–4, and Maynard-Reid (1987:39) draws a connection with James 1:5–8. However, commentators generally view James 1:9–11 not as a digression but as an extension of the argument presented in 1:2–8. Johnson (1995:174–176) emphasises the unity of the passage, noting that the contrast between the poor and the rich provides a concrete example of the trials that tested faith; these trials require divine wisdom for proper interpretation. Moo (2000:60–65) and Jackson-McCabe (2014:168) adopt a similar view, arguing that poverty and wealth serve as tests through *πειρασμός* (trial), thereby continuing the theme of perseverance introduced in 1:2–4. Batten (2017:107) states that James 1:9–11, which addresses the rich and the poor, serves as an amplification of perfection (*τέλειος*), for part of being perfect is to resist the desire for riches. Davids (1983:72–76) links the sections through the motif of wisdom: only wisdom enables both the poor and the rich to view their circumstances in light of God’s purposes. Allison (2013:187–191) underscores this coherence by demonstrating that wisdom (1:5–8) functions as the interpretative lens through which social conditions (1:9–11) are understood. Bauckham (1999:56–58) situates this progression within the Jewish wisdom tradition, observing that James moves from a general exhortation to seek wisdom and endure trials to specific applications concerning wealth and poverty. Collectively, these commentators reveal a consistent interpretative pattern: James 1:2–8 introduces the need for wisdom amid testing, while 1:9–11 exemplifies how wisdom reshapes the believer’s view of socio-economic realities.

Wolmarans (1994:86) similarly affirms the consistent interpretative pattern but further emphasises the syntactical and semantic connections between James 1:2–8 and 1:9–11. In particular, the verb *καυχάσθω* (James 1:9) shares a semantic field with *χαράν* (1:2). According to Louw and Nida’s (1988) classification, both belong to the domain of positive emotional attitude: *χαρά* (Domain 25.123) denotes an “inner emotional state of joy or gladness,” while *καυχάομαι* (Domain 33.387) refers to an “outward expression of confidence, pride, or glorying.” Both verbs thus convey positive evaluative attitudes towards circumstances, yet with different orientations: *χαρά* signifies the internal affective response, and *καυχάομαι* indicates the external, verbal, or demonstrative response that flows from such joy. Within this framework, James’s paradoxical reframing of suffering and status is especially clear. Believers are first exhorted to “consider it

pure joy” (1:2) when facing trials, an inward reorientation of perception, and then the “lowly” are called to “boast” in their exaltation (1:9), an outward proclamation of identity reversal. The semantic connection between *χαρά* and *καυχάομαι* thus reflects a complementary movement from internal joy (*χαρά*) to external boasting or glorying (*καυχάομαι*). Together, these verbs embody James’s paradoxical logic of reversal,¹⁴⁹ in which trials and lowly status are reinterpreted as occasions for joy and boasting based on God’s eschatological perspective.

James 1:5–8 and 1:9–11 are connected through the lexical link between *ὁδοῖς* (“ways,” 1:8) and its synonym *πορείαις* (“ways,” 1:11). In this way, the *ἀνὴρ δίψυχος* (“double-minded man,” 1:8) is associated with *ὁ πλούσιος* (“the rich man,” 1:11). The double-minded individual, described as “unstable in all his ways” (*ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ*), is thus linked to the rich man, who “will fade away in his ways” (*οὕτως καὶ ὁ πλούσιος ἐν ταῖς πορείαις αὐτοῦ μαρανθήσεται*).

Furthermore, considering James’s oral context, where the text addresses a listening audience (Botha, 2018:1–18; Wendland, 2024), the diatribe strategy employed in James 1:9–11 should also be acknowledged. In 1:5, James affirms that God generously grants wisdom to those who ask. For hearers facing trials in the diaspora, this affirmation might naturally prompt a question: if God truly provides generously, why is this generosity not shared equally among all? Why does it seem that the rich receive abundance while the poor are left deprived? James 1:9–11 anticipates and addresses this objection by reframing the issue through the motif of status reversal: God honours the poor, exalting them in their lowliness, while the rich, despite their apparent privilege, will ultimately fade away (Wolmarans, 1994:87). Within the framework of wisdom rhetoric, this reversal demands a divine perspective. Wisdom allows the community to see reality not through the outward appearances of wealth or poverty, but through God’s eschatological order, where trials become occasions for joy (1:2) and lowly status grounds for boasting (1:9).

The following section will analyse the semantic relationships between the A– and B–elements of the exclusion-type chiasmus to clarify the development of James’s argument in 1:9–11.

¹⁴⁹ James 1:2 highlights the paradox of finding joy in trials; James 1:9–10a also illustrates a paradox. Typically, the humble person mourns during their modest life, while the wealthy pride themselves on their high status. Now, the humble are encouraged to boast about their exaltation, while the wealthy are humbled.

7.3.4 The semantic relationship between the A and B-elements of the exclusion-type chiasmus

McKnight (2019:168) observes that James 1:9–11 presents a clear contrast between good and evil: the poor are associated with virtue, while the wealthy are linked to wickedness. The rich are portrayed as oppressors (James 2:1–13; 5:1–6), whereas the poor are depicted as the oppressed. In James 1:9, the phrase ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινός (the humble or lowly brother) functions as the opening element (**A**) in the exclusion-type chiasmus of 1:9–10a. The term ταπεινός can carry social and spiritual connotations, implying not only economic or social marginalisation but also an attitude of humility and reliance on God.¹⁵⁰ These aspects are consequently explored.

Most commentators interpret ὁ ταπεινός in this context, primarily in socio-economic terms. Davids (1983:84–85) argues that the lowly brother symbolises the poor believer, who paradoxically may boast in their exalted position in Christ. Johnson (1995:183) likewise sees this as a “radical inversion of values,” where the materially poor are encouraged to rejoice in their exaltation by God. Since ταπεινός is contrasted with πλούσιος (“the rich,” 1:10), it suggests lowliness in status, privilege, or social standing (Visser, 2022:110–111; Batten, 2008:65–78; Maynard-Reid, 1987:5; Tamez, 2019:196–197). Several scholars highlight that, while spiritual aspects are present, the primary focus should be material, referring to those disadvantaged by social injustice and economic inequality (Martin, 1988:24). James underscores this contrast elsewhere: in James 2:1–13 and 5:1–6 he condemns the exploitation of the poor. The power of this antithesis is sharpened by the parallel use of ὁ ταπεινός (1:9) and ὁ πλούσιος (1:10), which Martin (1988:25) sees as central to James’s critique of social disparity.

Several commentators, however, emphasise both the social and spiritual aspects of the term. Moo (2000:64–66) explains that the “lowly” brother is best understood as a poor Christian and suggests that the term carries a religious nuance of humility and reliance on God. Similarly, Allison (2013:198–200) argues that James draws on Jewish wisdom traditions, where poverty and piety are closely linked, depicting the lowly as both socially marginalised and spiritually honoured.

¹⁵⁰ In the LXX, ταπεινός often refers to the poor or oppressed (e.g., Proverbs 3:34, Sirach 3:13), covering both social and religious meanings. In Greco-Roman usage, however, the word could have a pejorative nuance (weak, servile). Adam (2013:11) comments that ταπεινός (an attributive adjective) may have positive (“humble”) or negative (“base, abject”) senses. Louw and Nida (1988) identify four meanings, namely (a) downhearted (25.295), (b) humble (88.52), (c) lowly (87.61), (d) gentle (88.64).

As argued in Chapter 4 (paragraph 4.3.2.2) on ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ, this study employs a multidimensional hermeneutic in which conceptual metaphors emerge from shared human experience within specific cultural and historical contexts. From this perspective, the debate over whether ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινὸς read in combination with ὁ πλούσιος (1:10), should be read literally or metaphorically is reductive; the term is best considered as encompassing both dimensions. The term is consequently discussed as a conceptual metaphor.

7.3.5 The phrase ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινὸς ἐν τῷ ὕψει αὐτοῦ, ὁ δὲ πλούσιος ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει αὐτοῦ analysed as a conceptual metaphor

In James 1:9, the term ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινὸς (the lowly brother) signifies more than merely a label for a social subgroup within the Christian community. When examined through the lens of conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), it functions as a condensed metaphor that connects socio-economic status, spiritual attitude, and theological identity. By combining kinship language (ἀδελφός)¹⁵¹ with status language (ταπεινός), James both affirms communal belonging and recognises social marginalisation, embodying a paradoxical marker of identity.

The central conceptual metaphor triggered by ταπεινός is grounded in the embodied schema of ‘low status as low position’. The attributive adjective indicates spatial lowliness, being lowered, diminished, or of low standing. In cognitive terms, “low” carries embodied associations of weakness, inferiority, or marginality. When James applies this to a believer, he urges his audience to see social diminishment not merely as a material state but also as a symbolic, embodied metaphor for humility before God. As a result, the “lowly brother” becomes a metaphorical figure in which poverty and piety are linked. This connection between social poverty and spiritual humility is deeply ingrained in Jewish tradition. The adjective ταπεινός (lowly, humble, poor) appears frequently in the Septuagint (LXX), often carrying theological significance. It can denote both

¹⁵¹ Punt (2012:153–171) investigates ἀδελφός as an expression of fraternity language in Galatians, emphasising that a proper understanding of first-century concepts of kinship language in New Testament texts requires attention not only to their literary and social contexts but also to their linguistic “setting.” The range of family, kinship, and brotherhood metaphors in Pauline texts allows for multiple interpretations: they may reinforce hierarchical and patriarchal structures, but they may also convey intimacy and tenderness. In James 1:2 and 1:9, ἀδελφός reflects this dual dynamic. On the one hand, it indicates a hierarchical reality: the lowly, poor brother gains status within the Christian community through belonging to the community. On the other hand, it signifies intimacy, tenderness, and empathy. By contrast, the wealthy are excluded from that communal identity and the renewed status it confers.

social status (the poor, oppressed) and inner disposition (humble, contrite before God)¹⁵². Similarly, James reflects on wisdom traditions in which poverty is seen not only as a sign of economic hardship but also as an expression of faithfulness and reliance on God. Allison (2013:198–200) emphasises this point, noting how Jewish wisdom literature often links marginality and piety, creating a conceptual overlap between “poor” and “faithful.”

The rhetorical strength of this phrase becomes even more apparent when placed within the exclusion-type chiasmus of James 1:9–10a, which contrasts ὁ ταπεινός (the lowly) with ὁ πλούσιος (the rich). This contrast exemplifies what Pelkey (2017) describes as an “embodied chiasmus,” where the inversion of categories, low/high and high/low, operates not only at a literary level but also on a conceptual metaphor level. The chiastic reversal illustrates the paradoxical mapping: – LOW (status, poor) → HIGH (exalted by God), – HIGH (rich) → LOW (brought low by God).

This is not merely a rhetorical flourish but an eschatological declaration. The believer who is socially marginalised is called to boast in their exaltation, while the wealthy, culturally esteemed, is warned of imminent humiliation. Moo (2000:64–66) captures this well: “The ‘lowly’ brother is best understood as the poor Christian, but the term carries also a religious overtone of humility and dependence on God.” The metaphor, therefore, does not simply serve as a social description but functions as a theological symbol: the lowly embody the paradox of the kingdom, in which God “chooses the poor of this world to be rich in faith” (James 2:5).¹⁵³

Bauckham (1999:63–65) stresses that James situates the poor at the very heart of his vision of God’s people. For him, ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινός is not a casual descriptor but a paradigmatic identity. Within James’s eschatological framework of reversal, where “the last shall be first”¹⁵⁴, the poor embody God’s elect, their social humiliation reinterpreted as a mark of divine favour.

¹⁵² Proverbs 3:34 states: κύριος ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιτάσσεται ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν – The Lord resists the proud but gives grace to the ταπεινοῖς. This intertext is also used in James 4:6. However, in this context, it is used to address the rivalry and competition among the wisdom teachers (Van Zyl, 2000:136-137). Sirach 3:13 affirms: ὅσῳ μέγας εἶ τοσοῦτῳ ταπείνου σεαυτὸν καὶ ἔναντι κυρίου εὐρήσεις χάριν – The greater you are, the more you must humble yourself, and you will find favour before the Lord.

¹⁵³ James 2:5 states: Ἀκούσατε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί· οὐχ ὁ θεὸς ἐξελέξατο τοὺς πτωχοὺς τῷ κόσμῳ πλουσίους ἐν πίστει καὶ κληρονόμους τῆς βασιλείας ἧς ἐπηγγέιλτο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν. – Listen, my beloved brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him.

¹⁵⁴ Luke 6:20–21: Καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπάρας τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ εἰς τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ ἔλεγεν· Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοί, ὅτι ὑμετέρα ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες νῦν, ὅτι χορτασθήσεσθε. μακάριοι οἱ κλαίοντες νῦν, ὅτι γελάσετε. – And he, lifting his eyes toward his disciples, said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.”

From the perspective of conceptual metaphor theory, ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινὸς ... ὁ δὲ πλούσιος embodies James's broader theological vision. It links physical spatial experience (low/high) to social reality (poor/rich) and spiritual status (humble/exalted). This metaphorical framework conveys a reversed view of values that is at once moral, theological, and eschatological. The humble are not to be pitied, but to take pride, not in material security, but in the transformation of their humility into exaltation by God.

7.3.6 Summary of phase 1: the structural and rhetorical mapping (textual-rhetorical phase of the multidimensional hermeneutic investigation)

The chiastic pattern in James 1:9–10a follows an exclusionary structure (Grausso, 2020:33–34): (a) the humble brother (low); (b) his exaltation (high); (b) the rich (high); (a) his humiliation (low). In this form, the **A**- and **B**-elements are mutually exclusive, with a “never” condition ensuring no overlap, so only one state can apply (p or not-p). In James 1:10, the verb referring to the rich is more plausibly reconstructed as κλαίετω (let him weep), rather than καυχάσθω (let him boast), reflecting the exclusionary chiasmus principle of mutually exclusive states and reinforced by the intensifying verb ὀλολύζω (to wail) in James 5:1. James 1:9–11 expands on the argument of 1:2–8 by illustrating, through the paradoxical reversal of rich and poor, how divine wisdom allows believers to reinterpret trials and social conditions from an eschatological viewpoint.

James 1:9–11 contrasts the lowly (ὁ ταπεινὸς) and the rich (ὁ πλούσιος) through an exclusionary chiasmus, emphasising their mutual exclusivity in social and spiritual terms. The lowly are both materially poor and spiritually humble, while the rich are culturally honoured yet destined for humiliation. This contrast serves as a conceptual metaphor, linking symbols of low and high status to social reality (poverty and wealth) and spiritual identity (humility and exaltation), thereby revealing the paradoxical nature of God's kingdom. The lowly are encouraged to boast in their exaltation, while the wealthy face imminent downfall, reflecting an ethical, theological, and eschatological reversal. Commentators highlight that this literary and metaphorical framework critiques social inequality, affirms community bonds, and shows God's favour toward the humble.

Consequently, the fading grass flower simile in the **C**-part of the ring-structure chiasmus is analysed using conceptual metaphor theory. The intertexture of the simile is examined alongside its rhetography within the embodied-cognitive phase of the multidimensional hermeneutic. Attention is also given to the exclusion-type chiasmus within the ring-structure chiasmus and its relationship.

7.4 Phase 2: the embodied-cognitive phase (embodied and socio-cultural engagement) of the investigation

7.4.1 The fading grass flower simile analysed as a conceptual metaphor

The *source domain* of the fading grass simile is the natural cycle observed in plants, particularly grasses and flowers, exposed to sunlight. This imagery emphasises their fragility, ephemerality, and susceptibility to external influences. Conversely, the *target domain* represents human wealth and social status, particularly among the rich. The metaphor draws a parallel between the delicate, transient nature of flowers and the fleeting prosperity and stability associated with wealth. Several commentators¹⁵⁵ emphasise the ironic-eschatological¹⁵⁶ nature of the simile, referring to James 5:1, which mentions the eschatological judgement of the rich.

7.4.2 Explaining the mappings of the conceptual metaphor

The following table explains the mappings of the simile (**Table 7.1**).

Table 7.1: Source–target domain mappings of the flower-simile in James 1:9–11

SOURCE DOMAIN	TARGET DOMAIN
Flower of the grass (ἄνθος χόρτου – genitive of source [Adam, 2013:12]).	The life of the rich person.
The sun and scorching heat (ὁ ἥλιος σὺν τῷ καύσωνι – dative of accompaniment or association [Adam 2013:12]).	Within the framework of an ironic-eschatological interpretation, the scorching sun signifies God/Jesus's judgment.
Withering/falling/diminished beauty.	Loss of wealth, social power, or worldly recognition.
Ephemeral beauty.	Temporary human pride or material success.

Source: Author's own synthesis.

¹⁵⁵ See Davids (1983:76); Laws (1980:26); Tamez (1990:39); Moo (2000:64–66); Allison (2013:198–200); Bauckham (1999:63–65); Wolmarans (1994:88).

¹⁵⁶ **Irony** in biblical rhetoric involves expressing something in a way that defies expectations. It is not merely sarcasm or humour; it constitutes a more profound reversal: what appears lofty is low, and what seems permanent is fragile. James challenges conventional social logic: those considered “important” will fade away, while those seen as “nobodies” will be elevated.

The conceptual metaphor can be summarised as: wealth and status are like a flowering plant. In this metaphor, prosperity is visually and experientially represented by the lifecycle of a flower: it blooms briefly, then gradually fades under environmental pressures.

7.4.3 The cognitive and embodied grounding of the grass flower simile

The metaphor is grounded in human experience of the natural world: people recognise that flowers are beautiful but fleeting. This embodied experience helps audiences understand the fragility of wealth and status. The progression “withers → falls → beauty destroyed” illustrates a temporal, embodied sequence of decay. Rhetorically, within James, the metaphor creates a paradoxical reversal of values: worldly status may appear secure and admirable, but it is ultimately transient and unstable. It emphasises the theme of eschatological reversal, in which the humble are exalted, and the rich fade away (cf. James 1:12; 5:1–6). In the chiasmus, this imagery reinforces the contrast between the lowly (low → high) and the rich (high → low). Stylistically, the triadic sequence ἐξήρανεν, ἐξέπεσεν, ἀπώλετο (withers, falls, destroyed) establishes a rhythm of gradual decay. The metaphor engages both the visual sense (loss of beauty) and the tactile sense (the heat causing withering), thereby extending cognitive and emotional involvement.

7.4.4 The intertexture of the grass flower simile

James’ imagery draws on a biblical tradition in which grass and flowers wither as symbols of human mortality and transience, as in Job 14:1–2 and Isaiah 40:6–7.¹⁵⁷ The author of the Epistle of James thus refracts a familiar biblical motif of impermanence into a new rhetorical context of wealth and poverty. The flower simile as it appears in Isaiah, Job, and James can be compared to show how James adapts this imagery for his rhetorical and theological purposes (**Table 7.2**).

¹⁵⁷ Isaiah 40:6–8 (LXX) emphasises: φωνὴ λέγοντος βόησον καὶ εἶπα τί βοήσω πᾶσα σὰρξ χόρτος καὶ πᾶσα δόξα ἀνθρώπου ὡς ἄνθος χόρτου. ἐξηράνθη ὁ χόρτος καὶ τὸ ἄνθος ἐξέπεσεν. τὸ δὲ ῥῆμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα – A voice says, ‘Cry out!’ Furthermore, I said, ‘What shall I cry?’ All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man is like the flower of grass. The grass withered, and the flower fell. However, the word of our God endures forever. Job 14:1–2 states: βροτὸς γὰρ γεννητὸς γυναικὸς ὀλιγόβιος καὶ πλήρης ὀργῆς. ἢ ὥσπερ ἄνθος ἀνθήσαν ἐξέπεσεν ἀπέδρα δὲ ὥσπερ σκιά καὶ οὐ μὴ στῇ – For man born of woman is short-lived and full of trouble. Like a flower, he blossoms and then falls away; he flees like a shadow and does not remain.

Table 7.2: Comparative use of the flower simile in Isaiah, Job, and James

Motif	Job 14:1–2	Isaiah 40:6–7	James 1:10–11
Human condition	Brief and troubled.	All flesh is like grass.	Focus on the wealthy individual.
Image of a flower	Blossoms briefly appear, then fall.	Human glory equals the flower of grass.	Rich man = flower of grass.
Cause of fading	Intrinsic mortality: life is shadow-like.	Contrast with God's unchanging word.	Intense sun (God's judgment).
Consequence	Life disappears like a shadow.	Human glory fades, God's word endures.	The pursuits of the rich man fade into nothing.
Tone	An existential lament.	A prophetic declaration.	Moral encouragement and ethical analysis.

Source: Author's own synthesis.

All three passages use the flower or grass motif to symbolise fragility, transience, and mortality. Job imbues this imagery with existential meaning, illustrating that human life is fleeting and filled with pain, much like a flower. James echoes this idea of human vulnerability, especially highlighting the humiliation of the wealthy. Isaiah's use of flower imagery contrasts it with God's enduring word. James almost quotes Isaiah directly (i.e. the flower falls), but instead of contrasting it with God's word, he juxtaposes it with the futility of wealth. From Job, James inherits the lament about mortality and the brevity and fragility of life. From Isaiah, he adopts the grass-and-flower metaphor and turns it into a warning about the dangers of wealth. James integrates¹⁵⁸ these themes into a moral message: wealth is as temporary as life itself, and placing hope in it leads to shame and eventual disappearance.

The intertexture of the simile also includes the *socio-cultural intertexture* (the audience's embodied experience). In James 1:9–11, the social-cultural intertexture¹⁵⁹ closely relates to the rhetography of the simile. The rhetography of the flower simile is consequently discussed.

¹⁵⁸ Wolmarans (1994:89) refers to James's reinterpretation of Isaiah and Job as an "intertextual text-fracture". When one text refers to another, it does not reproduce it smoothly; instead, it fragments the original meaning and reinterprets it within a new context.

¹⁵⁹ Batten (2013:4–20) notes that James often employs *agrarian imagery*, such as plants, springs, trees, harvesters, and farmers, to evoke a moral world associated with simplicity, honesty, and health, in contrast to the corruption of city life and its wealthy inhabitants. While James did not encourage his audience to adopt a rural lifestyle, he used these images to inspire them to develop virtues and qualities traditionally associated with rural life.

7.4.5 The rhetography of the flower simile

The flower simile in James 1:9–11 is rhetographically rich: it paints a visual and sensory picture that makes the moral point memorable. James draws on a familiar Mediterranean landscape, namely grass (χόρτος) and its flower (ἄνθος). The sensory resonance encompasses *sight*, *touch*, and *emotion*. The brightness of the sun, the fading greenery, the falling flower, and the loss of beauty stimulate the visual imagination. The “scorching wind/heat” evokes bodily sensation, reminding listeners of how harsh the eastern wind (sirocco)¹⁶⁰ feels.

The withering of the flower carries an emotional sting: fragility set against fleeting splendour. Nature here serves as a moral mirror; just as flowers inevitably fade, so too will the pursuits of the wealthy. The irony is that the very “beauty” of the rich, their status, wealth, and outward appearance, lies at the heart of loss. The image also functions as a mnemonic device, since each summer in Palestine, hearers could see the metaphor enacted in their surroundings. By emphasising impermanence, James appeals not only to rational thought but also to imagination and emotion, urging his readers to loosen their attachment to wealth.

The imagery is compelling because it draws on bodily experience: the scorching sun, wilting plants, and vanishing beauty. In this way, the rhetography merges the physical and moral, allowing the audience to feel the futility of misplaced trust in riches. The rhetography of the flower simile in James 1:9–11 evokes a vivid sensory scene of natural decay to illustrate the fleeting nature of wealth. Drawing on agrarian imagery and scriptural echoes (Isaiah, Job), it constructs a multidimensional metaphor: just as a flower withers under the scorching sun, so too do the pursuits of the wealthy fade, thereby reinforcing James’ theme of eschatological reversal, in which the humble are exalted, and the rich are humbled.

7.4.6 The chiasmus within a chiasmus in James 1:9–11

James 1:9–11 presents an exclusionary chiasmus (1:9–10a) within a broader ring-structure (1:9–11), creating an hourglass shape. Drawing on Pelkey’s concept of embodied chiasmus, this layered form goes beyond rhetorical symmetry by embodying bodily and sensory experiences of reversal and impermanence. Thus, chiasmus not only conveys meaning but also evokes an affective response: its embodied structure enacts movement and inversion, reinforcing James’s

¹⁶⁰ Martin (1988:27) and Maynard-Reid (1987:46) interpret ὁ ἥλιος σὺν τῷ καύσωνι (the sun with its scorching heat) as a reference to the sweltering east wind from the desert called the sirocco, which is known to rapidly wither vegetation.

theology of eschatological reversal, in which the humble are exalted and the wealthy are brought low. This *chiasmus within a chiasmus* is illustrated schematically in **Figure 7.4**.

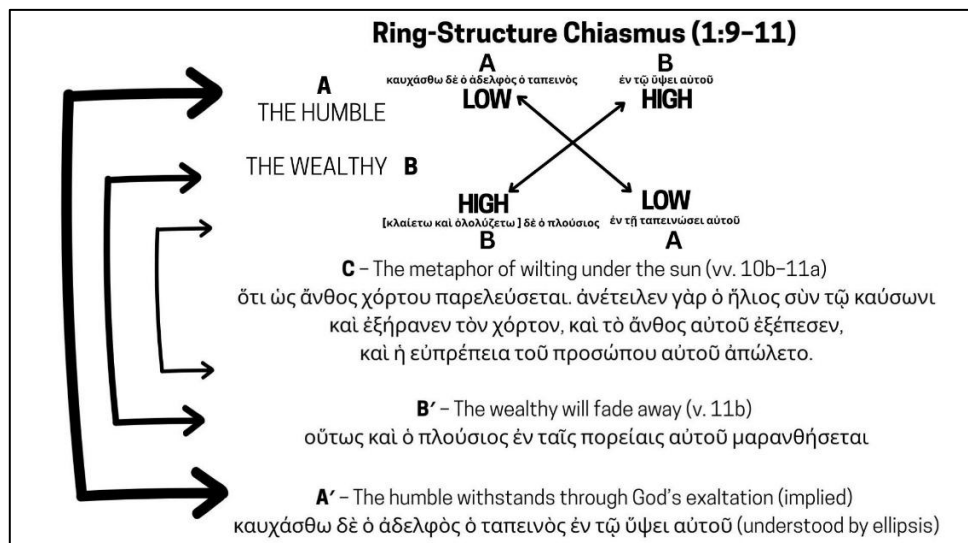


Figure 7.4: Nested (“chiasmus within a chiasmus”) structure in James 1:9-11

Source: Author's own representation.

As outlined in Paragraph 2.2, James 1:9-10a exhibits an exclusionary (antithetical) chiasmus: **A**, “the lowly brother should boast in his exaltation” (low → high), and **B**, “the rich in his humiliation” (high → low). This configuration operates through direct inversion, presenting mutually exclusive social states that intersect at the centre. This antithetical chiasmus is embedded within a broader ring structure that encompasses James 1:9-11. The sequence unfolds as follows: **A**, the exaltation of the lowly; **B**, the humbling of the wealthy; **C**, the central simile of the withering flower; **B'**, the reminder that the rich will fade away; and **A'**, the implicit affirmation that God exalts the lowly in contrast to the wealthy. Framed in this way, the ring structure intensifies the exclusionary contrast of verses 9-10a. It underscores the passage's central theme: the transience of wealth and the enduring honour bestowed upon the humble.

When the exclusionary chiasmus is incorporated into the ring structure, the overall effect resembles an hourglass: an initial widening (the humble exalted), a narrowing (the wealthy humbled), a central point of sharp inversion (the flower simile, shifting from abstraction to sensory experience), and then a widening again to encompass both the destiny of the wealthy and the implied eschatological exaltation of the humble. The hourglass shape itself produces an embodied effect, as it is a familiar tactile and visual symbol of time and mortality (Pelkey, 2017:102-106). The hourglass chiasmus is presented schematically in **Figure 7.5**.

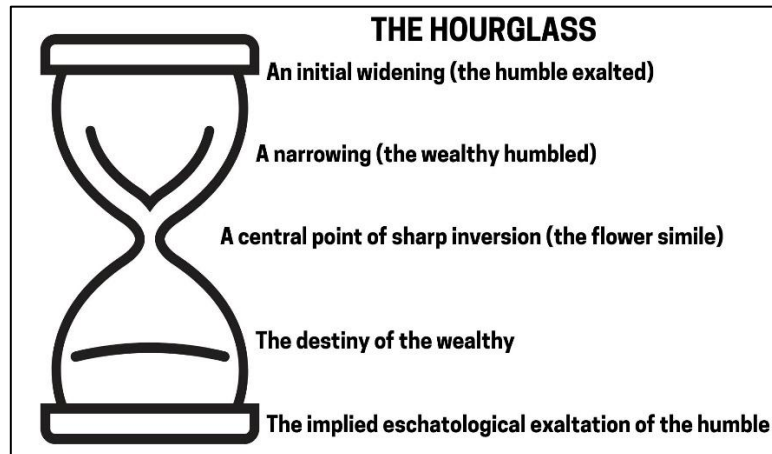


Figure 7.5: Hourglass chiasmus in James 1:9–11

Source: Author's own representation.

The embodied effects of the chiasmi in James 1:9–11 operate on multiple levels. The reversal “low → high / high → low” engages bodily awareness of elevation and humiliation, rooted in spatial experience. The simile of the withering flower evokes the passage of time: hearers are reminded of the scorching heat they know, see the grass fade, and accept the certainty of decay. The imagery engages the senses of sight (lost beauty), touch (parching heat), and emotion (the sting of fragility). The nested chiastic structure mirrors the human experience of limitation and transience: narrowing and widening like an hourglass. Wealth and status slip away like sand, while the reversal of fortunes occurs at the “narrow neck” of the structure, where the withering flower metaphor is located.

By merging an exclusionary chiasmus with a ring structure, James does more than articulate the reversal of eschatology; he brings it to life. The audience is confronted with:

- Reversal as bodily inversion (up ↔ down).
- Decay as a passage of time (sand slipping away, flowers withering).
- Judgement as an inevitability (the hourglass eventually empties).

Thus, the rhetoric of James 1:9–11 constructs a theology that is both conceptual and emotional: wealth is temporary, the poor are honoured, and God's eschatological reversal is made tangible through sensory imagery. Pelkey's concept of embodied chiasmus (2017) shows how this passage functions beyond verbal contrast, becoming a lived, bodily experience. The exclusionary chiasmus (the exaltation of the lowly/the humiliation of the rich), embedded within the broader

ring structure, creates an hourglass shape. This form itself symbolises reversal, limitation, and impermanence, ensuring that James's theology of eschatological reversal is not only memorable but also vividly experienced.

7.4.7 Summary of phase 2: the embodied-cognitive phase (embodied and socio-cultural engagement) of the investigation

James uses the simile of fading grass and flowers to illustrate the transience of human wealth and social status, inspired by the natural life cycle of plants. This imagery highlights an ironic end-times reversal: although the wealthy seem secure, they eventually fade away, whereas the humble are ultimately elevated. The phrases — “withers,” “falls,” and “is destroyed” — depict a slow yet inevitable decay, appealing to the visual and tactile senses and emphasising the contrast between lasting humility and temporary prosperity.

In developing this imagery, James reappropriates a well-established biblical motif found in Job 14:1–2 and Isaiah 40:6–7. In Job, the image highlights the brevity and fragility of human life, while in Isaiah it contrasts human transience with the enduring word of God. James draws these traditions together, affirming human vulnerability and mortality while redirecting the metaphor towards a critique of wealth. The emphasis shifts from the general frailty of life to the futility of reliance on material status, serving as a moral warning: wealth, like life itself, is unstable and ultimately incapable of securing honour or permanence.

The flower simile in James 1:9–11 is further grounded in the sensory realities of the Mediterranean environment. By evoking plants scorched by intense heat, James engages the senses, producing a vivid and memorable image of impermanence. The irony is that the very beauty associated with wealth — status, prosperity, and social visibility — is precisely what fades most quickly. Rooted in embodied experience and reinforced by scriptural tradition, the imagery fuses natural decay with ethical exhortation, intensifying James's theme of eschatological reversal: the humiliation of the rich and the exaltation of the humble.

This theological vision is reinforced structurally by an exclusionary chiasmus embedded within a broader ring structure. Drawing on Pelkey's concept of embodied chiasmus, the passage may be read as forming an hourglass pattern that symbolises constriction, reversal, and loss. This structural movement renders James's message not only conceptually intelligible but also experientially compelling, as readers are drawn into the tension and collapse enacted by the imagery itself.

Accordingly, James 1:9–11 establishes a stark contrast between the humble brother (ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινός) and the wealthy (ὁ πλούσιος). The ideological and theological implications of this opposition will be examined in the third phase of the multidimensional hermeneutical analysis, through the lens of carnal hermeneutics, in dialogue with the broader themes of wisdom, suffering, and servanthood articulated throughout the epistle.

7.5 Phase 3: theological and ethical synthesis (theological-ethical phase)

7.5.1 James 1:1–11 read through carnal hermeneutics and the theology of the suffering and wise slave

This discussion summarises the theme of the suffering and wise slave as it appears in the Epistle of James and as examined thus far, demonstrating how James 1:9–11 incorporates both aspects of this figure.

James opens his epistle by identifying himself as a δοῦλος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (“a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,” 1:1). As argued in Chapter 4 of this thesis, this opening designation is more than a conventional formula of humility. By calling himself a slave, James frames his message from the perspective of the socially humble yet divinely privileged, establishing a paradigm for his audience and providing the hermeneutical key to the theology that unfolds in James 1:2–11 (Bauckham, 1999:14–16; Johnson, 1995:173–174). The δοῦλος identity thus serves as the letter’s thematic overture, foreshadowing recurring motifs of suffering (1:2–4; 5:7–11), renunciation (1:5–8, 12–15; 3:13–18; 4:1–9), humiliation (1:9–11, 27; 4:1–9; 5:14), and self-control (1:19; 3:1–12). Servanthood to God and Christ is therefore portrayed as a lived, embodied *habitus*, uniting faith, endurance, and action.

In James 1:2–4, the δοῦλος identity is portrayed as characterised by endurance amid trials. The faithful servant of God is encouraged to rejoice when facing trials because such trials foster perseverance, and perseverance, demonstrated through concrete action, leads to maturity and completeness. The δοῦλος thus embodies both vulnerability to suffering and the outcome it produces, namely perfection (τέλειος).

As discussed in Chapter 5 (paragraph 5.4), James’s self-identification as “a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:1) integrates both *Leib*, the inner *habitus* of humility, obedience, and surrender, and *Körper*, the outward, visible body exposed to persecution, scrutiny, and even the possibility of martyrdom. This model of servanthood grounds authority not in domination but in

solidarity forged through shared endurance. By addressing “the twelve tribes in the diaspora” (ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ), James forges unity within a scattered community by appealing to their mutual vulnerability. Trials (πειρασμοί) affect both the inner life, generating alienation and instability, and the external social body, through exclusion and hardship. However, James reframes adversity as a refining fire: testing (δοκίμιον) produces endurance (ὑπομονή), which leads to maturity and wholeness (τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι), ultimately crowned with the eschatological promise of “the crown of life” (1:12).

The δοῦλος identity becomes clearer through James’s emphasis on wisdom. “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God” (1:5). The δοῦλος is characterised not by independence but by reliance. Wisdom is not self-made; it is granted by God, “who gives generously (ἀπλῶς) and without reproach.” The wise servant thus directs both “body and soul” entirely towards God, depending not on self-sufficiency but on divine generosity. Conversely, the διψυχος (the double-minded person) is compared to a wave driven and tossed by the wind (1:6), a vivid image of instability. As Moo (2000:64–66) and Allison (2013:198–200) observe, James presents wisdom as both cognitive and practical, as evidenced by faithful obedience and good works. Therefore, while the servant’s body is strongly aligned with God, the doubter’s life remains unanchored, buffeted, and without direction, influenced by external forces.

Richard Kearney’s carnal hermeneutics (2015:16–25) emphasises this embodied aspect of servanthood. For Kearney (2015:16), hermeneutics is always carnal: “word is flesh, text is body and body is text.” Meaning arises through the senses — touch, taste, sight, smell, and hearing — by which the flesh mediates significance and reveals otherness (Kearney, 2015:19–22). Central to this is vulnerability: interpretation involves exposure, a readiness to be touched and transformed. Kearney (2015:23–25) describes this as the “hermeneutic wager of the flesh,” where the body acts as both the agent and the receiver of meaning. From this perspective, James’s view of wisdom is not merely an abstract cognitive possession but an embodied attitude of servanthood. To be a δοῦλος is thus to live in openness to divine generosity, allowing oneself to be reshaped through suffering, and relying entirely on the gift of God’s wisdom.

The δοῦλος theme is evident in James 1:9–11. The “lowly brother” (ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινός) is advised to boast in exaltation, while the rich are cautioned to mourn their impending humiliation. James structures this contrast as an exclusionary chiasmus (Grausso, 2020:33–34), reversing the roles of low and high, exalted and humbled, to embody the radical reversal at the heart of God’s eschatological plan. This reversal is not merely theoretical; it has physical and spatial significance.

Being lifted or cast down relates to bodily concepts of posture and dignity, standing tall or being brought low. Moo (2000:64–66) notes that the passage merges social and spiritual levels: poverty signifies marginalisation but also dependence on God. From Kearney’s carnal hermeneutics perspective, the audience not only understands this reversal intellectually but also experiences it bodily. The *δοῦλος* identity permeates the passage: the humble, like slaves, are exalted through their humiliation, while the wealthy, who seem elevated, are destined to fall.

The imagery of the fading flower (1:10b–11) deepens this embodied theology — the sun-scorched flower serves as a sensory metaphor. Hearers imagine the wilting blossom, feel the scorching heat drying the grass, and are moved by the pity of fragility. In this way, a theological concept is conveyed through lived, sensory experience, emphasising the transience of wealth and the instability of social standing from a divine perspective. Allison (2013:198–200) notes that James draws on Jewish wisdom traditions in which a fleeting flower symbolises human mortality (cf. Isaiah 40:6–8; Job 14:1–2). The metaphor is not merely an abstract idea but an invitation to interpret reality through bodily perception, to feel impermanence in one’s own flesh. The fading flower reflects the audience’s real experience of mortality and marginality, exposing the futility of riches.

Therefore, James 1:9–11 presents a theology of the “wise and suffering slave.” The *δοῦλος*, though scorned by society, becomes the ultimate model of divine wisdom. The humble are exalted before God, while the rich are shown to be temporary and powerless. Kearney’s carnal hermeneutics help explain why James employs such sensory imagery: theology is not delivered as abstract doctrine but as lived experience expressed through the body. The audience sees, feels, and remembers the fading riches in the flower, and they imagine the paradox of the lowly being lifted and the rich being cast down in their own bodies.

Ultimately, James’s theology of reversal is shaped by the *δοῦλος* identity and expressed through sensory metaphors. Servitude is not a sign of weakness but the foundation of wisdom, embodied, vulnerable, and open to God’s exaltation. Drawing on Kearney’s hermeneutical approach, James’s eschatological vision appears notably physical: wealth dissolves, status disintegrates, yet the humble are uplifted. His theology is thus profoundly tangible, operating through the physical realm.

7.6 Summary

The table below offers a structured summary of the main themes in James 1:9–11, as clarified through a multidimensional hermeneutical analysis, and situates them within the overarching research aims (Table 7.3).

Table 7.3: Main themes in James 1:9–11 in relation to the study’s research aims

Phase / Focus	Key Elements	Details & Insights
Phase 1: Structural & rhetorical mapping	Exclusionary chiasmus. Low/High conceptual metaphor.	Pattern: (a) humble brother → (b) exaltation → (b) wealthy → (a) humiliation. Mutually exclusive, either “p” or “not-p”, emphasising binary opposition. In James 1:10, the verb referring to the rich is more convincingly reconstructed as <i>κλαίετω</i> (let him weep), rather than <i>καυχάσθω</i> (let him boast), reflecting the exclusionary chiasmus principle of mutually exclusive states and reinforced by the intensifying verb <i>ὀλολύζω</i> (to wail) in James 5:1. The contrast between the lowly and the rich functions as a conceptual metaphor - criticising social inequality, affirming communal solidarity, and emphasising God’s eschatological reversal.
Phase 2: Embodied-cognitive hermeneutics	Conceptual metaphor, intertexture, rhetography: the fading flower (1:10b–11). Chiasmus within a chiasmus.	Conceptual metaphor connects physical posture (“lifted up/brought low”) with social and eschatological reversal. Intertextual echoes include Job 14:1–2 and Isaiah 40:6–8. The fading-flower simile draws on biblical tradition: Job highlights the brevity of life; Isaiah contrasts transience with God’s enduring word. The sun-scorched flower simile evokes sight, touch, and emotion. The verbal sequence (“withers → falls → destroyed”) illustrates stages of decay. It creates a sensory, memorable metaphor: wealth and status fade like fragile flowers. The exclusionary chiasmus within the ring structure creates an hourglass shape that symbolises reversal and impermanence.
Phase 3: Theological and ethical synthesis	<i>Δοῦλος</i> theme & embodied reversal, theology of reversal: eschatological irony.	James 1:9–11 presents a theology of eschatological reversal centred on the theme of <i>δοῦλος</i> , in which the lowly are exalted and the rich humbled. Through the exclusionary chiasmus and the sensory metaphor of the fading flower, James suggests that wisdom and divine favour arise from humility, suffering, and embodied experience. James’s theology emphasises a concrete, embodied engagement rather than an abstract doctrine.

Source: Author’s own synthesis.

Chapter 8 offers an analysis of James 1:12–15. Verse 12, which declares a blessing on those who persevere through trial, serves as a transitional segment between James 1:2–11 and James 1:13–15. However, for this study, it is examined alongside James 1:13–15 within a multidimensional embodied rhetorical analysis.

CHAPTER 8 THE WISE AND SUFFERING SLAVE FACING TEMPTATION (JAMES 1:12–15)

I can resist everything except temptation.

(Wilde 2006:15)

8.1 Introduction

Chapter 8 examines James 1:12–15 through a multidimensional embodied rhetorical framework. Verse 12, which blesses those who persevere under trial, functions as a transition between James 1:2–11 and 1:13–15. It concludes the discussion of endurance and testing and introduces the themes of temptation, desire, and sin. This analysis considers James 1:12 alongside 1:13–15 to investigate the conceptual and rhetorical continuity between perseverance in trial and the internal dynamics of temptation.

This chapter examines how the passage presents the relationship between external testing and internal desire, focusing on embodied, experiential, and ethical aspects. Using a multidimensional hermeneutic, the analysis traces the rhetorical shift from blessing and endurance to temptation, and the progression of desire toward sin and death. The chapter also explores the passage's semantic and metaphorical features, particularly the imagery of conception and birth used to illustrate the development of sin.

This discussion analyses how James 1:12–15 informs the development of the identity of the faithful servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ by contrasting perseverance grounded in love for God with the destructive outcomes of disordered desire. The chapter also investigates the theological implications of the claim that God neither tempts nor is tempted by evil, emphasising the distinction between divine testing and human temptation within the Epistle's rhetorical and ethical framework.

8.2 The position of James 1:12 – hinge verse or part of James 1:13-15?

As discussed in Chapter 3, many scholars¹⁶¹ assume that James 1:2–12 forms a coherent literary unit, framed by joy in trials (1:2) and blessing in trials (1:12). They emphasise that the passage

¹⁶¹ Allison (2013:190–192) notes that James 1:12 functions both as a summary and a transition. Moo (2000:64–66) claims that verses 2–12 are framed by themes of joy and blessing in trials. Bauckham (1999:62–65) emphasises the wisdom context that unites this section. Johnson (1995:175–180) argues

unfolds through three distinct segments: the role of trials in cultivating endurance and maturity (1:2–4), the importance of wisdom for perseverance (1:5–8), and the correct perspective on poverty and wealth (1:9–11), culminating in the blessing of endurance and the promise of divine reward (1:12). Verse 12 serves both as a summary of the previous argument and as a transition to the following discussion of internal temptation dynamics (1:13–15). Guthrie and Taylor (2006:686) argue that 1:2–4, 12, and 1:25 form an *inclusio*: 1:2–4 and 1:12 set the opening frame, while 1:25 completes the structural and thematic cycle. Lexical parallels across these three passages highlight the chapter's unity, each emphasising the blessing bestowed on those who persevere in testing. Endurance is expressed through obedience, rooted in love for God, and understood within an eschatological framework: trials refine believers (1:2–4), those who love God will inherit the crown of life (1:12), and those who remain obedient will be blessed (1:25). Therefore, verse 12 emerges as the pivotal point in the chapter's literary and theological design, functioning as an "overlapping transition" between the two parts of the double introduction. In this way, James 1:12 captures the chapter's core message: those tested and proven are truly blessed, and the crown of life awaits all who love God.

Wolmarans (1994:93) argues, however, that James 1:12 should not be viewed as an isolated or transitional verse but as part of a cohesive section covering 1:12–15. He explains that, in this section, the term *πειρασμός* in 1:12 is best understood as "temptation". This interpretation is reinforced by the subsequent use of *πειράζω* (to tempt) in 1:13–14, which expands and develops the theme. The passage is also unified through the metaphor of desire (*ἐπιθυμία*) as a seductress, enticing a person like a prostitute. Based on this, Wolmarans concludes that 1:12 should be linked to 1:13–15, interpreting *πειρασμός* not as external trials but as temptation. He further notes that the "life" (*ζωή*) promised in 1:12 is deliberately contrasted with the "death" (*θάνατος*) of 1:15, creating a rhetorical opposition that strengthens the argument. Finally, Wolmarans emphasises the textual proximity between 1:12 and 1:13, where the theme of temptation is revisited, in contrast to the greater distance between 1:12 and 1:2, where *πειρασμός* refers to trials. Consequently, Wolmarans bases his argument on the immediate context (1:13–15), which concludes with James' emphasis on ethical endurance, resisting desire rather than merely enduring hardship.

that 1:12 is a pivotal verse, summarising the call to endurance (verses 2–11) and opening the discussion of temptation (verses 13–15). This structure highlights the epistle's central message: the blessedness of those who endure trials and the eschatological reward that awaits them.

Jackson-McCabe (2014:167) argues that James 1:2–4 and James 1:12 offer a direct and complementary parallel to the discussion of failure to resist in James 1:13–18. In the latter passage, giving in to temptation is said to “give birth to sin” (τίκτει ἁμαρτίαν in 1:15) and ultimately lead to death (ἀποκύει θάνατον in 1:15). Conversely, in James 1:2–4 and 1:12, enduring temptation is said to produce a “perfect work” (ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ ἔργον τέλειον ἐχέτω in 1:4), which ultimately results in the “crown of life” (τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς in 1:12). Together, these two sections present contrasting outcomes of temptation, resisting or not resisting, moving from the immediate action (either a perfect work or sin) to long-term, eschatological consequences (crown of life or death). Jackson-McCabe (2014:161–184) consistently translates *πειρασμός* as “temptation”.

The central interpretative challenge in James 1:12 concerns the meaning of *πειρασμός*. Scholarly opinion is divided between a moral-ethical view, which reads the term as “temptation,” and a wisdom-suffering view, which interprets it as “trials.” This ambiguity reaches its height in James 1:12, which can be read either as part of 1:13–15 or as a hinge verse linking 1:2–11 with 1:13–15. The main question, therefore, is whether *πειρασμός* in 1:12 should be understood as external trials, internal temptations, or both. Past research has approached this issue primarily from two perspectives: lexical studies seeking to define the meaning of *πειρασμός* (see Allison, 2013:190–192; Moo, 2000:64–66; Bauckham, 1999:62–65; Johnson, 1995:175–180; Wolmarans, 1994:93) and structural analyses (see Jackson-McCabe, 2014:161–184; Guthrie and Taylor, 2006:686) emphasising literary unity or division. While these approaches have provided important insights, they often treat “trials” and “temptation” as mutually exclusive, oversimplifying James’ rhetorical strategy. This study aims to address this gap by employing a multidimensional, embodied rhetorical approach to James 1:12, clarifying the semantic scope of *πειρασμός* and reevaluating the verse’s structural function within the chapter. Such an approach foregrounds the text’s embodied impact on its audience, appealing simultaneously to the “listening ear” and the “spelling eye” (Botha, 2018:1–18). The guiding question, therefore, is: how would the audience have heard and experienced the reference to *πειρασμός*?

8.3 Exploring James 1:12 through a multidimensional embodied rhetorical approach

8.3.1 Phase 1: structural and rhetorical mapping (textual-rhetorical phase)

8.3.1.1 Research questions posed

In this phase of the multidimensional embodied rhetorical approach, the following research questions guide the investigation of James 1:12:

- How does James 1:12 relate to 1:2–11 on a formal level? Here, the inner texture of the text is examined.
- Referring to James 1:2, the phrase *πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις* (when you encounter various trials) is reconsidered to explore whether intertexts suggest that such “trials” encompass not only external hardships but also temptations to sin. In this context, the passage's intertextual texture is examined.
- James 1:12 is framed as a *macarism* (*μακάριος ἀνὴρ*, “Blessed is the one ...”). The verse will therefore be examined in relation to its corresponding intertexts that employ similar forms of blessing.

These research questions are consequently discussed.

8.3.1.2 The relationship between James 1:2–11, James 1:12 and James 1:13–15

Formally, *μακάριος* (blessed in 1:12) relates to *χαρὰν* (joy in 1:2) and *καυχάσθω* (boast in 1:9), all of which belong to the semantic field of joy.¹⁶² The words *πειρασμός* (trial, temptation in 1:12) and *πειράζω* (put to test, tempt in 1:13) relate to *πειρασμός ποικίλος* (various kinds of trials) mentioned in James 1:2, whilst *δόκιμος* (tested, approved in 1:12) relates to *δοκίμιον* (testing, genuineness, unalloyed quality) mentioned in James 1:3. The word *ὑπομένει* (endure in 1:12) relates to *ὑπομονή* (endurance) in James 1:3–4. That which a person receives from God (*λήμψεται τι παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου*

¹⁶² Louw and Nida (1988) map these words within these specific semantic domains: *μακάριος* (blessed): Domain 25.119: (*pertaining to being fortunate or happy because of circumstances* - “happy, blessed”. *χαρά* (joy): Domain 25.123, 124: (*a state of happiness or rejoicing, reason for gladness* - “joy, gladness”. *καυχάομαι* (boast): Domain 33.368: (*to take pride in something, with implication of joyful confidence* (“to boast, to glory, to take pride in”). Formally, *μακάριος* (1:12), *χαρά* (1:2), and *καυχάομαι* (1:9) all belong to the semantic field of joy, as indicated by Louw and Nida (1988:25.119; 25.123,124; 33.368).

– whoever wants to receive anything from God) and λήμψεται τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς (will receive the crown of life) is mentioned in James 1:7 and James 1:12. The ὁδός-/πορεία– (the way) metaphor (1:8, 11) is also indirectly suggested in James 1:12, where a metaphor of a race is implied. Like a good athlete, one must complete the race of life to receive the crown of life.

The repetition of key terms in James 1:2–12 deliberately creates verbal echoes that rhetorically lead the audience towards thematic connections. These connections indicate that 1:12 functions as an *inclusio* with 1:2–4, framing endurance under trial as central to the passage. While James 1:2–4 highlights external challenges, such as the hardships of diaspora life, poverty, and the call to persevere in good works, James 1:12 restates the blessing of endurance and looks forward to the crown of life. Jackson-McCabe (2014:167) emphasises that James 1:12 serves as a transitional hinge, demonstrating that the surrounding units are not intended to stand alone but rather as parts of a unified argument.

The *inclusio* of James 1:2–4 and 1:12 finds a complementary counterpoint in 1:13–15, where failure to endure results in death. Both sections highlight God’s providential role: in James 1:2–4, perseverance leads to maturity and “lacking nothing” (1:4), while 1:5–8 underscores God as the generous giver. In 1:13–15, by contrast, the issue is the deceptive power of ἐπιθυμία (desire), which distorts perception of God as the true source of good.

Taken together, these structural and thematic connections suggest that James intentionally links “trials” (1:2–4, 1:12) with “temptation” (1:13–15), contrasting faithful endurance with destructive failure. In sum, James 1:2–18 presents a coherent discussion of the problem of trials/temptation in two phases. James 1:2–12 emphasises the importance and rewards of enduring various temptations (πειρασμός ποικίλος in 1:2), viewing them as tests of faith in divine providence. James 1:13–18, on the other hand, warns about the power and consequences of human desire, which can seduce individuals away from reliance on the provident God and toward sin and death.

Nevertheless, the thematic links between 1:2–11, 1:12, and 1:13–15 do not by themselves clarify whether πειρασμός in 1:12 should be understood as “trials” or “temptation.” Since it has been shown that 1:12 echoes 1:2, where πειρασμοῖς ποικίλοις is often translated as “various trials,” it is necessary to revisit this initial point and reconsider its meaning. Specifically, one must question whether the category of “trials” might also include aspects of “temptation.” An intertextual investigation offers a valuable way to explore this possibility. Thus, does the intertextual evidence indicate that the reference to πειρασμοῖς ποικίλοις in James 1:2, usually rendered as “various

trials,” could also embrace the concept of temptation, thus influencing the interpretation of *πειρασμός* in 1:12?

8.3.1.3 Scrutinising the intertextual texture of the reference to *πειρασμοὺς ποικίλοις* in James 1:2

Commentators on James frequently rely on a network of intertexts when discussing *πειρασμός*. They often cite passages from the Septuagint (LXX), such as Genesis 22:1 and Deuteronomy 8:2. Within the Wisdom tradition, Sirach 2:1, commonly noted as a “parallel motto” to James 1:2, links devotion to God with unavoidable testing, as observed by Davids (1983), Martin (1988), Johnson (1995), and Allison (2013). The Wisdom of Solomon 3:5–6, which presents suffering as a process of refinement leading to eschatological vindication, is discussed by Bauckham (1999), Moo (2000), and Allison (2013). Among New Testament texts, the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:13/Luke 11:4) is frequently referenced (Davids, 1983; Moo, 2000; Johnson, 1995; Bauckham, 1999), while Mark 14:38 and Matthew 26:41 are associated with the disciples’ weakness (Davids, 1983; Johnson, 1995). In exploring the intertexture of James 1:2–4, 1 Peter 1:6–7 is especially relevant because its mention of *ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς* mirrors James 1:2; most scholars interpret this as confirmation that the phrase refers to external trials with a refining purpose (Davids, 1983; Moo, 2000; Johnson, 1995; Bauckham, 1999). Lastly, Bauckham (1999) draws attention to Revelation 3:10, which describes eschatological or cosmic testing, closely connected to James’ promise of the “crown of life.”

These intertexts are analysed to determine whether *πειρασμοί*, when translated as “trials,” are consistently distinguished from “temptations,” or if the two meanings overlap. The aim is to assess whether the phrase “various trials” (*πειρασμοῖς ποικίλοις*) in James 1:2 might also implicitly include the concept of temptation. How would the audience have possibly interpreted this word? The following table presents the relevant intertexts, an English translation, and an assessment of the meaning conveyed by the noun *πειρασμός* and the verb *πειράζω* in their specific contexts (**Table 8.1**).

Table 8.1: Intertextual uses of πειρασμός / πειράζω and their contextual meanings

Text	Greek	Translation	Assessment of the meaning of πειρασμός
Genesis 22:1 (LXX)	καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ τὰ ῥήματα ταῦτα ὁ θεὸς ἐπειράζειν τὸν Ἀβραάμ καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτόν Ἀβραάμ Ἀβραάμ ὁ δὲ εἶπεν ἰδοὺ ἐγώ	After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.”	God “tested” Abraham (πειράζειν). In this context, the “test” relates to obedience to God, but it can also be seen as a moral-ethical temptation to rebel. Here, πειράζω signifies God’s test. Although it mainly points to an external trial — the sacrifice of Isaac — it also involves a moral temptation; Abraham might have chosen to disobey out of self-interest.
Deuteronomy 8:2 (LXX)	καὶ μνησθήσῃ πᾶσαν τὴν ὁδὸν ἣν ἤγαγέν σε κύριος ὁ θεός σου ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ὅπως ἂν κακώσῃ σε καὶ ἐκπειράσῃ σε καὶ διαγνωσθῇ τὰ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου εἰ φυλάξῃ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ ἢ οὐ	And remember all the way that the Lord your God led you in the wilderness, to humble you, to test you, and to reveal what is in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.	This verse emphasises both external and internal aspects: the external hardship of the wilderness and the internal test of obedience. Israel is tested (πειράζω) in the wilderness. Initially, the trial involves hunger, thirst, and wandering, but it becomes a temptation when Israel grumbles or disobeys. These passages imply that trials naturally include a temptation to rebel against God.
Sirach 2:1	τέκνον εἰ προσέρχῃ δουλεύειν κυρίῳ ἐτοίμασον τὴν ψυχὴν σου εἰς πειρασμόν	My child, if you come to serve the Lord, prepare your soul for testing.	This verse emphasises that serving God inevitably involves πειρασμός, understood as a trial or test that may include both external hardships and internal challenges of obedience, thus moral testing. The trial is expected to tempt the faithful to turn away.

Text	Greek	Translation	Assessment of the meaning of πειρασμός
Wisdom of Solomon 3:5–6	καὶ ὀλίγα παιδευθέντες μεγάλα εὐεργετηθήσονται ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἐπείρασεν αὐτοὺς καὶ εὗρεν αὐτοὺς ἀξίους ἑαυτοῦ ὡς χρυσὸν ἐν χωνευτηρίῳ ἐδοκίμασεν αὐτοὺς καὶ ὡς ὀλοκάρπωμα θυσίας	And although they were disciplined only for a short time, they will receive great rewards, for God tested them and found them worthy of Himself; He proved them like gold in the furnace and as a burnt offering, complete in holiness.	This passage depicts testing (ἐπείρασεν/ἐδοκίμασεν) as both trial and refinement, connecting external discipline with internal moral testing, like the themes of endurance and reward in James 1:2–4 and 1:12. The righteous are “tested (ἐπείρασεν) as gold in the furnace,” implying external hardship with an underlying moral aspect proving.
Matthew 6:13 (Luke 11:4)	καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.	And do not lead us into testing (temptation) but deliver us from the evil one.	This phrase highlights the dual meaning of πειρασμός in the New Testament, encompassing both external trials and internal moral conflicts. The term is therefore ambiguous: referring either to “trial (persecution)” or “temptation to sin”.
Mark 14:38	γρηγορεῖτε καὶ προσεύχεσθε, ἵνα μὴ ἔλθῃτε εἰς πειρασμόν· τὸ μὲν πνεῦμα πρόθυμον ἡ δὲ σὰρξ ἀσθενής.	Watch and pray, so that you do not fall into testing (temptation); the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.	This verse emphasises the interplay between external circumstances and internal moral susceptibility, illustrating how πειρασμός involves both the pressures of the situation and the vulnerability of human desire. Here, πειρασμός highlights the risk of succumbing to moral failure under external pressure.

Text	Greek	Translation	Assessment of the meaning of πειρασμός
1 Peter 1:6–7	ἐν ᾧ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, ὀλίγον ἄρτι εἰ δέον [ἐστὶν] λυπηθέντες ἐν ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς , ἵνα τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως πολυτιμότερον χρυσίου τοῦ ἀπολλυμένου διὰ πυρὸς δὲ δοκιμαζομένου, εὐρεθῇ εἰς ἔπαινον καὶ δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν ἐν ἀποκαλύ	Rejoice in this, even if only for a little while, if it is necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, more valuable than gold, which perishes even though it is tested by fire, may be shown to result in praise, glory, and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.	Remarkably like James 1:2. While referred to as trials, the passage suggests a moral evaluation, as faith must stay firm. This passage echoes James 1:2–4 in describing trials (πειρασμοῖς) as external hardships that also test the inner strength of faith, creating a strong intertextual link between trials, testing, and refinement.
Revelation 2:10	μηδὲν φοβοῦ ἃ μέλλεις πάσχειν. ἰδοὺ μέλλει βάλλειν ὁ διάβολος ἐξ ὑμῶν εἰς φυλακὴν ἵνα πειρασθῇτε καὶ ἔξετε θλῖψιν ἡμερῶν δέκα. γίνου πιστὸς ἄχρι θανάτου, καὶ δώσω σοι τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς.	Do not fear any of the hardships you are about to face. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you may be tested and suffer tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.	This passage emphasises testing (πειρασθῇτε) in the context of both external suffering (imprisonment, tribulation) and the need for faithful endurance, reflecting James 1:12's promise of the “crown of life” to those who persevere through trials. It closely parallels James 1:12: the trial (persecution) is also a temptation (to renounce faith).

Source: Author's own analysis.

The intertexts suggest that “various trials” are not just external hardships but also inherently involve the danger of temptation, including the risk of unbelief, disobedience, or moral collapse. Within Jewish wisdom and wilderness traditions, trials are rarely depicted as purely external; instead, they are consistently linked to the possibility of failure — temptation. This pattern is reflected in the Lord's Prayer, Gethsemane, 1 Peter 1:6–7, and Revelation 2:10, where trials and temptations are presented as two sides of the same coin.

Such evidence supports a dual understanding of πειρασμός in James, where life's trials are both opportunities for moral testing. Therefore, in James 1:2, the phrase ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς (“various trials”) likely includes the aspect of temptation, creating a natural link to the discussion in 1:13–15. External pressures such as persecution, poverty, and suffering expose believers to internal temptation to abandon faith, resist God, or fall into sin. James himself transitions from external trials (1:2–4) to internal temptation (1:13–15), implying he assumes this inherent overlap.

James 1:12 is framed as a macarism¹⁶³ (μακάριος ἀνὴρ, “Blessed is the one ...”). This study examines the verse in relation to its intertextual parallels, which employ similar blessing formulas. The central question is whether the use of the macarism helps clarify the meaning of πειρασμός, and whether it should be understood primarily as external trials, internal temptation, or a mixture of both.

8.3.1.4 An analysis of the macarism in James 1:12

Bauckham (1999:46–47) states that beatitudes (or macarisms) occur both with and without motive clauses (giving a reason why the person should be considered blessed). Though beatitudes have an essential place in the wisdom tradition¹⁶⁴, they are also frequent in psalms.¹⁶⁵ Later beatitudes, like the one in James and those in Matthew 5:3¹⁶⁶, 11¹⁶⁷ and Luke 6:20, 22 are often eschatological in character, pronouncing people blessed because of the eschatological blessings they can expect and contrasting their present condition with their eschatological condition. In James 1:12, this eschatological expectation is also emphasised, since the promised blessed state is the “crown of life” (λήμψεται τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς). Sirach speaks of a blessing associated with the embodiment of wisdom, whereas Psalm 1:1 concerns temptation and the resulting resistance to sin. In contrast, the beatitudes in Matthew and Luke relate to perseverance in trials.

Consequently, the macarism tradition involves both embodying wisdom and facing the dual challenge of overcoming external trials while resisting internal temptation. James 1:12 clearly places itself at these crossroads: the blessing promised to those who cultivate wisdom and

¹⁶³ A macarism is a literary and rhetorical device where a person or group is called blessed (μακάριος – “fortunate, happy, blessed”). It is essentially a beatitude—a blessing formula that declares someone “blessed” due to a specific quality, action, or circumstance. It typically starts with the word μακάριος (blessed is ...), followed by the subject (the person or group), and sometimes includes a motive clause that explains why the person is blessed. (Bauckham, 1999:46–47).

¹⁶⁴ Sirach 14:20–21 states: μακάριος ἀνὴρ ὃς ἐν σοφίᾳ μελετήσῃ καὶ ὃς ἐν συνέσει αὐτοῦ διαλεχθήσεται ὁ διανοούμενος τὰς ὁδοὺς αὐτῆς ἐν καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀποκρύφοις αὐτῆς ἐννοηθήσεται. (Blessed is the man who meditates on wisdom and who reasons with understanding. The one who considers her ways in his heart and ponders her secrets with insight).

¹⁶⁵ Psalm 1:1 emphasises: μακάριος ἀνὴρ ὃς οὐκ ἐπορεύθη ἐν βουλῇ ἀσεβῶν καὶ ἐν ὁδῷ ἁμαρτωλῶν οὐκ ἔστη καὶ ἐπὶ καθέδραν λοιμῶν οὐκ ἐκάθισεν. (Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers).

¹⁶⁶ Matthew 5:3 states: Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν – Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹⁶⁷ Matthew 5:11 states: μακάριοί ἐστε ὅταν ὀνειδίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ διώξωσιν καὶ εἰπωσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν καθ’ ὑμῶν [ψευδόμενοι] ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ. – Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you on account of me.

persevere through *πειρασμός*, where this term may refer to enduring persecution and hardship, as well as resisting sinful desires, with both aspects consistently echoed across the intertexts.

8.3.1.5 Summary of phase 1: structural and rhetorical mapping (textual-rhetorical phase)

James 1:2–12 presents a unified argument: perseverance under trials leads to maturity and life, whereas succumbing to desire leads to sin and death. Verses 1:2–4 focus on external hardships, 1:12 emphasises the blessing of endurance (crown of life), and 1:13–15 warns against internal temptation. The repeated use of key terms (joy, endurance, testing, crown) forms an *inclusio* framing endurance as central.

The term *πειρασμός* is multifaceted, encompassing both external trials (such as poverty, oppression, and persecution) and internal temptations (such as desire and moral struggle). Intertextual references from the LXX, Wisdom literature, and the New Testament support this dual interpretation. James places trials within lived experience, where external pressures trigger inner moral challenges.

The essence of 1:12 promises blessings for perseverance in all forms of *πειρασμός*, integrating wisdom, moral, social, and theological dimensions, and emphasising the semantic tension between trial as testing and temptation as moral challenge.

The multidimensional embodied rhetorical investigation has so far established that James employs metaphors and similes to enhance the rhetorical impact of his argument. The metaphor in 1:12, specifically that of a race culminating in the receipt of the victor's crown, along with its underlying rhetography, is therefore to be examined in phase 2 of the investigation, the embodied-cognitive phase, which considers both embodied and socio-cultural dimensions.

8.3.2 Phase 2: the embodied-cognitive phase (embodied and socio-cultural engagement) of the investigation

8.3.2.1 The implicit race-metaphor analysed as a conceptual metaphor

In James 1:12, the phrase λήμψεται τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς (the crown of life or the crown which is life — *epexegetical genitive*)¹⁶⁸ employs the well-established metaphor¹⁶⁹ that the life of faith is akin to a race or struggle. In this context, perseverance signifies endurance in competition, while the eschatological reward denotes the victor's crown. This metaphor is rooted in Greco-Roman athletic culture, where victory crowns (στέφανοι, often made of laurel or olive) were awarded to successful athletes¹⁷⁰. James utilises this cultural framework to compare the realm of athletics, characterised by competition, endurance, and reward, with the spiritual journey of trial, perseverance, and salvation.

The following table highlights the source-to-target mappings emphasised by conceptual metaphor theory, demonstrating how James employs concrete athletic imagery to convey abstract theological concepts (**Table 8.2**).

¹⁶⁸ An epexegetical genitive (also called an appositional genitive) is a Greek grammatical construction in which the genitive explains, clarifies, or identifies the noun it modifies, and can be translated as “that is,” “namely,” or “which is”. The genitive shows equivalence: the second term renames or explains the first (Jordaan, 2014:115).

¹⁶⁹ Both James and Paul employ athletic imagery to depict the Christian life as a struggle or competition that demands endurance. In 1 Corinthians 9:24–25, the Christian life is compared to a race where everyone runs, but only one wins the prize. Unlike transient awards, believers pursue an eternal crown. In 2 Timothy 4:7–8, Paul states that having fought the good fight and finished the race, he awaits the crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge will bestow at the end of time. Both James and Paul use the στέφανος (crown) as a central metaphor for the reward in the afterlife, drawing on the traditions of ancient Greek and Roman athletic contests. James emphasises perseverance through physical hardship to attain eternal life, while Paul highlights disciplined fidelity and the completion of one's calling as pathways to divine approval and everlasting honour. Both agree that the eschatological crown functions as a motivating symbol, with James focusing on endurance amid trials and Paul on self-discipline in pursuit of the goal. Philo in *De Migratione Abrahami* (133) also compares earthly life to a race where the winners will be crowned on completing it: ἐὰν μέντοι πορευόμενος μήτε κάμῃ, ὥς ὑπενδοὺς ὀκλάσαι, μήτε ῥαθυμῆσῃ, ὥς παρ' ἐκάτερα ἐκτραπόμενος πλανᾶσθαι τῆς μέσης καὶ εὐθυτενοῦς διαμαρτῶν ὁδοῦ, μιμησάμενος δὲ τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς δρομεῖς τὸ στάδιον ἀπταίστως ἀνύσῃ τοῦ βίου, στεφάνων καὶ ἄθλων ἐπαξίων τεύξεται πρὸς τὸ τέλος ἐλθών. — But if, while journeying, a person neither grows weary to sink and sit, nor becomes careless to be diverted on either side and wander away from the straight and level path, but, imitating the good runners, completes without stumbling in the stadium of life, then upon reaching the end, he will obtain crowns and prizes worthy of his toil.

¹⁷⁰ The metaphor of the “crown of life” in James 1:12 would have evoked the image of a headpiece, typically a laurel wreath, awarded to victors in athletic competitions in ancient Greek and Roman culture (Herodotus, *Persian Wars* 8.26; cf. 1 Corinthians 9:25; 2 Timothy 2:5). Such crowns also symbolised honour for public service (cf. Hebrews 2:7–9) and recognition of rank or achievement (Aristotle, *Athenaion Politeia* (The Athenian Constitution), 57.4; cf. also 2 Samuel 12:30; Isaiah 22:21) (Davids 1983:80; Moo 2000:70; Wolmarans 1994:95). In this way, the metaphor draws on culturally familiar markers of victory, honour, and status to convey the eschatological reward promised to the faithful.

Table 8.2: Conceptual metaphor mapping of athletic imagery in James

Source Domain (Athletics)	Target Domain (Faith/ James 1:12)	Explanation
In a race/contest, competitors encounter fatigue, obstacles, and rivals.	Life of faith/trials (πειρασμός).	The believer's journey through trials is likened to a competitive race, highlighting the importance of sustained effort and focus.
Running the race, which involves physical exhaustion.	Perseverance under trial and temptation.	Just as athletes must endure physical exertion, believers must withstand external hardships and internal moral challenges.
Competing according to the rules.	Faithful obedience to God.	Athletes must follow the rules to win; likewise, believers must obey God's commands and persist in good works (1:4) to receive the "crown of life."
Victory crown (στέφανος) – winners receive a laurel, olive, or other crown as a symbol of honour and achievement.	Crown of life/eschatological reward.	The eschatological reward for faithful endurance is compared with the tangible, celebrated prize of athletic victory.
Public recognition and honour. Success is publicly celebrated, admired, and rewarded.	Divine acknowledgement/ eternal vindication.	Just as an athlete is publicly recognised, the believer's steadfastness is acknowledged by God and rewarded in the eschaton.

Source: Author's own analysis.

The metaphor is not merely decorative; it enhances the rhetorical force of the exhortation:

- It conveys perseverance through a culturally familiar and vivid image.
- It reinterprets trials as meaningful struggles, akin to an athlete's race.
- It fosters motivational appeal, implying that endurance results in more than just survival — bringing honour and eschatological reward.

Thus, James 1:12 illustrates a conceptual metaphor: Faithful endurance through trial and temptation is like an athletic race whose reward is eternal life. The metaphor combines embodiment (pain, suffering, endurance, struggle) with eschatological hope (victory, honour, reward), emphasising the multidimensional nature of *πειρασμός*.

8.3.2.2 The rhetography of the implied race-metaphor

The “crown of life” metaphor in James 1:12 creates a vivid physical image for the audience. The rhetography of the metaphor, emphasising the embodied aspect of the race image (how the audience would have perceived, felt, and emotionally experienced the promise of reward), is discussed.

The metaphor concretises the abstract idea of eschatological reward as a physical crown or wreath, a culturally familiar symbol of victory, honour, and status. By invoking a tangible object, the audience can visualise it, connecting spiritual effort to a visible, attainable prize. This visualisation enhances both cognitive and affective engagement, enabling believers to imagine themselves receiving the crown and thereby strengthening the motivational force of the exhortation. The following table seeks to reconstruct the possible *rhetographical effects* of this metaphor (**Table 8.3**).

Table 8.3: Rhetographical effects of the crown metaphor in James

Dimension	Description / Experience	Embodied Effect on Audience	Rhetorical Function
Visual/ Perceptual	The crown as a tangible object (laurel wreath, victor's crown).	The audience imagines receiving the reward — a mental visualisation of success.	Solidifies the reward; improves understanding and motivation.
Kinaesthetic/ Physical	Running the race, exertion, and following the rules of the competition.	Experiences the physical strain, exertion, and stamina needed for the race; a sense of "somatic participation."	Fosters perseverance in body and mind; connects physical effort with spiritual discipline.
Emotional/ Affective	Desire for the reward, anticipation, hope, and anxiety about failure.	Evokes longing, fear of loss, and delight in imagining victory.	Fosters ethical perseverance and stirs emotions to uphold faith during trials.
Moral/Ethical	Adhering to rules, competing fairly.	Displays responsibility and self-discipline; demonstrates an embodied understanding of obedience.	Reinforces ethical behaviour and associates effort with moral integrity.
Social/Cultural	Shared knowledge of Greek/Roman athletic and honour traditions.	Feels collective recognition and pride; views reward as socially meaningful.	Strengthens cultural connection by associating spiritual resilience with community values.

Source: Author's own analysis.

The “crown of life” metaphor effectively engages the audience on multiple levels — emotional, cognitive, and physical. It allows them to see, feel, and desire the reward, while also experiencing the effort, tension, and discipline needed to achieve it. The metaphor transforms abstract theological concepts — such as trials, temptation, endurance, and divine reward — into a tangible, lived experience, thereby strengthening the persuasive and motivational power of James’ message.

8.3.2.3 Summary of phase 2: the embodied-cognitive phase (embodied and socio-cultural engagement) of the investigation

The race metaphor in James 1:12 clarifies different interpretations of *πειρασμός* (trials versus temptation) by expanding the conceptual framework, particularly from a multidimensional hermeneutic perspective. The race metaphor naturally supports this view. In ancient athletic contests, both physical and moral qualities were involved: training required self-control, loyalty, and integrity. Competing according to the rules was as important as endurance. Therefore, the metaphor connects external endurance (trials) with internal resistance (temptation). The “crown of life” is not only for enduring trials but for completing the entire race, which involves body, mind, and spirit, faithfully.

The race metaphor thus provides a multidimensional interpretation of *πειρασμός*, emphasising James’s fluid transition from “various trials” (1:2) to “temptation” (1:13–15). In this way, James 1:12 acts as a transitional verse, connecting 1:2–11, which describes *πειρασμός* as trials, with 1:13–15, which refers to *πειρασμός* as temptation, thereby establishing a coherent link between the two sections.

James 1:12 highlights that the “crown of life, the crown which is life”, is promised to those who love Him (*ὃν ἐπηγγελάτο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν*). The main question raised by this phrase is: How does this promise function theologically within the framework of the suffering yet faithful slave, and in what ways can Kearney’s carnal hermeneutics shed light on the embodied and affective dimensions of loving God amidst trial and temptation? The theological significance of this expression (its sacral texture) is examined in phase three, the theological-ethical synthesis, as part of the broader multidimensional hermeneutic investigation.

8.3.3 Phase 3: the theological and ethical synthesis (the theological-ethical phase)

8.3.3.1 Research questions posed

In James 1:12, the macarism (μακάριος ἀνὴρ – “blessed is the one”) relates to the phrase *ὃν ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν* (“which He promised to those who love Him”). This wording emphasises that the blessing and, ultimately, “the crown which is life” are not granted indiscriminately but specifically promised (*ἐπηγγείλατο*) to a particular group: those who love Him (*ὃν ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν*). A multidimensional hermeneutic approach prompts several key questions regarding this phrase:

- In James 1:12, how do its internal features (lexical, grammatical, rhetorical elements, thus the inner texture) and its connection with wider scriptural and traditional echoes (the intertexture) shape its theological importance?
- In what ways can Kearney’s carnal hermeneutics help interpret “loving God” as an embodied, affective, and ethical practice amid suffering? How does an embodied reading of James 1:12 deepen or challenge conventional views of divine promise and reward?

These questions are consequently discussed.

8.3.3.2 The inner and intertexture of *ὃν ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν*

James 1:12 reinterprets the blessing formula (μακάριος ἀνὴρ) through the conceptual metaphor of life as a race that must be completed. Within this metaphorical framework, the runners are the suffering and wise slaves of God, those who endure trials while doing good works (1:2–4), who continually seek wisdom from God (1:5–8), and who are identified as *ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινός*, the humble brother (1:9). The precise nature of their trials (*πειρασμοί*) or the content of their testing (*δόκιμος*, being tested and proved genuine) remains undefined. Instead, James emphasises the outcome: the ultimate reward is the “crown of life” (*λήμψεται τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς*). The promise, however, is not universal but conditional, directed towards a particular group whose defining characteristic is love of God. Within the metaphor of the race, the fulfilment of the promise depends on the audience’s perseverance through trials. The two sections of James 1:12 thus reinforce each other: perseverance through trials and temptation, validated by love of God, leads to the victor’s crown, while divine election, rooted in that same love, leads to the inheritance of the kingdom. Crown and kingdom are complementary metaphors that depict the same

eschatological reality through different images: the crown signifies the reward for endurance, and the kingdom represents the inheritance of God's chosen heirs.

James's theology of the poor further enhances this intertwining of promise, endurance, and divine election, reflected in James 1:9 and explicitly articulated in James 2:5. The *πτωχοί* are central to the letter, both socially and theologically. As Martin (1988:65) notes, the Old Testament repeatedly emphasises God's election of the socially weak (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:37; 7:7), a motif that influenced the early church's self-understanding (Acts 13:17; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 2:9). By the first century, *πτωχός* had become a theological category denoting believers distinguished by humility, dependence on God, and on "competing according to the rule", that is, loving God.¹⁷¹ This same covenantal¹⁷² condition resurfaces in James 2:5¹⁷³, where the author argues that God has chosen the poor to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, as He promised to those who love him. The verbal and thematic parallels between 1:12 and 2:5 are striking: both speak of divine promise (*ἐπηγγείλατο*), both restrict the promise to *τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν* ("those who love him") and both envisage eschatological reward, the "crown of life" in 1:12 and the "kingdom" in 2:5 (Mongstad-Kvammen, 2013:128–134). James reflects this evolution in 2:5, where the definite article indicates a specific group chosen by God. Moo (2000:108) emphasises that this label was

¹⁷¹ 2 Timothy 2:5 states that the faithful should finish the race by submitting to the rules: *ἐὰν δὲ καὶ ἀθλῇ τις, οὐ στεφανοῦται ἐὰν μὴ νομίμως ἀθλήσῃ*. — And if someone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. 1 Corinthians 9:24–25 also emphasises that an athlete should submit to the rules, be disciplined, and receive the prize: *Οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι οἱ ἐν σταδίῳ τρέχοντες πάντες μὲν τρέχουσιν, εἷς δὲ λαμβάνει τὸ βραβεῖον; οὕτως τρέχετε ἵνα καταλάβητε. πᾶς δὲ ὁ ἀγωνιζόμενος πάντα ἐγκρατεύεται, ἐκεῖνοι μὲν οὖν ἵνα φθαρτὸν στέφανον λάβωσιν, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἄφθαρτον*. — Do you not know that in a stadium all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. Every competitor exercises self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Visser (2022:113–114) notes that the term *ἀθλητής* can mean both physical exercise and a person skilled in a specific discipline. Metaphorically, it also has moral implications. This moral aspect appears in inscriptions depicting athletes as role models embodying ethical virtues. Similarly, *ἀγών* is often associated with rhetorical training and is also used in legal contexts, where it can denote moral or military struggle.

¹⁷² Several commentators (Wolmarans, 1994:96; Davids, 1983:82–84; Martin, 1988:34–35) observe that James 1:12's phrase *τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν* ("to those who love Him") strongly echoes covenantal language in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Second Temple tradition. Deuteronomy 6:5 ("You shall love the Lord your God...") serves as a covenantal marker of Israel's identity. Deuteronomy 7:9 illustrates that God shows steadfast love "to those who love Him and keep His commandments." This covenantal formula recurs throughout the Old Testament (e.g., Exodus 20:6; Nehemiah 1:5; Daniel 9:4). James' wording seems intentionally to reflect this refrain, shifting focus from simple endurance in trials and temptations to a deeper covenantal fidelity expressed as love for God. Jewish wisdom and apocalyptic literature often describe the righteous as "those who love God," such as in Sirach 1:10; 2 Baruch 48:22. In these texts, "love of God" signifies covenant loyalty, rewarded with divine blessing or eschatological life, aligning with the pattern James 1:12 follows through the promise of the "crown of life."

¹⁷³ *Ἀκούσατε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί· οὐχ ὁ θεὸς ἐξελέξατο τοὺς πτωχοὺς τῷ κόσμῳ πλουσίους ἐν πίστει καὶ κληρονόμους τῆς βασιλείας ἧς ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν*; — Listen, my beloved brothers: Did not God choose the poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him?

not merely metaphorical but also concrete: James' audience included genuinely poor people, whose poverty James presents positively in contrast to the exploitative wealth of the rich.

Throughout the letter, the poor are depicted in various forms: *ταπεινός* (1:9–10; 4:6, 10), orphans and widows (*ὀρφανός, χήρα* in 1:27), beggars (2:1–3), the naked and hungry (2:14–17), the suffering and sick (5:13–14), and the righteous oppressed by the wealthy (5:1–6). In each instance, James emphasises that true faith is inseparable from actions, with caring for the poor serving as a key test of genuine faith. This aligns with Jesus' teaching: wealth is portrayed as spiritually dangerous (Matthew 6:19–21; Luke 12:16–21), while discipleship transforms the use of possessions. While Jesus emphasises the importance of secrecy in almsgiving (Matthew 6:2–4), James highlights the obligation itself — caring for the poor as a visible sign of authentic faith (Mongstad-Kvammen, 2013:128–134).

James 2:5 deepens this theology by connecting divine election (*ἐκλέγομαι*) with the inheritance of the kingdom (*κληρονόμος τῆς βασιλείας*). In biblical thought, election and inheritance are intrinsically linked: Israel is God's chosen people, Jesus is the elect Son, and believers are "joint heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17). The poor are heirs of the kingdom (Matthew 5:3; Luke 6:20), while wealth acts as an obstacle to discipleship (Mark 10:17–31). James' rhetorical question in 2:5 affirms this truth, yet his immediate rebuke in 2:6 reveals the inconsistency of his readers, who dishonour the poor and thus weaken their own faith (Mongstad-Kvammen, 2013:133–136).

Reading James 1:12 and 2:5 together unveils a theological *inclusio*. Both passages highlight God's promise, limited to those who love Him. They describe the eschatological reward using metaphors of a crown and a kingdom. Additionally, both emphasise that covenantal faith is rooted not in wealth, social standing, or endurance alone, but in love for God, a love shown through perseverance during trials and temptations (1:12) and righteous actions toward the poor (2:5).

8.3.3.3 Loving God as an embodied act

Kearney's carnal hermeneutics (2015:120) highlights that meaning is mediated through the flesh — through embodied, affective, and ethical experience. As outlined in Chapter 5, he draws on the phenomenological distinction between *Körper* (the body as object, external, measurable, and observable) and *Leib* (the lived body). From this perspective, *Leib* is not a neutral object of study, but rather the locus of experience, sensation, and ethical encounter. Hermeneutics thus becomes "carnal": interpretation unfolds through embodied, affective, and ethical engagement. Read in this light, James 1:12 reconfigures "loving God" (*τοῖς ἀγαπᾶσιν αὐτόν*) not as intellectual assent or

abstract theological posture but as a practice of embodied fidelity. *Love for God* is mediated through the flesh, the medium of meaning, relation, and transcendence.

Applied to James 1:12, the emphasis on *Leib* clarifies how “loving God” (τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν) should be understood. It highlights:

- **Affective endurance:** the believer’s body bears trials, temptations, weaknesses, and suffering as the very space where fidelity is demonstrated.
- **Ethical relation:** love for God is inseparable from love for neighbour, embodied in concrete acts of care for the ταπεινός (1:9–10; 4:6, 10), orphans and widows (1:27), beggars (2:1–3), the hungry and unclothed (2:14–17), the sick (5:13–14), and the righteous poor oppressed by the wealthy (5:1–6).
- **Embodied temporality:** endurance (ὑπομονή) is lived out in the bodily experience of time, where suffering and waiting are endured in the flesh.

In this way, carnal hermeneutics shows how “loving God” is experienced through shared suffering, endurance, and mutual care, anchoring interpretation in the fabric of everyday life under trial.

James 1:12 is commonly interpreted within a covenantal-retributive framework, in which perseverance through trials results in the eschatological “crown of life” (στέφανος τῆς ζωῆς). However, an embodied hermeneutic retains this perspective while also introducing additional complexity and depth in several respects:

- **Temporal:** the “crown of life” is not only a future reward but is also tasted in present acts of embodied fidelity, endurance, solidarity, and care for the poor.
- **Communal:** love of God is inseparable from love of the neighbour (2:8)¹⁷⁴. Promise and reward are not private achievements but shared, communal experiences.
- **Ethical:** the promise of the crown (and the kingdom in James 2:5) is not merely an abstract reward but signifies a transformation where ζῶη is redefined through embodied love.

¹⁷⁴ James 2:8 refers to the “royal law” which emphasises love of your neighbour: Εἰ μέντοι νόμον τελεῖτε βασιλικὸν κατὰ τὴν γραφὴν· ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν, καλῶς ποιεῖτε – If, however, you fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself,’ you are doing well.

From this perspective, carnal hermeneutics shifts focus from a distant eschatological reward to a tangible, bodily engagement in God's covenantal life here and now. The crown signifies both present action and future hope, embodied through the community's suffering and faithfulness. Therefore, "loving God" in James 1:12 is not just an abstract theological concept but a concrete, emotional, and ethical practice. The divine promise is revealed not only in the distant future but also through embodied perseverance and care in the present.

To summarise: the multidimensional, embodied rhetorical reading of James 1:12 highlights its dual function as both a conclusion and a transition. It revisits 1:2–11, where *πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις* (1:2) can be interpreted as "trials" and, by extension, "temptations," situating endurance within a broader theological framework of wisdom (1:5–8) and status reversal (1:9–11). Looking forward, it anticipates James 1:13–15, where *πειρασμός* is explicitly defined as "temptation." Hence, 1:12 serves not only as a structural hinge but also as a conceptual one, reshaping understandings of endurance and blessing, considering divine promise and love for God. The subsequent discussion focuses on James 1:13–15, where the concept of temptation is examined in more detail.

8.4 A multidimensional embodied rhetorical reading of James 1:13–15

8.4.1 Surface remarks concerning James 1:13–15

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, several scholars have identified a direct and complementary relationship between James 1:2–4 and 1:13–15. This relationship is summarised in **Table 8.4**.

Table 8.4: Testing and temptation in James 1:2–4 and 1:13–15

Feature	James 1:2–4	James 1:13–15	Comparison
Focus	Trials and spiritual growth. A cause-and-effect sequence is distinguished: Trials are not random; they function instrumentally to produce spiritual growth.	Temptation and sin. A cause-and-effect sequence is distinguished: Temptation arises from internal desire, which produces sin, culminating in death.	Both address human experience under testing, but one has a positive outcome (1:2–4) and the other is negative (1:13–15).

Feature	James 1:2–4	James 1:13–15	Comparison
Source of experience	External trials (πειρασμοῖς ποικίλοις – 1:2).	Internal desire (τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας – 1:14).	1:2–4: outward → inward. 1:13–15: inward → outward.
Outcome	Maturity, completeness The progressive logical sequence: Trial → Testing of faith → Perseverance → Maturity.	Death (if sin matures) The progressive logical sequence: Source → Temptation → Conception → Birth → Death.	Mirror outcomes: constructive vs. destructive.
Structural pattern	Cumulative and developmental, it reveals a multi-effect chiasmus: A: Response to trials (joy). B: Purpose of trials. B': Endurance amidst trials. A': Outcome of faithful response.	Sequentially, it reveals a multi-effect chiasmic structure. A: God is not the origin of temptation. B: Desire provokes temptation and pulls one away. B': Desire causes sin. A': Sin leads to death.	Both show progression.
Temporal aspect	Purpose of trials.	Desire causes sin, which results in death (process).	Both emphasise progression over time, but 1:2–4 encourages ongoing endurance, which leads to <i>life</i> , whilst 1:13–15 warns of the internal process of sin, which leads to <i>death</i> .

Source: Author's own analysis.

While James 1:2–4 emphasises the constructive side of trials, showing how external challenges foster internal growth, James 1:13–15 highlights the destructive aspect of temptation: internal desire leads to sin and death. Structurally, both passages exhibit progressive, developmental sequences and can be interpreted through a chiasmic lens. As with James 1:2–4, James 1:13–15 does not show a formal chiasm, however it does exhibit a rhetorically arranged and mirrored sequence: (**A**) → God is not the origin of temptation (1:13), (**B**) → Desire provokes temptation and pulls one away (1:14), (**B'**) → Desire causes sin (1:15a), (**A'**) → Sin leads to death (1:15b). The structure demonstrates a one-way, cause-and-effect progression. At a surface level, the chiasmus operates as outlined in **Table 8.5**.

Table 8.5: Cause-and-effect chiastic structure in James 1:13–15

ELEMENT	TEXT	THEME
A	Μηδεις πειραζόμενος λεγέτω ὅτι ἀπὸ θεοῦ πειράζομαι· ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἀπείραστός ἐστιν κακῶν, πειράζει δὲ αὐτὸς οὐδένα. (James 1:13).	God is not the origin of temptation.
B	ἕκαστος δὲ πειράζεται ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας ἐξελκόμενος καὶ δελεαζόμενος (James 1:14).	Desire incites temptation and draws one away.
B'	εἴτα ἡ ἐπιθυμία συλλαβοῦσα τίκτει ἁμαρτίαν (James 1:15a).	Desire causes sin.
A'	ἡ δὲ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα ἀποκύει θάνατον. (Jam 1:15b).	Sin results in death. (Opposite of God, the source of life implied in James 1:18).

Source: Author's own analysis.

Bauckham (1999:50)¹⁷⁵ identifies the literary form of the metaphor in James 1:14–15 as a step-saying (sorite). The sorite demonstrates a climactic buildup and is developed by the anadiplosis of ἐπιθυμία (1:14,15) and ἁμαρτία (1:15). The single-direction, cause-and-effect sequence of the argument in James 1:13–15 is illustrated schematically as follows:

¹⁷⁵ Bauckham (1999:50) suggests that James employs a literary form already well established in Jewish literature — and likely in oral sayings — as the popularity of sorites depended on their capacity to encapsulate teachings in memorable form. James 1:2–4 and 1:13–15 probably represent James's own variation of a sorite commonly found in Christian paraenesis (cf. Romans 5:3–5; 1 Peter 1:6–7). A sorite is a logical or rhetorical argument structure where statements are linked sequentially, so that the predicate of one clause becomes the subject of the next. Example: A = B, B = C, C = D, therefore A = D. In rhetorical or literary terms, a sorite is a structured form of a catena (a “chain” of texts, quotations, or ideas), often used to persuade. For example, in Romans 5:3–5: “suffering produces endurance; endurance produces character; character produces hope.”

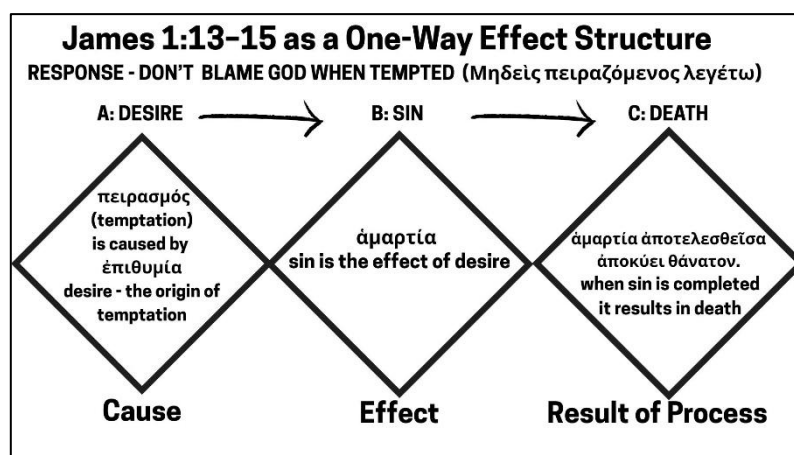


Figure 8.1: One-way, cause-and-effect sequence in James 1:13–15

Source: Author's own representation.

As noted in Chapter 5, the relationship between the A- and B-elements of the proposed multi-effect chiasmus is analysed within the structural-rhetorical phase of this investigation, with particular attention to the text's internal texture to understand the logical flow of the argument.

Furthermore, many scholars¹⁷⁶ observe that James employs a sexual or procreative metaphor to describe the process of temptation, sin, and death. James 1:14–15 likely suggests a metaphor of desire as a prostitute or adulterous woman. The text portrays temptation not as a neutral force but as a seductress leading the believer into an illicit union that produces sin and ultimately results in death. The prostitute metaphor is not explicit, but the conceptual framework of seduction, conception, and birth strongly aligns with biblical traditions of harlotry as a symbol of unfaithfulness and destruction. It is also noted that James's language echoes the biblical tradition of sexualised metaphors for sin and unfaithfulness.¹⁷⁷ The metaphor, its rhetography and intertextual texture are discussed in the embodied-cognitive phase (embodied and socio-cultural engagement) of the investigation.

James 1:13 emphasises the contrast between God's complete moral integrity, untemptable by evil and not tempting anyone (ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἀπειραστός ἐστὶν κακῶν, πειράζει δὲ αὐτὸς οὐδέν), and

¹⁷⁶ See Davids (1983:99-101); Johnson (1995:181–183); Moo (2000:73); Visser (2022:114); Wolmarans (2006:349–361; 1994:134–141); Tamez (1994:384-385); Adam (2013:16-17); Allison (2013:235–237). The contrast between the birth metaphors implicated in James 1:14–15 and James 1:18 is also noted by commentators.

¹⁷⁷ Wisdom literature (e.g., Proverbs 5–7) depicts folly and temptation as a harlot enticing the naïve. Prophets (e.g., Hosea, Ezekiel 16, Jeremiah 3) employ adultery and prostitution as metaphors for Israel's unfaithfulness.

human susceptibility, as each person is tempted by their own desire (ἐκαστος δὲ πειράζεται ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας); this dynamic shapes the ideological and sacred texture explored in phase 3, the theological-ethical synthesis.

8.4.2 Phase 1: structural and rhetorical mapping (textual-rhetorical phase)

8.4.2.1 The flow of the argument presented in James 1:13–15: the relationship between A- and B-elements of the multi-effect chiasmus

This stage of the multidimensional hermeneutic approach (the structural and rhetorical mapping of the text) examines the relationships between the A and B elements of the implied chiasmus, helping the reader understand the argument's logic from syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic perspectives.

The direct reason¹⁷⁸ introduces the **A**-part (James 1:13) of the implied chiasmus, suggesting a presumed counterargument. The presumed argument would be that a person who succumbs to temptation may indicate that God is responsible for temptation (μηδεὶς πειραζόμενος λεγέτω ὅτι ἀπὸ θεοῦ πειράζομαι)¹⁷⁹. The attempt at self-exculpation¹⁸⁰ for succumbing to temptation, will be that a person is powerless against God (Wolmarans, 1994:96). The claim “I am tempted by God” (ἀπὸ θεοῦ πειράζομαι)¹⁸¹ evokes a long-standing intertextual tradition in which humans shift blame

¹⁷⁸ The direct speech (*oratio recta*) dramatises the argument by portraying the opponent's voice or highlighting a statement. It fosters immediacy and enhances vividness, as if the audience hears the words directly from the speaker's mouth. The *oratio recta* is characteristic of James's dialogical style (also used in James 2:13, 16, 18; 4:13). In James 1:13 ὅτι introduces the clausal complement (direct discourse) of λεγέτω (present imperative active 3rd person singular from λέγω).

¹⁷⁹ The form μηδεὶς is required rather than οὐδεὶς, since it modifies a participle (πειραζόμενος, a non-indicative form). Also compare James 1:4, where the phrase ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι appears (Adam, 2013:14).

¹⁸⁰ In contrast to Davids (1983:83) and Martin (1988:35), who interpret the phrase “I am tempted by God” as a retrospective complaint directed against God, Wolmarans (1994:96) argues that the present form of the verb πειραζόμενος conveys an ongoing process of self-justification within the experience of temptation rather than a grievance expressed after the fact. This interpretation finds support in Johnson (1995:191), who similarly understands the phrase as an attempt at self-exculpation, and in Laws (1980:69), Moo (2000:74), and Hartin (2003:82), who each read the statement as reflecting a rationalisation or inner discourse during temptation. This study follows their line of interpretation.

¹⁸¹ Adam (2013:14–15) notes that although the use of ἀπό to indicate the agent of an action is unusual, it occurs frequently enough in *Koine* Greek to warrant attention. In this context, James's use of ἀπό introduces a subtle distinction: temptation may originate from God in a causal or permissive sense, yet God is not the direct agent carrying it out. The prepositional phrase, therefore, signifies source, not agency. Similarly, Davids (1983:82) observes that the focus is on the origin of temptation, paralleling the use of ἀπό in James 1:17 (ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων), where the term also indicates source rather than instrumentality. As Blass, Debrunner, and Funk (1961: §210) explain, ἀπό primarily conveys the ideas of separation or origin, and by

for moral failure onto divine or external agents. James’s refutation of this claim situates him within and against several biblical and Second Temple Jewish narratives that explore the dynamics of temptation, responsibility, and divine causality. Four passages, namely 2 Samuel 24:1 (parallel in 1 Chronicles 21:1), Genesis 22:1, Sirach 15:11–20 and Matthew 6:13, form a rich intertextual matrix for understanding James 1:13–15, especially regarding divine testing (πειρασμός) and the human tendency to blur the line between *testing* and *tempting*.¹⁸² Including them helps clarify how James engages in and reinterprets a longstanding theological discussion about divine agency, human desire, and human responsibility. The following detailed intertextual table places James 1:13–15 in dialogue with Genesis 22:1; 2 Samuel 24:1 (1 Chronicles 21:1); Matthew 6:13; and Sirach 15:11–20, integrating conceptual, linguistic, and theological dimensions (**Table 8.6**).

Table 8.6: Testing, temptation, and divine agency in James 1:13–15 and key intertexts

Text	Key Phrase and Theme	Divine Agency	Human Response and Responsibility	Connection to James 1:13–15
Genesis 22:1	καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ τὰ ῥήματα ταῦτα ὁ θεὸς ἐπείραζεν τὸν Ἀβραάμ καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτόν (After these things, God tested Abraham and said to him...)	This aligns with the LXX phrasing where ἐπείραζεν means “tested” (or “tried”), emphasising that God’s action is a test of faith rather than a temptation to sin. Abraham receives the order to sacrifice his son.	Abraham faithfully obeys, showing trust and endurance.	Provides context for πειρασμός as a test of faith. James 1:13 clarifies that God’s testing is not a temptation to evil.

extension can express causal source, in contrast to ὑπό, which consistently introduces a personal agent in the passive voice.

¹⁸² Several major commentators connect James 1:13 with Genesis 22:1; 2 Samuel 24:1 (1 Chronicles 21:1); Sirach 15:11–20; and Matthew 6:13. Genesis 22:1 is referenced by Davids (1983:82–83); Johnson (1995:191–192); and Moo (2000:73–74). 2 Samuel 24:1 is examined by Martin (1988:35); Johnson (1995:192); and Bauckham (1999:70–71). Sirach 15:11–20 is discussed by Davids (1983:84); Hartin (2003:83); and Bauckham (1999:69–70). Matthew 6:13 is analysed by Davids (1983:83); Johnson (1995:192); Laws (1980:70); and Moo (2000:74).

Text	Key Phrase and Theme	Divine Agency	Human Response and Responsibility	Connection to James 1:13–15
2 Samuel 24:1/ 1 Chronicles 21:1	καὶ προσέθετο ὀργὴ κυρίου ἐκκαῆναι ἐν Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἐπέσεισεν τὸν Δαυὶδ ἐν αὐτοῖς λέγων βάδιζε ἀρίθμησον τὸν Ἰσραὴλ καὶ τὸν Ἰουδα. (Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and He incited David against them, saying, ‘Go, number Israel and Judah. καὶ ἔστη διάβολος ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἐπέσεισεν τὸν Δαυὶδ τοῦ ἀριθμῆσαι τὸν Ἰσραὴλ (Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel).	These verses reflect the LXX’s portrayal of divine causality, in which God’s anger is the source of the action; later interpretations (e.g., 1 Chronicles 21:1) reinterpret the incitement as coming from Satan rather than God directly.	David sins by numbering Israel, but is incited by God, 1 Chronicles 21:1 shifts responsibility to Satan.	James resolves this tension: God is never the agent of moral temptation; temptation originates in human desire (ἐπιθυμία).
Matthew 6:13	καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ. (And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one).	God has authority over testing but may allow trials. This is the final petition of the Lord’s Prayer, where πειρασμός refers to trials or temptations, and τὸ πονηρὸν (“the evil one”) indicates the source of moral danger.	Believer seeks divine protection from temptation.	James differentiates testing from solicitation to sin: God may permit trials but does not tempt.

Text	Key Phrase and Theme	Divine Agency	Human Response and Responsibility	Connection to James 1:13–15
Sirach 15:11–20	God does not tempt anyone; each person is tempted by their own “desire”. God tests faith: the testing refines, not tempting to sin.	Sirach 15:11–20 stresses that God does not tempt anyone to sin; instead, each individual falls because of their own desire (ἐκ τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας), a theme James also emphasises.	Humans succumb to their own desires; moral responsibility is emphasised.	The closest literary and conceptual parallel to James 1:13 emphasises human agency in sin and divine goodness.

Source: Author’s own synthesis.

These passages collectively emphasise the ongoing tension between divine testing and human moral responsibility, providing a broader scriptural and wisdom-theological framework for James’s ethical guidance. The repeated use of terms such as *πειρασμός* and *ἐπιθυμία* throughout these sections demonstrates that James deliberately anchors his argument within recognised biblical and Jewish linguistic and conceptual contexts. In James 1:13–15, any potential ambiguity is clarified: although God may permit trials as a form of testing, the source of temptation to sin resides solely within human desire. Overall, this intertextual cluster illustrates how James draws on Second Temple traditions to address a Christian audience.

The claim that God is not responsible for temptation is further elaborated through an appeal to divine nature, introduced by the conjunction *γάρ*, which reinforces the previous statement by offering a rationale for why temptation cannot be attributed to God. This rationale is presented in two stages: a) *ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἀπείραστός ἐστιν κακῶν* (God is untemptable from bad things), and b) *πειράζει δὲ αὐτὸν οὐδένα* (He himself tempts nobody).

The predicate adjective *ἀπείραστος* is a *hapax legomenon*, it occurs only here in the New Testament and is rare even in extrabiblical Greek. The term may be understood actively as “untemptable” or “incapable of being tempted,” or passively as “not subject to testing,” that is, “beyond the reach of evil.”¹⁸³ In other contexts, it can also carry the sense of “inexperienced [in

¹⁸³ In Louw & Nida, *ἀπείραστος* appears under Domain 88.309 (“Moral and Ethical Qualities and Related Behaviour”), *ἀπείραστος*, *ον*: pertaining to not being able to be tempted, unable to be tempted, one who cannot be tempted.

something].”¹⁸⁴ The relationship between ἀπείραστος and the genitive of κακῶν also needs clarification.

Scholars have proposed several possible interpretations of this clause. Davids (1983:82; 2019:117-128), Wolmarans (1994:97–98), and Adam (2013:15–16) outline three main alternatives:

- “God cannot be solicited to evil”;
- “God is inexperienced in evil”; and
- “God ought not to be tested by evil people.”

The primary and most common interpretation is that the phrase means “God cannot be tempted by evil” or “cannot be tempted to do evil.”¹⁸⁵ In this translation, the genitive κακῶν is interpreted as a *genitive of source* of the temptations (Adam, 2013:15; Jordaan, 2014:118) or the subject which would be tempting God. This, however, does not explain why the person being tested should not ascribe his situation to God, and the precise reasoning behind the argument remains unclear.

The second interpretation relies on the sense of ἀπείραστος, most found in literature from around the same period as, and after, the New Testament, specifically meaning “untested” or “inexperienced.” This view holds that God cannot be involved in any testing or impurity, since He does not cause evil. Wolmarans (1994:97) supports this interpretation, reading James’s language metaphorically: just as metals are tested for purity (cf. 1:2–4), so God, the perfectly pure “metal,” cannot be tested at all. For James, perfection equates with completeness, and God is the ultimate example of completeness, explicitly expressed in 2:19, εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεός (“God is one”). While humans are incomplete and must face testing, God, being wholly pure, cannot be tested for impurity.

¹⁸⁴ Examples: Herodotus, *Histories* 4.86, ἀπείραστος κακῶν (unacquainted with troubles). Philo, *De Somniis* 1.202, ἀπείραστος κακίας (unacquainted with evil). In classical and Hellenistic Greek, the adjective ἀπείραστος conveys the sense of “inexperienced” or “unacquainted (with something)”, depending on the genitive that follows. The noun πείρα denotes a trial, attempt, experiment, or experience (Liddell and Scott [1987]). Considering this usage, ἀπείραστος κακῶν could mean: “unacquainted with evil,” “untested regarding evil,” or “without experience of evil” (Adam, 2013:14–15).

¹⁸⁵ Commentators such as Laws (1980:72), Davids (1883:79), Martin (1988:29), Johnson (1995:186), Bauckham (1999:63-64) and Moo (2000:72-73) support the translation.

A third possibility, supported by Davids (1983:82; 2019:117-128), situates the phrase within the broader context of Jewish tradition that cautions against “putting God to the test.” Adam (2013:15) argues against this interpretation, suggesting that the indicative *ἐστίν* should be understood as having imperatival force, producing an exhortation. He agrees with Wolmarans that *ἀπείραστος* is best interpreted as “inexperienced”, untested or “unacquainted (concerning evil),” and maintains that God’s moral innocence excludes attributing responsibility for human hardship or sin to Him. If one adopts the reading “not implicated in,” the genitive adjective *κακῶν*, indicates *reference/respect (genetivus respectus)*¹⁸⁶, thus, God has no experience with regard/reference to evil things. From this perspective, the clause can be paraphrased as: “God remains untested with reference to the giving of bad things.” Finally, as Johnson (1995:190) notes, James’s declaration is not a speculative philosophical statement but a pastoral assertion, a safeguard of divine goodness (cf. 1:17) against any charge that God is the originator of sin.

The second clause (b) balances the first with a contrasting *δέ*, emphasising an emphatic denial and presenting another reason for rejecting the premise that God is the source of temptation: He Himself tempts no one (*πειράζει δὲ αὐτὸς οὐδέν*). The reflexive emphasis (*αὐτός*) highlights divine initiative: God not only remains unaffected by evil but also does not act as a tempter. The parallelism between “untested concerning the giving of bad things” and “tempts no one” creates a chiasmus of nature and agency:

- **A: God’s nature:** God remains untested with reference to the giving of evil things.
- **B: God’s action:** God tempts no one.

Arranging James 1:13b as a full chiasmus (A–B–B’–A’) demonstrates how James’s statement attains rhetorical balance:

A → A’: Creates an outer framework that links God (the perfect, untested source) with humanity (the potential recipients of temptation). This pairing emphasises the relational gap between divine holiness and human vulnerability.

¹⁸⁶A genitive of respect (*genetivus respectus*), also called the genitive of reference or limiting genitive, expresses the respect or aspect in which something is true. It limits or qualifies the statement by indicating the specific respect in which the head noun applies. It translates as “with respect to,” “in relation to,” or “as to” (Adam, 2013:15; Jordaan 2014:120).

B → B': Acts as an internal mirror, contrasting what cannot happen to God (God remains untested regarding the giving of evil) with what God does not do (He does not tempt). This internal symmetry reflects the dual exclusion of evil; it neither acts upon God nor comes from Him. Evil is thus prevented from both entering God and emanating from Him.

The chiasmus can be summarised semantically as:

A (God)

B (untested with reference to the giving of bad things) – God's nature

B' (does not tempt anyone) – God's action

A' (humans)

James 1:13, forming the **A**-part of the multidimensional chiasmus, clarifies a misunderstanding that could arise from 1:2–12. Since God allows believers to experience testing (πειρασμοῖς), some might wrongly infer that He also tempts them to sin. James firmly rejects this idea. The conjunction γάρ introduces the theological rationale: God's very nature, described as ἀπείραστος κακῶν ("unacquainted with evil"), excludes Him from being the source of temptation. This phrase emphasises God's incorruptibility and moral inviolability.

In contrast, James 1:14 — the **B**-part of the chiasmus — shifts the emphasis from divine to human responsibility. The conjunction δέ introduces a clear contrast: "not God, but each person (ἐκαστος) is tempted." The phrase πειράζεται ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας (is tempted by own desire) highlights personal agency, assigning responsibility to the individual (Adam, 2013:15). The noun ἐπιθυμία ("desire") then acts as a negative counterpart to θεὸς ἀπείραστος, emphasising the internal, human origin of temptation. Therefore, understanding the semantic and intertextual layers of ἐπιθυμία is crucial to clarifying how human desire serves as the opposite of divine purity.

8.4.2.2 The semantic reference of ἐπιθυμία in James 1:14–15 – the inner and inter texture

The semantic reference of ἐπιθυμία in James 1:14–15 plays a crucial role in the argument about temptation and moral responsibility. The following discussion combines lexical analysis (the inner texture of the text) with the intertexture of the word's reference.

The noun ἐπιθυμία has a broad semantic field in Greek. It can denote a neutral desire¹⁸⁷ (a wish or longing, e.g., Philippians 1:23¹⁸⁸ denoting Paul's desire "to depart and be with Christ"), or negative craving, lust, or passion when linked to moral failure (e.g., Romans 7:7–8)¹⁸⁹. Marcus (1982:606–621) argues that James's use of ἐπιθυμία reflects Jewish moral anthropology, especially in Second Temple and rabbinic thought, where the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) refers to the innate human tendency towards self-gratification and sin, balanced by the *yetzer hatov* (good inclination). This dual view of moral agency, in which evil does not come from God but from within the human heart, provides the background for understanding ἐπιθυμία in James 1:14–15. James describes temptation as arising when "each person is lured and enticed by his own desire (τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας), which, once conceived, leads to sin and ultimately to death. This process mirrors the Jewish depiction of the *yetzer hara* as an internal force that incites sin but remains within human responsibility. While James does not explicitly use the Hebrew term *yetzer*, his depiction of desire as a creative, inner principle closely mirrors its role in Jewish ethical thought."¹⁹⁰ In James 1:14–15, the term ἐπιθυμία carries a clearly negative connotation: it signifies not ordinary human longing, but a misguided or self-governing desire that draws the will away from God. James personifies ἐπιθυμία as an active, creative force. The verbs ἐξελκόμενος¹⁹¹ καὶ δελεαζόμενος¹⁹² (1:14) utilise fishing and hunting imagery, depicting a person as being "drawn out

¹⁸⁷ Louw and Nida (1988) define ἐπιθυμία as a deep desire (25.12) or lust.

¹⁸⁸ Philippians 1:23 states: συνέχομαι δὲ ἐκ τῶν δύο, τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων εἰς τὸ ἀναλῦσαι καὶ σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι, πολλῶ [γὰρ] μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον· τὸ δὲ ἐπιμένειν [ἐν] τῇ σαρκὶ ἀναγκαϊότερον δι' ὑμᾶς. — But I am hard pressed from both sides, having the desire to depart and to be with Christ — for that is far better; yet to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

¹⁸⁹ Romans 7:7 states: Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; ὁ νόμος ἁμαρτία; μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔγνων εἰ μὴ διὰ νόμου· τὴν τε γὰρ ἐπιθυμίαν οὐκ ᾔδειν εἰ μὴ ὁ νόμος ἔλεγεν· οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις. — What then shall we say? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law; for I would not have known desire if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."

¹⁹⁰ In *Sirach* 15:11–20, Ben Sira rejects the idea that God is responsible for human sin ("Do not say, 'It was through the Lord that I fell away'"), attributing moral culpability to human choice. This echoes James's rejection of the notion that God tempts anyone (1:13) and his focus on the internal origin of sin. Similarly, *Sirach* 21:2 compares sin to a serpent whose bite causes death, imagery reflected in James's metaphor of desire producing death. The Rule of the Community (1QS 3:17–19) describes the *yetzer* concept within a dualistic view of human nature. Two spirits are presented: the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Perversity, guiding human hearts towards righteousness or wickedness. Although set within cosmic dualism, the conflict remains internal, within the "heart of man." Similarly, 1QS 5:5 warns community members that no one should stray by following "the thought of his *yetzer*" (Marcus, 1982:612). This aligns with James's depiction of internal conflict and divided loyalty (1:8; 4:1–4). While Qumran sees moral tension as caused by competing spiritual influences, James attributes it to ἐπιθυμία, the unchecked desire that usurps divine authority. Both, however, believe that sin arises from internal moral disorder rather than divine intervention.

¹⁹¹ ἐξελκόμενος (from ἐξέλκω) literally means "to draw out," "drag away," or "lure forth" (see Liddell and Scott, 1987:272). In this context, it suggests being pulled from a place of security (like a fish drawn from water cover or an animal from its lair).

¹⁹² δελεαζόμενος (from δελεάζω) means "to entice with bait," often used for catching fish (see Liddell and Scott, 1987:178). The term emphasises deceptive attraction — the bait conceals the hook.

and enticed.” At the same time, the phrase *εἴτα ἡ ἐπιθυμία συλλαβοῦσα τίκτει ἁμαρτίαν* (furthermore, when desire becomes pregnant, it gives birth to sin – 1:15) introduces imagery of conception and birth to illustrate how desire produces sin. Together, these metaphors describe a progression: desire leads to deception, which gives rise to sin, and ultimately results in death.

Thus, James’s conception of *ἐπιθυμία* echoes and transforms traditional Jewish wisdom and Torah theology (Davids, 1983:78–80; Allison, 2013:257–261), as reflected in texts such as Genesis 3:6 (LXX), Sirach 18:30,¹⁹³ and Wisdom 1:13–16¹⁹⁴. In James 4:2, the verb *ἐπιθυμεῖτε* (“you desire”) is connected to *ἡδονή* (“sensual pleasure”). Although *ἐπιθυμία* (1:14) and *ἡδονή* (4:1) are not exact synonyms, they are linked. *Ἐπιθυμία* indicates the inner craving that leads to sin, while *ἡδονή* signifies the pursuit of pleasure that damages communal harmony. In James 1:14–15, *ἐπιθυμία* describes the internal process of temptation that, once initiated, leads to sin and death. Conversely, in James 4:1–3, *ἡδονή* refers to the external expression of this same desire, pleasure-seeking passions that incite “wars and fights” within the community. James thus describes a moral progression from inner temptation to public disorder, illustrating how unchecked desire results in conflict. Both *ἐπιθυμία* and *ἡδονή* are forces that disturb moral and social order. *Ἐπιθυμία* emerges within the individual, enticing the person and, emphasised through the sexual metaphor of conception (1:14–15), gives birth to sin within the body. In contrast, *ἡδονή* “wages war in your members” (*ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν τῶν στρατευομένων ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν* – 4:1), illustrating how internal desire extends beyond the self, seizing bodily faculties and erupting into conflict within the community (Davids, 1983:82–83; Laws, 1980:162–163; Johnson, 1995:268–272; Allison, 2013:164–166).

Thus, in James, *ἐπιθυμία* refers to self-directed desire that leads from temptation to sin and death (1:14–15), reflecting the traditional concept of the *yetzer hara* as an internal moral inclination. Desire is personified as a creative force that, if left unchecked, corrupts both will and body. In 4:1–3, *ἡδονή* symbolises the external manifestation of this same impulse, causing social conflict.

¹⁹³ Sirach 18:30 reads: *ὀπίσω τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν σου μὴ πορεύου καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ὀρέξεών σου κωλύου*. – Do not follow your desires and restrain yourself from your appetites.

¹⁹⁴ In Wisdom 1:13–16, the author emphasises that God is not the origin of death or destruction, nor does He delight in the ruin of the living. Everything God created was made for existence, not for annihilation, and His creatures were formed to reflect justice and immortality (1:13–15). However, the ungodly bring death upon themselves through their words and deeds (1:16). By aligning themselves with corruption and “making a covenant with death,” they demonstrate that they belong to its company, not to God.

Collectively, they depict a progression from inner temptation to community disorder, showing how unchecked desire can undermine moral and spiritual harmony.

The sexual or procreative metaphor in James 1:14–15 is consequently analysed both as a conceptual metaphor and a form of rhetography. This analysis also examines the implied multi-dimensional chiasmus within the same framework. The metaphor, its visual-rhetorical dynamics, and its intertextual dimensions are explored within the embodied-cognitive phase of the study, which combines embodied and socio-cultural perspectives on interpretation.

8.4.3 Phase 2: the embodied-cognitive phase (embodied and socio-cultural engagement) of the investigation

8.4.3.1 James 1:14–15 analysed as a conceptual metaphor

In James 1:14–15, the author uses a sexual or procreative conceptual metaphor to explain the process of temptation and sin. This metaphor operates within Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), where meaning is formed through a mapping between a source domain (a concrete, embodied experience) and a target domain (an abstract concept). The *source domain* is human sexual conception and birth, representing the embodied process of desire leading to conception, gestation, and childbirth. The *target domain* of the metaphor is the moral and spiritual process by which temptation gives rise to sin and ultimately to death. The conceptual metaphor mapping for James 1:14–15 is explained in **Table 8.7**.

Table 8.7: Conceptual metaphor mapping of temptation, sin, and death in James 1:14–15

Source domain (sexual/procreative process)	Target domain (moral process)	Explanation
A woman becomes pregnant after luring and enticing a man into sin.	Desire (ἐπιθυμία) is prompted by temptation (ὕπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας ἐξελκόμενος καὶ δελεαζόμενος).	Desire is depicted as fertile and open to temptation. The person is seduced by desire as if by a lover.
Conception (συλλαμβάνω).	The internal acceptance of temptation.	The moral process starts internally when desire “conceives” sin. Desire is personified as developing within the self once temptation is entertained.

Source domain (sexual/procreative process)	Target domain (moral process)	Explanation
Pregnancy/gestation.	Growth of sinful intent or inclination.	Sin gradually reveals itself within human will and imagination.
Birth (τίκτω).	Sinful action emerges externally.	The internal desire results in visible sinful behaviour. Sin appears in concrete actions, completing the internal cycle.
The child grows to maturity.	Sin reaches completion (ἡ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα).	Sin is entirely realised through persistent indulgence.
Death as the end of the life cycle.	Separation from God, a person does not receive the crown of life (1:12).	The life-giving metaphor is ironic: sin's offspring is death.

Source: Author's own analysis.

The embodied metaphor contains multiple layers of meaning. First, it depicts desire as fertile and active, emphasising the internal creative force of moral failure. Sin is not an external intrusion but originates from within the self. Second, the process-oriented imagery (“conceived, gives birth, grows”) portrays sin as a developmental process, emphasising that moral decline occurs gradually and naturally rather than suddenly. Third, by linking the metaphor with death as its ultimate consequence, James creates a life–death paradox: what begins as pleasure and vitality ultimately results in corruption and extinction. This mapping illustrates how James reinterprets biological generation as a moral-spiritual process, utilising embodied experience to demonstrate how temptation arises internally and ultimately leads to destruction. The metaphor thus operates as a *didactic* model, transforming human reproduction (a source of life) into a warning about moral degeneration (a path to death).

The use of sexual imagery, common in Jewish wisdom and prophetic literature (e.g., Genesis 3:6¹⁹⁵; Proverbs 5:3–23¹⁹⁶; Hosea 1–3¹⁹⁷), depicts moral failure in embodied terms. As Allison (2013:258) notes, James’s “union between desire and the will” reflects the Jewish *yetzer* (inclination) tradition, where evil begins with internal consent. Therefore, the sexual and

¹⁹⁵ This is the quintessential example of desire leading to sin. The desire draws Eve to the forbidden fruit, acts on it, and results in death (expulsion from Eden).

¹⁹⁶ A father cautions his son about the seductive, adulterous woman whose lips “drip honey” (5:3), leading to loss, ruin, and death. Here, sexual desire and temptation are morally perilous and carry consequences. The passage depicts desire as both alluring and destructive.

¹⁹⁷ Hosea’s marriage to Gomer functions as a vivid metaphor for unfaithfulness and longing. Idolatrous desires tempt God’s people, yet divine love endures.

procreative metaphor functions both rhetorically and theologically: it warns that desire, if allowed and indulged, can produce “offspring” that lead to death, a parody¹⁹⁸ of the life-giving power of human generation.

The embodied metaphor in James 1:14–15 is further highlighted through its rhetography.

8.4.3.2 The rhetography of the sexual and procreative metaphor in James 1:14–15

The metaphor in James 1:14–15 engages the reader’s sensory imagination, enabling the reader to experience temptation and sin viscerally. Each stage of the metaphor corresponds to specific sensorimotor and affective cues that entice the senses, as outlined in **Table 8.8**.

Table 8.8: Rhetographical and sensory dynamics of the temptation metaphor (James 1:14–15)

Seeing (visual sense).	The imagery of being “drawn out and enticed” (ἐξελκόμενος καὶ δελεαζόμενος) evokes the sense of perceiving an alluring object, such as fruit or a seductive figure. Readers visualise temptation, which triggers cognitive and emotional engagement.
Feeling (kinaesthetic sense).	The language of conception and gestation (συλλαβοῦσα) involves the internal bodily sense of tension or growth. The reader can “feel” desire taking hold, creating a sense of inner movement or weight that reflects the moral development of sin.
Touch/tactile sense (implied).	The “birth” of sin (τίκτει ἁμαρτίαν) signifies the emergence into action, which readers can interpret as an externalisation of internal pressure, similar to a physical release.
Emotion/affect.	The whole metaphor evokes a spectrum of emotional responses, such as anxiety, anticipation, and dread. Desire is not merely abstract but also felt physically, making moral consequences seem real.

¹⁹⁸ James 1:14–15 employs a procreative metaphor that serves as an ironic parody of birth imagery. Usually associated with fertility and life, the process of conception and birth is reversed to depict moral decline: desire conceives and generates sin, which then leads to death. This subversion transforms a life-affirming image into one of corruption, emphasising the twisted “fertility” of evil. The passage thus functions as a moral parody, using the familiar language of generation to show how unchecked desire results not in life but in destruction (Marcus, 1982:613; Johnson, 1995:187).

Hearing (auditory imagination)	Although not explicitly stated, the verbs themselves (ἐξελκόμενος, δελεαζόμενος, συλλαβοῦσα, τίκτει) carry rhythmic and auditory signals that reinforce the progression. Temptation beckons, conceives, and produces sin, thus mimicking the temporal unfolding of a real-life process.
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Source: Author’s own analysis.

By engaging the senses, the author ensures readers experience temptation as a physical sensation rather than merely an idea. The metaphor stimulates the senses to mirror the internal pull of desire, making the moral lesson both intellectually engaging and physically resonant.

A multidimensional chiasmus further strengthens the embodied impact of the conceptual metaphor. This idea is examined in more detail.

8.4.3.3 The embodied effect of the multi-effect chiasmus

The type of chiasmus in James 1:13–15, which suggests multiple effects and mutually influencing relationships (Grausso, 2020:103–104), is schematically presented as follows (Figure 8.2).

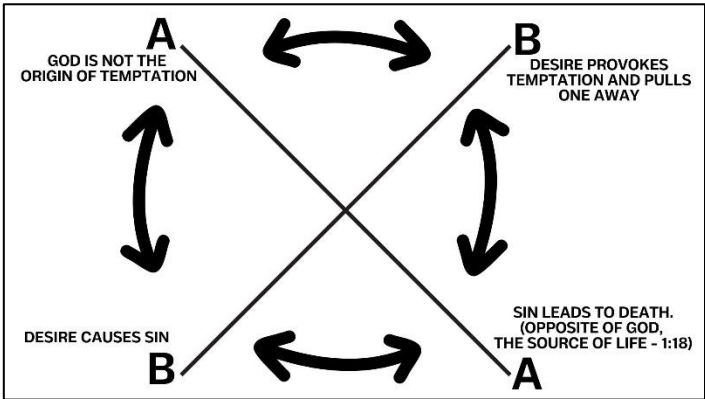


Figure 8.2: Multi-effect chiasmatic structure in James 1:13–15

Source: Author’s own representation.

The multi-effect chiasmus seen in James 1:13–15 aligns with Jamin Pelkey’s idea of a rhombic, or combined, chiasmus, where rhetorical layers encircle a central developmental axis, in this case, “sin” (ἁμαρτία). Unlike a simple A–B–B’–A’ symmetry, a rhombic chiasmus forms a diamond shape (a rhombus) that moves inward and outward simultaneously, involving intersecting axes of meaning, emotion, sensory experience, morality, and cognition. It engages a *felt reversal* or

somatic crossing, a rhythm of tension and release. The rhombic chiasmus can be schematically represented as follows (**Figure 8.3**).

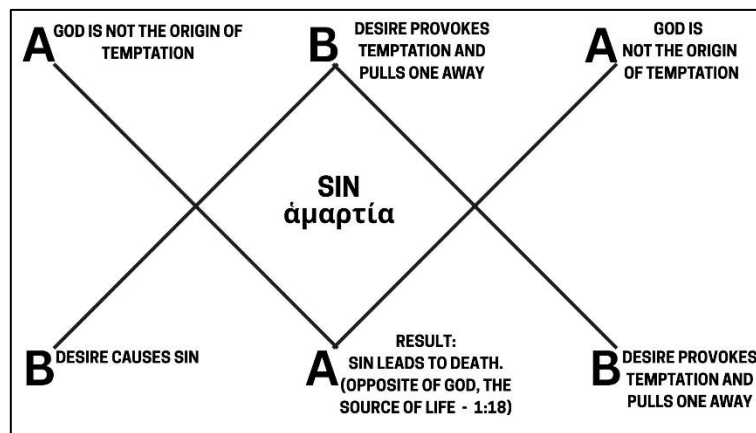


Figure 8.3: Rhombic chiasmus in James 1:13–15

Source: Author's own representation.

The rhombic structure is outlined as follows: (**Table 8.9**).

Table 8.9: Rhombic structure in James 1:13–15

LINE	TEXT FOCUS	MOVEMENT	EMBODIED FUNCTION
A (1:13)	"No one, when tempted, should say, 'God tempts me.'"	Outward denial.	A boundary is set. God is separate from human causation.
B (1:14)	"Each person is tempted by his own desire."	Inward pull.	Inward motion: desire arises in the body.
B' (1:15a)	"Desire conceives and gives birth to sin."	Central crossing.	Fusion point: the metaphorical concept in which the inner becomes the outer.
A' (1:15b)	"Sin, when fully grown, gives birth to death." (Death as separation from God is implied).	Outward consequence and closure/outward reversal.	Expansion: inner impulse externalised as moral action (sin), and Return: disjunction from God.

Source: Author's own analysis.

This pattern forms a rhombus, with the top (**A–A'**) representing the moral axis of God versus death, thereby suggesting separation from God. The sides (**B–B'**) illustrate the human process of temptation, while the central crossing point signifies the embodied moment of conception, where

desire and action, defined as sin, intersect. James 1:13–15 operates as a rhombic chiasmus, expressing moral inversion through rhythm, imagery, and structure. This structure produces a perceptible crossing, constituting a bodily and moral transition from life to death and from internal impulse to external consequence. The third element generated by the rhombic chiasmus in James 1:13–15 is the embodied act of conception, a somatic and moral threshold at which desire is transformed into sin. This mediating point exemplifies the tension that Pelkey (2021:30–54) identifies as the rhombic synthesis, which integrates cognition, body, and morality.

James 1:13 contrasts God's moral purity, who cannot be tempted, with human vulnerability to personal desires. This contrast illustrates the theological and ethical tension examined in phase 3 of the multidimensional hermeneutic approach presented in this thesis. Accordingly, this aspect is discussed in detail.

8.4.4 Phase 3: the theological and ethical synthesis (the theological-ethical phase)

8.4.4.1 Introduction

A detailed analysis of the sacred texture of James 1:12–15, particularly the motifs of suffering and the wise servant, clarifies the text's portrayal of divine reality, humanity's role, and the moral and spiritual relationship between God and believers. Integrating the sacred framework of James 1:13–15 with its theological and rhetorical continuity in 1:12 yields a more precise interpretation. This sacred structure comprises four interconnected stages: the depiction of the divine character, the example of the suffering servant, the embodiment of divine wisdom in the wise servant, and the paradoxical tension between divine testing and human temptation.

The following discussion examines these four aspects of the sacral texture as presented in James 1:12–15.

8.4.4.2 The sacred texture: the character of God

According to Robbins's socio-rhetorical framework, sacred texture examines portrayals of the divine realm, focusing on the divine's nature, activity, and moral stance. In James 1:13, the text affirms that God remains untested in relation to the giving of evil (*ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἀπείραστός ἐστιν κακῶν*) and does not tempt anyone (*πειράζει δὲ αὐτὸς οὐδέν*). God's nature is depicted as morally pure, and His role is to give life rather than to take it away (*πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθέν ἐστιν καταβαῖνον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φῶτων* – every good gift and every perfect

endowment is from above, coming down from the Father of lights [1:17]). The divine reality is characterised by consistency, goodness, and incorruptibility. This understanding shapes the sacred texture in James, presenting a moral universe ordered by divine steadfastness (παρ' ᾧ οὐκ ἔνι παραλλαγή ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα – with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning [Jam 1:17]), in contrast to the instability of human desire (ἐπιθυμία). The text, therefore, implies that God cannot be the source of temptation, as his sacred identity is fundamentally opposed to evil. James thus presents a sacred reality defined by divine goodness and unwavering fidelity.

Verse 12 serves as a pivotal transition, linking the themes of endurance and temptation (πειρασμός/πειράζω). James 1:12 recalls 1:2–4 by emphasising external trials that lead to approval and culminate in the στέφανος ζωῆς (“crown of life”). By contrast, verses 13–15 address internal temptation, tracing a moral progression from desire to sin and ultimately to death. Human desire initiates a self-perpetuating process that leads to death. Through repetition and contrast, James establishes an inner-textual hinge: God tests to purify rather than to destroy. This distinction delineates the boundary between divine testing and human moral failure. The resulting duality reflects James’s anthropology, in which humans either participate in divine life through steadfast endurance or succumb to sin driven by self-centred impulses.

8.4.4.3 Sacred texture: the suffering and the wise servant paradigm

James 1:2–4 encourages believers to “consider it all joy” when facing trials, as these experiences cultivate endurance and moral maturity (τέλειος). This understanding of testing as a divinely permitted process of refinement, rather than punishment, aligns with the wisdom tradition’s focus on spiritual growth through perseverance (Davids, 1983:67–71; Johnson, 1995:174–177; Laws, 1980:55–57). In James 1:12, those who endure trials are described as “blessed” (μακάριος) and promised “the crown of life,” a phrase that invokes eschatological themes of reward and divine vindication. This verse is often interpreted within a covenantal-retributive framework, in which steadfast perseverance through trials results in the eschatological reward of the στέφανος τῆς ζωῆς (“crown of life”). An embodied hermeneutic, rather than rejecting this interpretation, expands upon it by showing that the “crown of life” represents not only a future reward but also a present reality realised through embodied faithfulness, endurance, and communal solidarity. Within this framework, the love of God is intrinsically linked to love of neighbour (2:8), and the promise of life is fulfilled not as an individual accomplishment but as a collective, transformative participation in God’s kingdom (2:5), where ζωή (“life”) is redefined through acts of lived, embodied love.

Verses 13–15 explain the theology of testing: while God may permit trials to strengthen faith, He never lures people into sin. This distinction sets a theological boundary between divine holiness and human moral corruption. Within this sacred framework, the suffering believer resembles the wise and faithful servant of Isaiah 52–53¹⁹⁹ and Wisdom of Solomon 3:5–6, who is tested in righteousness but not tempted by evil. Their endurance amid suffering exemplifies the servant’s obedience and becomes a means of sharing in divine holiness and wisdom (Martin, 1988:27–28; Johnson, 1995:184–186; Bauckham, 1999:65–68). Suffering, therefore, serves a pedagogical purpose: through steadfast endurance, believers embody divine wisdom and moral integrity, reflecting the life-giving constancy of God Himself (Davids, 1983:84–86; Bauckham, 1999:73–76). Hence, James integrates the traditions of the suffering and wise servants into a sacred anthropology: humans engage in divine holiness through wise endurance in suffering, resisting the false notion that God tempts.

8.4.4.4 Paradox: testing versus temptation

The sacred texture of James 1:12–15 distinguishes between divine testing (a constructive process) and temptation to sin (a destructive impulse). This distinction is explained in the following table: (Table 8.10).

Table 8.10: Divine testing and temptation in James 1:12–15

Aspect	Testing (implied tempting to deceive God – πειρασμός in 1:2–4)	Temptation (πειραζόμενος in 1:13–15)
Source	God permits trials.	Desire (ἐπιθυμία) arises within a person.
Purpose	Refines and perfects a person.	Corrupts and kills a person.
Sacred meaning	Engage with divine wisdom and earn the “crown of life”.	Alienation from divine life ultimately leads to death.

Source: Author’s own analysis.

¹⁹⁹ In Isaiah 52:13–53:12, the Servant of Yahweh is depicted as both wise and obedient to the point of suffering and death. His wisdom is not about intellectual ability but about understanding and fulfilling God’s covenant, enabling him to recognise and act in accordance with God’s will amid injustice and suffering. His exaltation occurs paradoxically through humiliation and endurance (Isaiah 53:3–11). The Servant’s suffering serves a pedagogical and redemptive purpose: it reveals divine justice, purifies others, and demonstrates God’s moral glory (Bauckham, 1999:63–68; Johnson, 1995:184–186). In Second Temple thought, this figure became a model of the righteous sufferer, one whose steadfastness in trials exemplifies divine wisdom (Wisdom of Solomon 3:1–6; 5:15–16; Sirach 4:11–18). The Servant accepts God’s testing as part of divine vindication, rather than rebelling against it. This wisdom-driven suffering stands in sharp contrast to James 1:13–15, where endurance gives way to self-serving impulses.

The sacred structure of James 1:12–15 reflects a divine pattern in which God's holiness is the ultimate moral standard, human suffering is interpreted as a sacred test rather than as evidence of divine hostility, and the motif of the wise servant, drawn from Isaiah and Wisdom literature, exemplifies this pattern through wisdom and endurance amid trials.

8.5 Summary

The table below (**Table 8.11**) provides a structured summary of the main themes in James 1:13–15, clarified through a multidimensional hermeneutical analysis, and situates them within the overarching research aims.

Table 8.11: Main themes in James 1:13–15 in relation to the research objectives

Phase of investigation	Key features and insights	Outcome/Function
Structural–rhetorical phase	James 1:13–15 depicts a multi-layered chiasmus like Pelkey's rhombic chiasmus (A–B–B'–A'). God's incorruptibility (A–A') contrasts with human temptation (B–B'), with the centre highlighting the emergence of desire into sin. The pattern demonstrates moral inversion, specifically divine holiness versus human fallibility. James uses sexual and procreative imagery, a common motif in Jewish wisdom and prophetic writings (e.g., Genesis 3:6; Proverbs 5:3–23; Hosea 1–3), to depict moral failure in tangible, experiential terms. This metaphor serves two purposes: rhetorically, it dramatises temptation as a physical act of conception and birth, making sin concrete; theologically, it mocks the life-giving power of human generation by showing sin as the illegitimate offspring of desire, which ultimately results in death rather than life.	Highlights God's innocence and human responsibility.
Embodied–cognitive phase	Temptation is vividly depicted using sensory and physical imagery, turning moral insight into a visceral, lived experience. The conception metaphor likens it to physical gestation, depicting temptation as an internal process within the body. ἐπιθυμία = internal, self-driven desire (inner corruption). ἡδονή = external, social expression of desire (conflict, disorder). The language invites embodied cognition, allowing readers to "feel" the moral tension between desire and restraint.	Links internal desire to external consequences; integrates moral, physical, and social aspects of temptation.

Phase of investigation	Key features and insights	Outcome/Function
Theological–ethical synthesis	God is ἀπείραστος κακῶν, unacquainted with evil, the source of only good (1:17). Humanity is fully responsible for sin, which arises from desire rather than divine intention. Moral growth proceeds through a progression: desire leads to sin, which in turn leads to death and social conflict. James provides a broad perspective on moral anthropology, combining cognition, embodiment, and community ethics. The rhombic pattern represents the shift from divine goodness to human corruption.	Synthesises theology and ethics, affirms divine goodness, and emphasises human moral responsibility.

Source: Author's own analysis.

Chapter 9 focuses on James 1:16–18, highlighting righteous living through the word of God.

CHAPTER 9 GOD’S UNCHANGING GOODNESS: THE SOURCE OF LIFE AND TRUTH (JAMES 1:16–18)

**“Great is Thy faithfulness,” O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, thy compassions, Thy fail not.
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.**

**“Great is Thy faithfulness!” “Great is Thy faithfulness!”
Morning by morning, new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided —
“Great is Thy faithfulness,” Lord, unto me!**

(Hymn written by Thomas O. Chisholm)

9.1 Introduction

Chapter 9 examines James 1:16–18 using a multidimensional hermeneutic framework, emphasising the text’s focus on righteous living grounded in the word of God. The passage is analysed as a theological and rhetorical unit that contrasts divine generosity and constancy with human instability and deception, thereby reinforcing the Epistle’s broader ethical vision.

This chapter gives particular attention to the portrayal of God as the source of every good and perfect gift and to the depiction of divine immutability as the foundation for ethical transformation within the believing community. The analysis further explores the imagery of birth and new creation, especially the concept of believers being brought forth through the word of truth, as a central motif for understanding identity formation and moral renewal.

Employing a multidimensional hermeneutic approach, the discussion investigates the semantic, rhetorical, and experiential dimensions of James 1:16–18 and demonstrates how the passage helps shape a life oriented toward stability, holiness, and faithful obedience. Accordingly, the chapter aims to present righteous living not solely as ethical instruction but as an embodied response to God’s initiating and sustaining activity through his word.

9.2 James 1:16–18 as the opposite of James 1:13–15

James 1:13–15 and 1:16–18 depict a contrast between the negative imagery of sin and death, driven by human desire, and the true origin of goodness and life from God’s will (βουληθεὶς ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς λόγῳ ἀληθείας – By his will He brought us forth through the word of truth [1:18]). Both passages use similar grammatical structures and mirrored verbs (τίκτει in James 1:15; ἀπεκύησεν in James 1:18), emphasising the difference between human and divine sources. God’s constant goodness contrasts with human fickleness and deception. Consequently, James 1:16–18 functions as a thematic and structural counterpoint to James 1:13–15, reversing the moral associations of temptation and birth and establishing a metaphorical balance. This contrast is further clarified through specific grammatical and structural comparisons, as summarised in **Table 9.1**.

Table 9.1: Grammatical and structural contrasts between James 1:13–15 and 1:16–18

Aspect	James 1:13–15	James 1:16–18	Antithesis highlighted
Imperative	Μηδεὶς λεγέτω... (“Let no one say...”). A prohibition aimed at the third person. Impersonal.	Μὴ πλανᾶσθε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί (“Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers”). A warning directed at the second person, members of the congregation. Personal.	Both begin with an imperative; James 1:16 serves as a hinge, transitioning from error to truth (Davids, 1983:86; Wolmarans, 1994:104; Johnson, 1995:182).
Subject focus	God is incorrectly blamed for tempting people.	God is accurately depicted as the source of all goodness.	The contrasting portrayal of divine agency: presenting it not as the provider of temptation but as the source of blessing.
The agent of moral process	Human ἐπιθυμία (desire) is the active subject causing sin.	The divine πατὴρ τῶν φώτων (Father of lights) is the active subject bestowing good gifts.	Human causality is different from divine causality.
Verbs used: antithetical “two genealogies.”	Source: ἡ ἰδία ἐπιθυμία (own desire). Action: ἐξελκόμενος καὶ δελεαζόμενος (being drawn away and enticed).	Source: ὁ πατὴρ τῶν φώτων (Father of lights). Action: πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ... καταβαῖνον ἄνωθεν (every good and perfect gift comes down from above).	Contrasting outcomes: death versus life.

Aspect	James 1:13–15	James 1:16–18	Antithesis highlighted
	Conception: ἡ ἐπιθυμία συλλαβοῦσα (desire having conceived). Birth verb: τίκτει (gives birth to). Offspring: ἁμαρτία (sin). Maturation: ἡ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα (when sin is fully grown). Result: ἀποκύει θάνατον (gives birth to death).	Conception: βουληθεὶς (having willed/by his own decision). Birth verb: ἀπεκύησεν (gave birth to). Offspring: ἡμᾶς (us — believers). Maturation: εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχήν (that we should be a kind of first fruits). Result: ζωῆς implied — new creation, life (of his creatures).	

Source: Author's own analysis.

James 1:16–18 is also thematically and grammatically connected to James 1:1–11, creating a careful repetition and resolution of ideas introduced at the start of the letter. The link between verses 1:16–18 and 1:1–11 is therefore examined.

9.3 The relation of James 1:16–18 with James 1:1–11

Several prominent commentators²⁰⁰ explicitly acknowledge the structural and thematic link between James 1:1–11 and 1:16–18, noting that 1:12–15 constitutes the contrastive centre. James 1:16–18 echoes and fulfils 1:1–11 both thematically and grammatically. The motif of divine giving reappears (δίδωμι, δόσις); the adjective τέλειος links divine and human perfection; and the

²⁰⁰ Moo (2000:78–80) emphasises that 1:17–18 continues the theme of God's giving introduced in 1:5 and forms an *inclusio*, framing the discussion on testing and temptation. Johnson (1995:187–190) points out that these verses revisit the theme of God's generosity from 1:5 and that both sections frame the discussion of testing and temptation (1:2–18). Davids (1983:70–72) observes that 1:5 and 1:17–18 form an *inclusio* of divine giving, linking the gift of wisdom with the gift of new life, using key vocabulary such as δίδωμι and τέλειος. Martin (1988:27–29) identifies a deliberate balance between these passages, showing that the God who bestows wisdom also grants life, with divine constancy countering human instability (cf. 1:6–8). Batten (2014:66–68) remarks that themes of divine generosity (1:5, 17) and constancy (1:6–8, 17) work together to depict a consistent divine character throughout the section. Wolmarans (1994:105) also notes several grammatical and thematic links between James 1:16–18 and James 1:1–11. Allison (2013:243–246) observes that the God who generously grants wisdom (1:5) is also the source of every good and perfect gift (1:17). James 1:16–18 revisits the theme of divine beneficence and constancy.

imagery of testing and transformation culminates in God's act of new birth. The God who grants wisdom (1:5) is the same unchanging Father who bestows every good gift (1:17) and generates new life through the word of truth (1:18). The table below presents a detailed analysis illustrating how James 1:16–18 echoes, develops, and concludes the thematic and structural threads established in 1:1–11 (**Table 9.2**).

Table 9.2: Development of themes from James 1:1–11 to 1:16–18

Theme	James 1:1–11	James 1:16–18	Relationship
Seed metaphor	James 1:1 — ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορά (‘‘to the twelve tribes in the diaspora’’).	James 1:18 — τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχήν τινα τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων (‘‘for us to be a kind of first fruits of his creatures’’).	The seed metaphor implied in 1:1 is linked to the word ἀπαρχήν in 1:18, which refers to the first fruits that ripened. A complete cycle is suggested, where scattered seed becomes fruit.
Divine giving	James 1:5 — ὁ διδούς θεός (‘‘the God who gives generously’’).	James 1:17 — πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθεν ἐστὶν καταβαῖνον (‘‘every good and perfect gift comes down from above’’).	The theme of God as a generous giver underpins both sections; the God who grants wisdom (1:5) is the same God who bestows all good gifts (1:17).
God’s character	James 1:5 — ἀπλῶς καὶ οὐκ ὀνειδίζοντος (‘‘generously and without reproach’’).	James 1:17 — παρ’ ᾧ οὐκ ἔνι παραλλαγή ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα (‘‘with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning’’).	Both emphasise divine constancy: God’s giving nature stays unchanging and benevolent.
Perfection/ completeness (τέλειος)	James 1:4 — ἵνα ᾗτε τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι (‘‘that you may be perfect and complete’’).	James 1:17 — πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον (‘‘every perfect gift’’).	The adjective τέλειος connects human maturity (1:4) with divine perfection (1:17); the aim of believers’ testing reflects the perfection of God’s gifts.
Wisdom/word of truth	James 1:5 — αἰτείτω παρὰ τοῦ διδόντος θεοῦ (‘‘ask from the giving God’’).	James 1:18 — λόγῳ ἀληθείας ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς (‘‘He gave us birth by the word of truth’’).	Both highlight God’s connection with humans — the God who provides wisdom (1:5) also gives life through His word (1:18).

Theme	James 1:1–11	James 1:16–18	Relationship
Status reversal and new life	James 1:9–10 highlights the elevation of the humble and the humbling of the wealthy.	James 1:18 — ἀπαρχή τις τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων (“a kind of first fruits of his creatures”).	Both signify a renewed identity: believers’ trials lead to transformation and a new status before God.

Source: Author’s own analysis

James 1:16–18 clarifies and completes the themes introduced in 1:1–11 by showing that the same God who offers wisdom (1:5) and calls believers to maturity (1:4) also grants every perfect gift (1:17) and initiates a new beginning (1:18). Given the established connection between James 1:1–15 and 1:16–18, the subsequent analysis will further examine the latter passage using the multidimensional hermeneutic approach presented in this study.

9.3.1 Remarks based on the surface literary features of James 1:16–18

Judging on a mere surface level, James 1:16–18 can be interpreted as a multiple-effect chiasmus, as Grausso (2020:29) describes it. It is seen as a reciprocal or multi-directional pattern in which “A affects B and B affects A,” or in which numerous semantic or perceptual effects resonate across the structure rather than converging in a single pivot.²⁰¹ Therefore, chiasmus is not only formally reciprocal (ABBA) but also experientially interactive, such that each side reshapes or reorients the other. The following table illustrates this multiple-effect chiasmus (**Table 9.3**).

Table 9.3: Multiple-effect chiasmus in James 1:16–18

Verse	Text Element	Thematic Function
A (1:16)	Μὴ πλανᾶσθε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί — “Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.”	Warning: human error and distortion of truth.
B (1:17a)	Πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθεν ἐστὶν καταβαῖνον — “Every good and perfect gift is from above.”	Affirmation: divine beneficence as the source of all good.

²⁰¹ Several commentators observe this reciprocal or transformative symmetry. Johnson (1995:180–182) suggests that divine giving and human regeneration reflect each other, as the same divine constancy that supports giving also underpins new birth. Allison (2013:266–268) emphasises the contrastive reciprocity: human deception versus divine truth, instability versus stability. Laws (1980:63–65) explains how 1:16–18 “reverse the moral logic” of 1:13–15, shifting from sin leading to death to God’s begetting of life, creating a chiastic structure inversion.

Verse	Text Element	Thematic Function
C (1:17b)	ἀπὸ τοῦ Πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, παρ' ᾧ οὐκ ἔστι παραλλαγή ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα — “coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of change.”	Contrastive stability: divine constancy versus human instability.
B' (1:18a)	βουληθεὶς ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς λόγῳ ἀληθείας — “By his will he brought us forth by the word of truth.”	Affirmation further explored: divine beneficence as a creation act.
A' (1:18b)	εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχὴν τινα τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων — that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.”	Renewal: divine truth creating human life (reversal of deception).

Source: Author's own analysis.

While James 1:16–18 exhibits features of a ring or concentric structure, it is more precisely understood as a multi-effect chiasmus rather than a simple ring pattern. A ring structure emphasises symmetry and cyclical return, with the conclusion mirroring the beginning (**A–B–C–B'–A'**), creating a sense of closure. In contrast, a multi-effect chiasmus highlights interaction, movement, and transformation rather than static repetition. Its pattern (**A–B–C–B'–A'**) reflects reciprocity, with meaning developing through the dynamic interplay between divine and human realities — each reshaping the other (e.g., deception versus divine truth and new creation). Rather than returning to the initial state, the passage moves from deception (**A**) to truthful new life (**A'**), driven by God's consistent generosity and constancy (**B–B'**). Therefore, James 1:16–18 functions as a multi-effect chiasmus that traces a transformative movement from human error to divine renewal through God's unchanging goodness. While it maintains ring-like symmetry, its primary purpose is transformation rather than mere repetition.

The relationship between human deception (1:16) and divine begetting in truth (1:18) exemplifies the reciprocal transformation Grausso (2020:104–106) identifies as characteristic of a multiple-effect chiasmus. Human failure (**A**) is not merely corrected by divine constancy (**B**); it is re-created through divine truth (**B'**), yielding renewed humanity (**A'**). Through this dynamic exchange, the display of divine goodness (**B–B'**) both reveals human deception (**A**) and restores humanity (**A'**), thereby marking them as the first fruits of God's creation. The central focus (**C**) emphasises God's unchanging nature, in contrast to the instability of creation. The “good and perfect gift from above” (1:17) thus descends to transform what lies beneath, establishing a continual exchange between giver and receiver, heaven and earth. This process embodies Grausso's understanding of chiasmus as a structure of mutual transformation and interconnected reciprocity, rather than mere inversion. The reciprocal relationship between the A and B elements of this chiasmus is further explored in the structural–rhetorical phase of the multidimensional hermeneutic analysis.

James 1:16–18 contains numerous conceptual metaphors, many of which oppose those in 1:13–15. These metaphors serve both cognitive and theological roles by illustrating God’s ongoing beneficence in contrast to human unpredictability. These are God as giver and source²⁰², God as the Father of lights²⁰³, God’s constancy as cosmic stability²⁰⁴, new birth through the word²⁰⁵ and believers are characterised as first fruits.²⁰⁶ Related to these metaphors is its rhetography, which is discussed in the second phase of the multidimensional hermeneutic investigation, the embodied–cognitive phase. The embodied impact of the multi-effect chiasmi is also examined.

James 1:16–18 comments on God’s character and His relationship with mankind. These aspects in relation to the themes of the wise and suffering slave are discussed in the third phase of the multidimensional investigation — the theological-ethical phase.

9.4 Phase 1: structural and rhetorical mapping (textual-rhetorical phase)

9.4.1 The A-element of the multi-effect chiasmus

Most commentators agree that James 1:16 signifies a shift from moral warning to theological affirmation. Davids (1983:82) describes it as a “bridge verse” that wraps up the warning about human self-deception (1:13–15) while introducing the correction regarding God’s goodness (1:17–18). Johnson (1995:182) likewise describes it as a “rhetorical hinge”²⁰⁷ in which James reorients the reader’s perception from internal desire (the deceptive source of sin) to divine giving (the trustworthy source of good). Laws (1980:68) explains that the command *μὴ πλανᾶσθε* (imperative present passive second person plural from *πλανάω*) serves not only to moralise but also to correct theological misconceptions, specifically targeting those who might wrongly see God as the source of evil. Consequently, the verse shifts focus from human responsibility for sin to God’s faithfulness. By placing this command before mentioning divine giving (*πᾶσα δόσις*

²⁰² James 1:17 affirms: *πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθεν ἐστὶν καταβαῖνον* (every good gift and every perfect gift is from above).

²⁰³ James 1:17 states that good gifts come: *ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων* (from the Father of the lights).

²⁰⁴ James 1:17 further describes God: *παρ’ ᾧ οὐκ ἔστι παραλλαγή ἢ τροπὴ ἀποσκίασμα* (with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning).

²⁰⁵ James 1:18 states: *βουληθεὶς ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς λόγῳ ἀληθείας* (by his will he gave us birth through the word of truth).

²⁰⁶ James 1:18 further states: *εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχὴν τινὰ τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων* (that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures).

²⁰⁷ Similarly, Adam (2013:18) suggests treating James 1:16 as a “janus verse,” examining both the origins of sin and death and the contrasting creation of goodness in humanity.

ἀγαθὴ..., 1:17), James creates a clear contrast: 1:13–15 depict a flawed view that leads to desire and death, whereas 1:17–18 show an accurate view that results in a divine gift and life.

The phrase ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί (“my beloved brothers”) functions not merely as a formal greeting; it also cushions rebukes and fosters unity among believers. This address appears in the New Testament, such as in 1 Corinthians 15:58²⁰⁸ and Philippians 4:1²⁰⁹. The *vocative* case is used for emphasis in James 1:2, 19, and 2:5. This personal and affectionate way of speaking creates a ‘family discourse’ tone in the exhortations, reinforcing a sense of community and encouraging readers to reflect and change their perspective without feeling distant. Through this gentle urging, James helps his audience move from moral uncertainty toward clearer theological understanding.

9.4.2 The B-element of the multi-effect chiasmus

The phrase πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθέν (“every good giving and every perfect gift is from above”) expresses the idea that all goodness comes from divine beneficence. While Adam (2013:18) suggests there is no clear difference between δόσις and δῶρημα, seeing their pairing as a stylistic choice reflecting James’s preference for synonyms, there is a subtle difference between them. Δόσις (from δίδωμι, “to give”) refers to the act or process of giving²¹⁰, the generous act itself rather than its outcome, whereas δῶρημα (from δωρέομαι, “to bestow freely”) denotes the result of that action, the actual gift received. The latter term emphasises the tangible or spiritual impacts of divine generosity. The paired comparison indicates an inclusive sense: both the act of giving and the gift itself are involved. This completeness is further highlighted by the repetition of πᾶς (“every”), which renders the statement universal. The phrase

²⁰⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:58 states: “Ὡστε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί, ἐδραῖοι γίνεσθε, ἀμετακίνητοι, περισσεύοντες ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ τοῦ κυρίου πάντοτε, εἰδότες ὅτι ὁ κόπος ὑμῶν οὐκ ἔστιν κενὸς ἐν κυρίῳ. – Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

²⁰⁹ Philippians 4:1 affirms: “Ὡστε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοὶ καὶ ἐπιπόθητοι, χαρὰ καὶ στέφανός μου, οὕτως στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ, ἀγαπητοί. – Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brothers, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, beloved.

²¹⁰ The term appears only here in the New Testament (*hapax legomenon*). Louw and Nida (1988) describe δόσις as: to give an object, usually implying value – ‘to give, giving (57.71). In the Septuagint (LXX), it sometimes appears in contexts emphasising the *act of offering*. Proverbs 21:14, for example, states: δόσις λάθριος ἀνατρέπει ὀργὰς δῶρων δὲ ὁ φειδόμενος – A secret gift turns away anger, but one who withholds gifts stirs up wrath. This proverb contrasts two attitudes toward generosity: The secret act of giving (δόσις λάθριος) pacifies anger, suggesting that quiet generosity restores harmony. The withholding of gifts (ὁ φειδόμενος δῶρων) provokes or sustains hostility; stinginess leads to conflict.

further demonstrates synonymous parallelism by matching a noun and an adjective in each part (δόσις ἀγαθή/δῶρημα τέλειον), establishing both rhythm and phonetic harmony, key features of refined Greek rhetorical and epideictic writing. Wolmarans (1994:106) observes that if a consonant had followed the final sigma of δόσις, the phrase would form a perfect hexameter,²¹¹ demonstrating deliberate rhythmic craftsmanship. This metrical precision, he argues, aims to evoke the sound and authority of a classical maxim, thereby giving the statement proverbial weight. According to Wolmarans, such rhythmic design reflects James’s pragmatic rhetorical strategy — to create the impression of a well-established *topos* and thus strengthen the persuasive impact on his audience. Repeated consonant sounds (δ and τ in δόσις, δῶρημα, and τέλειον)²¹² enhance the line’s euphony and rhythm, making it memorable when spoken aloud, consistent with the oral tradition typical of the epistolary style. The use of the *present participle* καταβαῖνον²¹³ (active nominative neuter singular from καταβαίνω, “coming down”) emphasises ongoing divine activity — God’s act of giving is not confined to the past but represents a continuous, everlasting process. Through this participle, the divine gifts are vividly personified as ever-descending streams, creating a striking *energeia* (lively depiction) that captivates the listener’s imagination.

Several commentators²¹⁴ describe the gift received from God as wisdom, as mentioned in James 1:5. Later, James 3:13–17 explicitly compares “wisdom from above” (ἡ ἄνωθεν σοφία) with earthly, unspiritual wisdom. The repeated use of ἄνωθεν in James 1:13–17 creates an inclusion with James 1:17, signifying that the perfect gift from above refers to divine wisdom — an attribute that fosters moral integrity, peace, and righteousness. Within the larger context of James 1:13–18, the first part of James 1:17 serves as a corrective contrast: God is not the source of temptation (1:13), but rather the one who gives every good and perfect gift — namely, wisdom (1:17). The repetition

²¹¹ A hexameter is a poetic line composed of six metrical feet, usually dactylic (– ∪ ∪), and is the traditional metre used in Greek and Roman epic poetry, creating a grand rhythm ideal for heroic or narrative poetry.

²¹² Both δ and τ are stops (plosives), meaning they block entirely and then release airflow. They are dentals, produced with the tongue against the upper teeth. The only difference is voicing: τ is voiceless (no vocal cord vibration), while δ is voiced (vocal cords vibrate). In words like δόσις, δῶρημα, and τέλειον, alternating voiced (δ) and voiceless (τ) dentals create a balanced, percussive rhythm.

²¹³ The participle agrees with δῶρημα, but modifies both δῶρημα and δόσις (Adams, 2013:18).

²¹⁴ Davids (1983:89–90) connects James 1:17 with James 1:5, suggesting that the “perfect gift from above” likely signifies wisdom, which descends from God as pure and complete. Johnson (1995:192) notes that the divine gift imagery reaches its peak in 1:17, where the heavenly origin of wisdom and goodness is explicitly stated. Laws (1980:78) sees the “perfect gift” as divine wisdom that moulds believers and transforms moral conduct. Martin (1988:44) observes that the repeated use of δίδωμι-related words throughout 1:5–18 emphasises the theme of divine giving, especially of wisdom, life, and moral integrity. Wolmarans (1994:106) suggests that the reader is motivated, in James 1:17–18, to pursue the wisdom that comes from God.

of *πάσα ... πᾶν* emphasises divine beneficence and clearly contrasts with the deceptive nature of human desire (1:14–15). Finally, the transition from divine giving (1:17) to divine begetting (1:18, *ἀπεκύησεν*) establishes both theological and structural parallels, portraying God as the unchanging source of all light, life, and goodness.

James 1:17 unfolds in a progressive rhetorical sequence, beginning with the act of giving (*δόσις*), moving to the gift itself (*δῶρημα*), and culminating in the source of all giving (*ἄνωθεν*). This development creates an escalating movement in both meaning and theological intensity, emphasising the principle that every good and perfect gift ultimately originates with God, the divine giver. This rhetorical ascent is summarised in **Table 9.4**.

Table 9.4: Rhetorical ascent in James 1:17

Verse fragment	Translation	Function
<i>πάσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ</i>	Every good giving ...	The act or process of giving.
<i>καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθεν ἐστὶν</i>	... and every perfect gift is from above ...	Result of the giving action, the actual gift received.
<i>ἐστὶν καταβαῖνον ἀπὸ τοῦ Πατρὸς τῶν φώτων</i>	... is coming down from the Father of the lights ...	The divine source of the giving and gifts received.
<i>παρ' ᾧ οὐκ ἔστι παραλλαγή ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα</i>	... with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.	The unchanging character of the source.

Source: Author's own summary.

9.4.3 The C-element of the multi-effect chiasmus

Rhetorically, the phrase *τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, παρ' ᾧ οὐκ ἔστι παραλλαγή ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα*, functions as the climactic point of verse 17's progression. It not only identifies the giver but also expresses his unchanging nature, thus resolving the earlier contrast between divine constancy and human instability (1:13–15). The metaphor *τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων*²¹⁵ evokes creation imagery,

²¹⁵ The noun phrase *ὁ πατήρ τῶν φώτων* does not appear elsewhere in the New Testament and is a *hapax legomenon*. While God as “Father” (*πατήρ*) is a common designation and “light” (*φῶς*) a frequent theological metaphor (e.g., 1 John 1:5; John 1:4, 9; Ephesians 5:8–9), the combination of *Father* with *lights* in the genitive plural (*τῶν φώτων*) is unique to James.

portraying God as the creator of the celestial lights (cf. Genesis 1:14–18)²¹⁶ and thus the ultimate source of all illumination. The “Father of lights” epithet²¹⁷ serves a rhetorical purpose, exalting and glorifying the giver and reinforcing his moral authority. The motif of light and radiance, often linked with divine wisdom (Wisdom 7:26,²¹⁸ Philo, *Legum Allegoriarum* 3.104²¹⁹), implicitly contrasts with the darkness of human temptation (1:13–15).

The imagery of “no variation or shadow of turning” (οὐκ ἔνι παραλλαγή²²⁰ ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα) draws on astronomical motion: celestial bodies move, change, and cast shadows, but God — the Father of lights — remains unchanging. This contrastive metaphor stabilises the theological message: the Creator of changeable lights Himself is unchanging. The rhetorical balance highlights the passage’s moral reasoning — God’s gifts are always good because His nature is always good. The use of celestial terms like φῶτα, παραλλαγή, τροπή, and ἀποσκίασμα imparts an elevated, hymnic quality to the verse. The repetition of hard, voiceless consonants (π–φ–θ)²²¹

²¹⁶ Genesis 1:14–18 states that on the fourth day of creation, God created the sun, moon, and stars, placing them in the sky to illuminate the earth. Their roles are fourfold: to differentiate light from darkness, marking day and night; to serve as signs of the seasons, days, and years — organising time; to shed light on the land; and to control day and night. God approves of this arrangement, highlighting the harmony and structure of creation.

²¹⁷ An epithet is a descriptive word or phrase that emphasises a key quality, attribute, or characteristic of a person, deity, or object. It acts as a literary or rhetorical tool that enhances vividness, emotional impact, or conveys an honorific tone to the noun it describes.

²¹⁸ Wisdom 7:26 describes Wisdom as: ἀπαύγασμα γάρ ἐστιν φωτὸς αἰδίου καὶ ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίδωτον τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνεργείας καὶ εἰκὼν τῆς ἀγαθότητος αὐτοῦ. — For she is the radiance of the eternal light, the spotless mirror of the activity of God, and the image of His goodness. This verse depicts divine wisdom (σοφία) as a radiant, personified emanation of God’s eternal light. The language expresses both intimacy and distinction between God and Wisdom. Wisdom reflects and manifests God’s essence, purity, and goodness, much like light shining from its source or a mirror reflecting an image.

²¹⁹ Philo, *Legum Allegoriarum* 3.104 states: ἐπειδὴ τοίνυν δύο φύσεις εὖρομεν γενομένας καὶ πλαττομένας καὶ ἄκρως τετορευμένας ὑπὸ θεοῦ, τὴν μὲν ἐξ ἑαυτῆς βλαβεράν καὶ ἐπίληπτον καὶ κατάρατον, τὴν δὲ ὠφέλιμον καὶ ἐπαινετήν, καὶ ἔχουσιν τὴν μὲν κίβδηλον, τὴν δὲ δόκιμον χαρακτῆρα, καλὴν καὶ ἀρμόττουσαν εὐχὴν εὐξώμεθα, ἣν καὶ Μωυσῆς, “ὦ ἡμῖν ἀνοίξῃ ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ θησαυρὸν” καὶ τὸν μετάρσιον καὶ ἐγκύμονα θείων φώτων λόγον, ὃν δὴ κέκληκεν οὐρανόν, τοὺς δὲ τῶν κακῶν ἐπισφίγξῃ. — Since, then, we have found that two natures have been brought into being, formed, and most skilfully fashioned by God — the one harmful, blameworthy, and accursed by its very nature, the other beneficial and praiseworthy, the one bearing a counterfeit, the other a genuine character — let us offer up a good and fitting prayer, the very one that Moses also offered: ‘that God may open to us His own treasury,’ that is, the lofty and pregnant Word full of divine lights, which he calls ‘heaven,’ and that He may shut up those [treasures] belonging to evils. This passage eloquently captures Philo’s allegorical theology, in which the Logos symbolises heaven and the divine treasury of light, serving as the medium through which the soul gains wisdom and illumination.

²²⁰ Louw and Nida (1988) define παραλλαγή as “a change or variation in the nature or character of something” (Domain 58.44). παραλλαγή functions as the predicate nominative with ἐνι (present indicative present active third person singular from ἔνειμι – to be inside an area or object (Louw and Nida, 1988, Domain 85.19).

²²¹ The letter π is pronounced as a voiceless bilabial stop, φ as an aspirated voiceless bilabial stop, and θ as an aspirated voiceless dental stop. These are “hard” voiceless consonants, often with a puff of air (aspiration). In James 1:17, these consonants appear as follows: ἄνωθεν ἐστιν καταβαῖνον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, παρ’ ᾧ οὐκ ἔνι παραλλαγή ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα.

and the rhythmic balance of the closing phrase (παρ' ᾧ οὐκ ἔνι παραλλαγὴ ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα)²²² contribute to a pleasing euphony. This rhythmic conclusion serves an epideictic purpose by praising divine perfection. It reflects James's oral-parenthetic style, designed to be heard and read, emphasising the “listening ear,” as Botha (2018:1–18) highlights.

The passage's imagery and rhetorical artistry are further examined during the embodied-cognitive phase of the multidimensional hermeneutic analysis, where its sensory and emotional aspects become particularly significant.

9.4.4 The B' and A'-elements of the multi-effect chiasmus (James 1:18)

James 1:18 is structured as a five-part concentric (ring) chiasmus, exemplifying a *multiple-effect chiasmus* in which the parallel elements are not perfectly symmetrical but mutually interpretative, indicating reciprocal movement and semantic development. This five-part ring structure is set out in **Table 9.5**.

Table 9.5: Five-part ring (concentric) chiasmus in James 1:18

SEGMENT	GREEK PHRASE	FUNCTION
A	βουληθεὶς (“having willed”) ...	Divine will.
B	ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς (“he brought us forth”) ...	Divine act of creation.
C	λόγῳ ἀληθείας (“by the word of truth”) ...	Instrumental means.
B'	εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς (“so that we might be”) ...	Outcome for mankind.
A'	ἀπαρχὴν τινα τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων (“a kind of first fruits of his creatures”).	Divine volition completed.

Source: Author's own analysis.

The ring composition, also referred to as a concentric chiasmus, centres on the element (**C**), “λόγῳ ἀληθείας,” which serves as the structural pivot. The outer elements (**A/A'**) represent divine

²²² Adams (2013:20) suggests that the genitive τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα presents a translation challenge because the genitive can be expressed in several ways: as an attributive genitive (“a changing shadow”), a genitive of source (“shadow due to change”), a subjective genitive (“the shadow that change casts”), or an exegetical genitive (“shadow, that is, change”). Among these, the genitive of source may be slightly more probable; the subjective and exegetical genitives are less common, but all are possible. Ἀποσκίασμα, referring to “the shape or shade cast by an object which blocks rays of light or a shadow” (Louw and Nida, 1988, Domain 14.61), functions as the predicate nominative with ἐνι and is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament.

initiative and fulfilment, while the inner pair (**B/B'**) illustrates divine–human interaction through birth, creation, and renewal. James 1:18 demonstrates a concentric chiasmic structure, positioning *λόγῳ ἀληθείας* at its theological and rhetorical centre. Furthermore, this passage may be interpreted as a multi-effect chiasmus, in which the mirrored elements not only repeat but also develop and influence one another. In this structure, divine will initiates human renewal, culminating in the first fruits of creation. This interpretation is supported by an analysis of the passage's inner and intertextual textures and their interrelationships.

9.4.5 The textures of segments A and B – the divine will and act of creation

The verb *ἀπεκύησεν* (aorist indicative active, third person singular of *ἀποκυέω*) intentionally recalls the earlier metaphor in James 1:15 (“sin gives birth to death”), thereby establishing a paradoxical chiasm of birth and death. The repeated use of this rare verb, a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament, purposefully introduces a complex tension between divine and human generativity. The participle *βουληθεὶς* (aorist passive nominative masculine singular of *βούλομαι*), positioned emphatically at the beginning of the sentence, emphasises divine volition as the primary initiating force. The contrast between James 1:15 (*ἐπιθυμία* → *ἁμαρτία* → *θάνατος*) and James 1:18 (*βούλησις θεοῦ* → *λόγος ἀληθείας* → *ζωή*) highlights a deliberate moral inversion: human desire results in death, while divine will generates life. As Davids (1983:90) and Johnson (1995:191) observe, this structural and semantic opposition serves as a rhetorical antithesis, reinforcing the epistle’s central ethical assertion that God is good.

The *aorist* tense in James 1:18 mainly expresses a perfective aspect, indicating a single, completed event rather than an ongoing process (Jordaan, 2014:12–14). In this verse, God’s decisive act of spiritual begetting is presented as a single divine act that brings about new birth. The emphasis is on the action’s finality and completeness, underscoring that new life is brought about entirely by God’s will. In contrast, the participle *καταβαῖνον* (“coming down”) in James 1:17 is in the *present tense*, highlighting the ongoing nature of divine giving. The switch to the aorist *ἀπεκύησεν* in verse 18 signifies a final act of creation, reminiscent of the Genesis account in which God’s word initiates creation. This tense contrast creates a theological pattern — God’s gifts constantly flow in the present, while the act of creation itself has already been completed in the aorist.

Rhetorically, the aorist anchors the believer’s identity in a completed divine act rather than in an uncertain process of becoming. It evokes the creation motif: just as God once spoke and creation

came into existence, so too has He, by His will (βουληθείς), brought forth His people (ἡμᾶς) in a single, purposeful act. As Davids (1983:90) and Laws (1980:78) note, the aorist tense emphasises the once-and-for-all nature of God's regenerative action. This action is enabled by the λόγῳ ἀληθείας, the word of truth. The semantic reference of this phrase is discussed in the following paragraph, as is the identity of the recipients (ἡμᾶς, the personal pronoun in the accusative plural form of ἐγώ) of the creation process.

9.4.6 The textures of segment C – the instrumental means of divine will and the identity of ἡμᾶς

Regarding the semantic reference of the λόγῳ ἀληθείας, the word of truth, many commentators²²³ note the close relationship between λόγος (word) and νόμος (law) in the Epistle of James. They regard this as vital for understanding the letter's theology and its combination of Jewish wisdom with early Christian moral teachings. In James, the λόγος ("word") and νόμος ("law") are not separate categories but complementary expressions of divine wisdom and revelation. The λόγος

²²³ Du Toit (2020:275–305) links λόγῳ ἀληθείας with the νόμον τέλειον τὸν τῆς ἐλευθερίας (the complete principle of freedom – James 1:25) and examines these concepts in relation to James 2:8 (νόμον τελεῖτε βασιλικόν – the supreme kingdom principle) and James 2:12 (νόμου ἐλευθερίας – the principle of freedom). He distinguishes between the *indicative* and *imperative* aspects of the supreme principle of freedom, noting their close relationship. The "completed principle of freedom" in 1:25 primarily concerns the indicative work of God, by which he gives birth to believers through the gospel-word (1:18) and implants the gospel-word within them (1:25), thereby constituting a new identity in Christ that sets believers free and empowers them. By contrast, the "supreme kingdom-principle" (2:8) or the "principle of freedom" (2:12) mainly constitutes the imperative of love that springs from the indicative of the new identity and the implanted word. He also refers to νόμος in James 4:11 and νομοθέτης (Lawgiver) in James 4:12. Many scholars interpret νόμος in these passages as referring to the Mosaic law, particularly the command to love one's neighbour (Leviticus 19:18). This interpretation rests on two connections: 1. The use of πλησίον ("neighbour") in 2:8, which echoes Leviticus 19:18. 2. The association with slander, vengeance, and partiality—themes also found in Leviticus 19:16–18. However, Du Toit emphasises that Leviticus 19:15 might be especially relevant: it condemns partiality in judgment. It commands righteous judgment towards one's neighbour, issues closely connected to James's concerns about social inequality and unjust judgment. He further notes that in James 2:9–10, νόμος appears with the article, clearly referring to the Mosaic law, whereas in 4:11 it is anarthrous, implying a broader understanding—that is, "law" as the will of God rather than the written Torah. In summary, Du Toit offers a nuanced interpretation: in James, λόγος (word) and νόμος (law) express divine truth and will, merging wisdom and moral teaching into a unified theological vision. David's (1983:93) description of the λόγος as "the renewed Torah written on the heart" blends Jewish tradition with new creation. Johnson (1995:196) contends that James links the implanted word to "the perfect law of liberty," uniting revelation with ethical guidance. Laws (1980:80) explains that the word in 1:18–21 evolves into the law in 1:25 — both representing divine wisdom that calls for active obedience. Allison (2013:301) observes that in James, word and law are two aspects of the same divine reality — one fostering life, the other guiding it. Jackson-McCabe (2014:181) argues that the Letter of James is not a compilation of earlier traditions but a cohesive work with theological and literary unity, centred on a dichotomy between human desire and a divinely given logos connected to God's law.

is the source, and the νόμος is the form that this divine revelation takes in ethical life. To summarise, λόγος is viewed as divine revelation, wisdom, or the word of truth that gives life, while νόμος is understood as that same divine will, now expressed as the moral order guiding human action. These concepts are examined through an analysis of the inner and intertextual textures of James 1:18, 25, 2:8, 12, and 4:11–12.

9.4.7 The connection between λόγος and νόμος in the Epistle of James

In James 1:18 (βουληθεὶς ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς λόγῳ ἀληθείας – by his own will, he brought us forth through the word of truth), λόγος represents the creative and life-giving force by which God regenerates believers. This alludes to Genesis 1, where God’s word initiates creation, as well as Wisdom of Solomon 9:1–2²²⁴ and Psalm 32:6 (LXX)²²⁵, where divine speech possesses creative power (Johnson, 1995:195; Davids, 1983:91). In James, the λόγος ἀληθείας (“word of truth”) functions as the means by which believers experience new birth, it is not merely revelation but also re-creation. This new birth provides the theological basis for obedience: those who are born through the Word are called to live in accordance with it. Davids (1983:89) and Moo (2000:79) suggest that James may refer to creation through the mention of κτίσμα (“creatures”), yet in the wider New Testament, the phrase λόγος ἀληθείας consistently signifies the gospel message (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:7; Colossians 1:5; Ephesians 1:13; 2 Timothy 2:15). Hartin (1991:140–172) interprets the message of James as a *Jesus/logia* — a theology derived from the teachings and example of Jesus. This framework shows how James bases faith, life, and ethical conduct on the sayings and wisdom of Jesus, especially those found in the Sermon on the Mount and related wisdom traditions. In a complementary argument, Bauckham (1999; 2019) defines *Jesus/logia* as James’s use of Jesus’ wisdom — not through direct quotation but through the adaptation and reinterpretation of Jesus’ voice within the Jewish sapiential tradition. According to Bauckham,

²²⁴ Wisdom 9:1–2 states: θεὸς πατέρων καὶ κύριε τοῦ ἐλέους ὁ ποιήσας τὰ πάντα ἐν λόγῳ σου, καὶ τῇ σοφίᾳ σου κατασκευάσας ἄνθρωπον ἵνα δεσπόζη τῶν ὑπὸ σοῦ γενομένων κτισμάτων – God of my fathers and Lord of mercy, who made all things by your word, and by your wisdom you formed humankind, so that he might rule over the creatures that you made. This passage combines creation theology—such as divine *logos* and *sophia* as creative forces—and anthropology, highlighting the human vocation to rule over creation. It anticipates similar theological ideas in James 1:18, where God “brought us forth by the word of truth.”

²²⁵ Psalm 32:6 (LXX) states: τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ κυρίου οἱ οὐρανοὶ ἐστερεώθησαν καὶ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ πᾶσα ἡ δύναμις αὐτῶν – By the word of the Lord the heavens were established, and by the breath of His mouth all their host. This verse provides an intertextual backdrop for Wisdom 9:1–2 and James 1:18, where λόγος once again functions as the divine agent of creation and re-creation.

James presents Jesus as the sage whose wisdom informs the letter's ethical teachings, making his words the central point for understanding faith, speech, and action. Although the epistle does not explicitly mention Jesus' death and resurrection, its moral vision closely aligns with the ethical core of Jesus' message. As a result, scholars such as Hartin (1991) and Allison (2013:64–72) identify *Jesus/logia* as the living tradition of Jesus' moral instruction that influenced the earliest Christian communities and provided the theological basis for James's paraenetic discourse.

The use of “new creation” imagery in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 3:1–11), along with references to “first fruits” as believers in Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:13; Revelation 14:4), and the frequent association of the “word of truth” with the gospel (2 Corinthians 6:7; Ephesians 1:13; Colossians 1:5; 2 Timothy 2:15), strongly suggest that James 1:18 speaks of rebirth through the gospel message (Dibelius & Greeven, 1976:104–105; Davids, 1983:89; Martin, 1988:39; Moo 2000:79). Allison (2013:68) notes that 1 Peter 1:23, which links rebirth with the word, likely reflects dependence on the same early Christian tradition as James. Thus, the new birth in James may be seen as a divine gift (1:17), mediated through the *Jesus/logia* — the teaching of Jesus. The *λόγος ἀληθείας* in James 1:18 is also associated with the baptismal proclamation or instruction given to believers at their initiation into the faith. The verb *ἀποκυνέω* (“to give birth”) is rarely used but powerfully evokes imagery of spiritual begetting or new birth, a common baptismal metaphor in early Christianity (cf. John 3:3–5; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3, 23).

Since baptism was regarded as the moment of rebirth, and since the “word” (*λόγος*) was often linked to the proclamation of the gospel during baptism, many interpreters see James 1:18 as reflecting this early baptismal practice and theology.²²⁶

James 1:21 exhorts the audience to *δέξασθε τὸν ἐμφυτον λόγον τὸν δυνάμενον σῶσαι τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν* (“receive the implanted word, which can save your souls”). This statement appears paradoxical, as it instructs the audience to receive a word that is already implanted within them. Davids (1983:95) and Dibelius-Greeven (1976:113–114) contend that the audience is

²²⁶ Dibelius & Greeven (1976:105) argue that James 1:18 refers to “the word of truth that is proclaimed at baptism,” representing the gospel message by which believers are begotten anew. Davids (1983:89–90) and Martin (1988:39) similarly observe that the imagery of begetting and the presence of *λόγος* suggest a baptismal context, even if not within a formal liturgical setting. Johnson (1995:195) suggests that the word of truth is the effective agent of rebirth, and since baptism was the moment at which this word was received, the text likely reflects baptismal imagery. Allison (2013:68) highlights the close similarity between James 1:18 and 1 Peter 1:23, where believers are “born anew... through the living and abiding word of God,” a verse commonly understood to have baptismal implications.

encouraged to act in accordance with the *Jesus/logia*. The surrounding context supports this interpretation, particularly since James 1:22–23 urges the audience to be doers of the word, not merely hearers. The phrase τὸν ἔμφυτος λόγος is also employed to denote the *Jesus/logia*. For example, Barnabas 9:9 (first century CE) states: “Οἶδεν ὁ τὴν ἔμφυτον δωρεὰν τῆς διδακῆς αὐτοῦ θέμενος ἐν ἡμῖν· οὐδεὶς γνησιώτερον ἔμαθεν ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ λόγον, ἀλλ’ οἶδα ὅτι ἄξιοί ἐστε ὑμεῖς” (He who has implanted within us the innate gift of his teaching knows this: no one has learned the word more genuinely from me, but I know that you are worthy). Additionally, Barnabas 2.6 characterises the *Jesus/logia* as the new law of Jesus Christ, unburdened by the yoke of necessity: “Ταῦτα οὖν κατήργησεν ἵνα ὁ καινὸς νόμος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἄνευ ζυγοῦ ἀνάγκης ὢν μὴ ἀνθρωποποίητον ἔχῃ τὴν προσφοράν” (He thus abolished these things so that the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ, free from the yoke of necessity, might have an offering not fashioned by human hands). Barnabas asserts that Christ abolished the former sacrificial system so that the new law — the *Jesus/logia* — could offer a spiritual, non-human sacrifice, given freely rather than under compulsion.

The word is implanted when the hearer receives catechetical instruction in preparation for baptism. The primary emphasis is not on an initial acceptance of the gospel, but on the continual embrace of the implanted word’s influence in the believer’s life and conduct. Du Toit (2020:287) notes that James 1:21 employs imagery to illustrate the tension between the “already” and the “not yet,” or the indicative and the imperative. Believers are called to respond to God’s gifts (1:17), particularly the implanted word (1:21). The “completed principle of freedom” in 1:25 primarily refers to the indicative, which imparts new life to believers through the gospel (1:18) and embeds it within them (1:25). This process establishes a new identity in Christ, liberating believers and enabling them to act in love (1:12, 25–27). Believers are encouraged to receive the implanted word with meekness (1:21) and to continually reflect on this principle (1:25) to understand their origins and identity in Christ. Such understanding empowers them to consistently live in accordance with the word.

The “law of liberty” (νόμος τῆς ἐλευθερίας) in James 1:25 builds upon the logic introduced in 1:18, where the implanted word (1:21) is expressed through tangible action. This perfect law represents not external legalism but the internalised word of truth that actively shapes conduct. Dibelius (1976:118–119) and Johnson (1995:200) observe that, in this context, λόγος and νόμος function similarly, both signifying divine instructions that are received and embodied. The adjective τέλειος (“perfect”) links this law to divine perfection (cf. 1:17), emphasising ethical wholeness and

completeness. Further discussion of James 1:21 and James 1:25 is provided in chapter 10 of this thesis.

A clear rhetorical and theological progression is evident: God begets through the word (1:18); the word is implanted in believers (1:21); it becomes the law of liberty (1:25); and it is ultimately enacted in life. In James 2:8, the νόμος is further identified as the royal law (βασιλικὸς νόμος), which is equated with the command to love (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37–40). The designation “royal” underscores divine sovereignty and highlights the ethical fulfilment of the implanted word. Moo (2000:118) and Johnson (1995:213) contend that this royal law enacts the λόγος of truth, whereby the inner regeneration described in 1:18 is outwardly manifested as love for others. Du Toit (2020:294) maintains that the “supreme kingdom-principle” (2:8) or the “principle of freedom” (2:12) primarily consists of the imperative of love, which emerges from the indicative of the new identity and the implanted word. Believers are thus required to fulfil this imperative (2:8), and their actions are to be evaluated by it (2:12), thereby demonstrating the authenticity and richness (2:5) of their faith (see 1:3, 6; 2:1, 5, 14–26; 5:15).

In the Epistle of James, the νόμος τῆς ἐλευθερίας serves rhetorically as the standard for judgment. The λόγος that imparts life (1:18) and the νόμος that directs conduct (1:25) collectively establish the framework for moral accountability (cf. Luke 6:46–49). In James 4:11–12, God alone is identified as the Lawgiver, and His word determines the moral order. References to slander and speech in James 4:11 reinforce the λόγος motif, indicating that human words are subject to divine evaluation. According to Allison (2013:641), this dynamic creates a rhetorical progression from divine utterance through human obedience to divine judgment, thus forming a comprehensive moral cycle governed by God’s word. Within James, the *Jesuslogia* constitutes the living substance of both λόγος (the creative, regenerative word) and νόμος (the enacted, liberating law). Du Toit (2020:300) argues that James’s mention of νόμος in 4:11 may refer either to the kingdom principle of freedom, as articulated in 1:25 and 2:8, 12, or to the Mosaic law, as in 2:9–11. The anarthrous use of νόμος may indicate that the author deliberately invokes both concepts, leaving the reference intentionally ambiguous. Du Toit further contends that James may be addressing a tendency among certain believers to judge others according to the Mosaic law, thereby clarifying the context and intent of James 4:11.

The relationship between λόγος and νόμος may be summarised as shown in **Table 9.6**.

Table 9.6: The λόγος–νόμος relationship in James

Concept	Function	Reference	Description
λόγος ἀληθείας	Regeneration	James 1:18	The divine creative word that grants new life = Jesus/ <i>logia</i> , received through catechism for baptism.
ἐμφυτος λόγος	Reception	James 1:21	The implanted word is internalised within the believer. The indicative.
νόμος τέλειος	Transformation	James 1:25	The perfect law — a living embodiment of the word.
βασιλικὸς νόμος	Action	James 2:8	The royal law of love — an imperative for ethical fulfilment.
νόμος ἐλευθερίας	Judgment	James 2:12; 4:12	The liberating law — a divine criterion for judgment.

Source: Author's own analysis.

Consequently, λόγος is transformed into νόμος as divine wisdom, as described in James 1:5, advances from revelation to regeneration, proceeds to moral embodiment, and ultimately culminates in eschatological evaluation (Bauckham, 1999:155; Johnson, 1995:198).

The pronoun ἡμεῖς (“us”), the accusative plural of ἐγώ, functions in James 1:18 as the direct object of ἀπεκύησεν (“he gave birth” or “brought forth”). The primary interpretative issue concerns the identity of those encompassed by “us.” In the context of James, the most plausible interpretation is that “us” designates the Christian recipients of the letter — the “twelve tribes in the diaspora” (1:1) — who represent the people of God reconstituted in Christ.

James 1:18 concludes the section spanning 1:13–18, which contrasts human temptation resulting in death (1:13–15) with divine regeneration resulting in life (1:18). The grammatical relationship between the subject (God, who begets) and the object (ἡμεῖς, those begotten) intentionally establishes a rhetorical antithesis. Therefore, “us” identifies those who have experienced divine regeneration, born not from human desire but from God’s will through the word of truth. The imagery of κτίσμα (“creature”) and ἀπαρχή (“first fruits”) extends the meaning to a cosmic scale, depicting the recipients as the representative beginning of God’s renewed creation and the initial portion of what God will ultimately redeem. In this context, “us” refers to those who have received the Jesus/*logia* during catechetical instruction for baptism and are members of the Christian community.

By employing ἡμεῖς, James aligns himself with his audience, fostering a shared identity and participation in divine life. This sense of inclusion reinforces communal unity and establishes the basis for subsequent ethical exhortations. In summary, ἡμεῖς in James 1:18 refers to the believing community — Jewish-Christian readers whom James regards as the initial manifestation of God's new creation, brought forth by His word of truth and destined to embody the fullness of divine life within the renewed order.

9.4.8 The textures of segments B' and A' — the outcome for mankind and the divine volition completed

Repeated use of birth imagery (τίκτει/ἀπεκύησεν) creates a rhetorical echo — a deliberate mirroring that transforms the destructive reproductive metaphor of temptation (1:13–15) into a creative and redemptive one. Verse 18 then becomes the peak of a three-stage rhetorical development: *correcting the misconception* that God is the source of temptation, *affirming divine generosity* — that every good and perfect gift comes from above — and *revealing divine purpose* through God's act of begetting believers. The phrase εἰς τὸ εἶναι (“so that we might be”) emphasises this teleological shift, moving from theology — the character of God (1:16–17) — to anthropology — the vocation of humanity (James 1:18). The term ἀπαρχή (“first fruits”) carries rich sacrificial and cultic connotations familiar to Jewish and early Christian audiences. As seen in Exodus 23:19, Leviticus 23:9–14, and Deuteronomy 26:1–11, “first fruits” refer to the initial, best offerings given to God. James reinterprets this imagery, applying it to people rather than to produce, portraying the community of believers as God's consecrated offering from all creation. This draws on Jeremiah 2:3 (LXX), which describes Israel as ἅγιος Ἰσραὴλ τῷ κυρίῳ, ἀρχὴ γενημάτων αὐτοῦ (“Israel was holy to the Lord, the first fruits of his harvest”). By echoing this tradition, James extends Israel's vocation as God's first fruits to the Christian community, emphasising both continuity and renewal in God's redemptive plan. The Christian community, as the first fruits of God's new creation, is echoed in intertexts such as 1 Corinthians 15:20–23²²⁷ and Revelation 14:4²²⁸.

²²⁷ In 1 Corinthians 15:20, Christ is called ἀπαρχὴ τῶν κεκοιμημένων (“the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep”), the first human to die and be raised from the dead. 1 Corinthians 15:23 states that Christians, following Christ, are also regarded as ἀπαρχὴ Χριστός (“first fruits of Christ”).

²²⁸ Revelation 14:4 states: οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ μετὰ γυναικῶν οὐκ ἐμολύνθησαν, παρθένοι γάρ εἰσιν, οὗτοι οἱ ἀκολουθοῦντες τῷ ἀρνίῳ ὅπου ἂν ὑπάγῃ. οὗτοι ἡγοράσθησαν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀπαρχὴ τῷ θεῷ καὶ τῷ ἀρνίῳ. — These are the ones who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been redeemed from among humankind as *first fruits to God and to the*

In James 1:18, the passage reaches its rhetorical height, transitioning from themes of temptation and death to divine creation and renewal. The verse links theology and ethics by moving from God's role as the "giver of every good gift" to believers' role as the "first fruits" of His creation. Through imagery of Israel's first fruits and new creation, James emphasises God's ongoing purpose and the renewal it represents. This statement sets the stage for the ethical guidance in 1:19–27, where those "brought forth by the word" are called to act accordingly — shifting from begetting to behaviour. Jackson-McCabe (2014:169) observes that the author uses the triad "quick to hear," "slow to speak," and "slow to anger" (James 1:19) as a framing mechanism to define what it means to live rightly in accordance with the *logos*. This framing links proper hearing of the word with the performance of *erga* (works) associated with the "law of freedom," the control of speech ("bridling the tongue"), and the cultivation of a gentle, composed disposition. Wolmarans (1994:105) observes that the seed metaphor in James 1:1 (ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ) is linked to ἀπαρχήν in James 1:18, meaning the first fruits that reach maturity. This imagery depicts a complete cycle of growth and fulfilment, where scattered seed eventually produces ripe fruit. The connection extends to ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ, emphasising that the dispersed faithful — like seed spread across the twelve tribes in the diaspora — are meant to be gathered and developed into the first fruits of God's renewed creation.

James 1:16–18 presents a web of conceptual metaphors that intentionally contrast with those in 1:13–15. These metaphors serve both cognitive and theological purposes by depicting God's steadfast generosity in opposition to human inconsistency. They include images of God as the giver and source of all good, the Father of lights, the embodiment of cosmic stability, and the one who brings forth new life through the word, while believers are shown as the first fruits of creation. These metaphors also shape the passage's rhetography, which is examined further in the second phase of the multidimensional hermeneutic analysis: the embodied–cognitive stage. The embodied effect of the implied multi-effect chiasmi (James 1:16–18, as well as in James 1:18) is also discussed.

Lamb. Revelation 14:4 and James 1:18 both employ eschatological and cultic metaphors, portraying the redeemed community as the initial phase of God's new creation, marked by their purity and devotion to divine will.

9.5 Phase 2: the embodied-cognitive phase (embodied and socio-cultural engagement) of the investigation.

9.5.1 The phrase *πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθεν ἐστὶν καταβαῖνον* discussed as a conceptual metaphor and its rhetography

The phrase *πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθεν ἐστὶν καταβαῖνον* (“every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down”) in James 1:17 functions as a conceptual metaphor, framing divine beneficence in spatial and relational terms. According to Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) cognitive-linguistic metaphor theory, this expression draws on embodied experience, particularly spatial orientation and the dynamics of human gift exchange, to render abstract theological concepts both comprehensible and emotionally resonant.

The metaphor operates through two overlapping *source domains*, which are:

- **Giving:** “δόσις” (act of giving) and “δῶρημα” (the thing given) evoke the familiar human experience of a benefactor bestowing gifts upon another. This experiential pattern offers a cognitive schema for understanding divine generosity.
- **Vertical Movement:** “ἄνωθεν” (“from above”) and “καταβαῖνον” (“coming down”) introduce vertical spatial imagery, a widespread conceptual metaphor in biblical thought, where up = divine, good, transcendent and down = human, earthly, receptive.

When transferring meaning from these source domains to the *target domain*, the metaphor depicts God as the ultimate benefactor whose gifts constantly “descend” to humanity. The upward-to-downward movement emphasises divine transcendence and initiative. The divine act of giving is ongoing, as indicated by the *present participle* *καταβαῖνον*, which underscores that divine goodness is not a one-time event but a continuous bestowal.

The metaphor connects bodily and social experiences — like receiving gifts or perceiving something coming from above — to spiritual reality. Theologically, it portrays God’s nature as consistently generous, in contrast to the misleading and unstable desires mentioned in James 1:13–15. Human desire “conceives and gives birth to sin” (an inward process), whereas divine giving is outward, bringing life and completeness. The metaphor thus creates a moral and cosmic polarity:

- Human giving/birth → from within, leading to death.
- Divine giving/birth → from above, leading to life.

The phrase *πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθεν ἐστὶν καταβαῖνον* functions as a conceptual and embodied metaphor which:

- Conceptualises divine goodness as human giving and spatial descent,
- Contrasts divine constancy with human instability, and
- Rhetorically presents an image of ongoing divine outpouring that shapes the believer's ethical and theological outlook.

This phrase exhibits a vivid rhetographical quality that prompts the audience to perceive divine beneficence through visual imagery rather than through intellectual abstraction. In this verse, James utilises descriptive and rhythmic language to construct a dynamic representation of divine generosity. The repetition and parallelism of *πᾶσα δόσις* and *πᾶν δῶρημα* create an accumulative rhythm, evoking abundance and fullness. The adjectival pairs *ἀγαθὴ* and *τέλειον* reinforce this effect by expressing both the moral excellence and completeness of God's gifts. The prepositional phrase *ἄνωθεν ἐστὶν καταβαῖνον* introduces the notion of vertical movement. The *present participle* *καταβαῖνον* signifies ongoing action, indicating that divine gifts constitute a continual descent from the heavenly realm to the human domain. This imagery immerses the hearer in a visual field where goodness flows steadily from a transcendent source. The rhetography positions God "above" as an unchanging benefactor and humanity "below" as the recipient of divine generosity. The depiction of descent not only suggests vertical movement but also conveys a graceful bestowal, engaging both visual and tactile senses and allowing one to "see" and "feel" the gifts as they descend.

In summary, the rhetography of James 1:17 affirms that "God is good" as a tangible, lived reality. Through repetition, vertical imagery, and embodied movement, the text vividly portrays divine goodness as a continual flow from the transcendent into human existence. This positive depiction stands in contrast to and redeems the negative imagery in verses 1:13–15.

9.5.2 The phrase *ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, παρ' ᾧ οὐκ ἔστι παραλλαγή ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα* discussed as a conceptual metaphor and its rhetography

The expression *ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, παρ' ᾧ οὐκ ἔστι παραλλαγή ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα* ("from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning") continues the imagery of divine giving by situating God as the origin of celestial illumination. This metaphor is both

cosmological and theological, integrating anthropomorphic, cosmic, and ethical ideas to illustrate divine constancy and benevolence. The underlying conceptual metaphor is analysed in **Table 9.7**.

Table 9.7: Conceptual metaphor of divine constancy in James 1:17

Metaphorical expression	Source domain	Target domain	Mapping and conceptual transfer	Theological or cognitive implication
ὁ πατὴρ τῶν φώτων ("Father of lights").	Cosmic and familial themes: celestial bodies (sun, moon, stars) symbolising offspring; fatherhood representing the source or origin.	God is the creator and sustainer.	Light symbolises goodness, truth, and life, while the Father stands for source, authority, and nurture.	God is the universal source of enlightenment and moral virtue; divine paternity represents both creative power and relational consistency.
παραλλαγὴ ("with whom there is no variation").	Astronomy/physics: the changing positions of celestial bodies.	Divine nature and character.	Celestial movements cause change, yet God's nature remains unalterable.	Contrasts divine constancy with the universe's variability; affirms God's perfection and reliability.
ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα ("or shadow of turning").	Solar phenomena: shadows formed by the sun's movement.	Human perception of divine presence and moral consistency.	The movement of light symbolises the ebb and flow of moral clarity or divine blessing.	Highlights God's unwavering benevolence: divine light stays consistent, never concealed by shadow.

Source: Author's own analysis.

The rhetography of ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, παρ' ᾧ οὐκ ἔνι παραλλαγὴ ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα creates a visual and spatial tableau that renders theological abstraction as vivid imagery. This passage places God within a cosmic framework as the "Father of lights," a title that invites readers to envision a radiant sky filled with the sun, moon, and stars, all emanating from a single divine source. This imagery establishes a vertical and spatial schema: the gifts mentioned in verse 17a descend from above (ἄνωθεν) and originate from (ἀπὸ) this divine, light-bestowing Father. The following clause, παρ' ᾧ οὐκ ἔνι παραλλαγὴ ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα, intensifies the imagery by introducing a contrast, explicitly denying the possibility of variation or shadow caused by the movement of celestial bodies.

This rhetography relies on embodied perception, prompting the audience to visualise the flickering brightness of the heavens while simultaneously negating such sensory instability in relation to God. The rhythmic repetition of π -sounds in $\pi\alpha\tau\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$, $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\gamma\acute{\eta}$, and $\tau\rho\omicron\pi\tilde{\eta}\varsigma$ reinforces cohesion and stability. The combination of sound, spatial imagery, and cosmic vision collectively communicates divine immutability: God is portrayed as the unchanging centre of the universe, whose light remains perpetually unobscured. Through this rhetography, the Epistle of James articulates the concept of God's constancy and evokes a sensory and emotional perception of divine trustworthiness, thereby grounding moral exhortation in the unwavering presence of divine light.

9.5.3 The images in James 1:18 discussed as conceptual metaphors and their rhetography

James 1:18 is structured around a set of interrelated metaphors that conceptualise divine goodness as creative and transformative. Applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), the primary source and target domains in this verse are identified in **Table 9.8**.

Table 9.8: Conceptual metaphor domains in James 1:18

Metaphorical Expression	Source Domain	Target Domain	Mapping/ Conceptual Transfer	Theological Implication
$\beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\eta\theta\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ $\acute{\alpha}\pi\epsilon\kappa\upsilon\eta\sigma\epsilon\nu$ $\acute{\eta}\mu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ ("having willed, he gave birth to us").	Human reproduction/ childbirth.	Divine act of creation.	Begetting → spiritual renewal; birth → transformation into a new life.	God is depicted as a parent granting life; divine will supersedes human desire (contrast 1:15).
$\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omega$ $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\eta\theta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ ("by the word of truth").	Speech act/ generative utterance.	Instrument of divine creation and revelation.	Spoken word embodies creative power; truth signifies reliability.	Rebirth through the divine word, <i>Jesus/logia</i> .
$\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ $\tau\acute{o}$ $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha\iota$ $\acute{\eta}\mu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ $\acute{\alpha}\pi\alpha\rho\chi\chi\acute{\eta}\nu$ $\tau\iota\nu\alpha$ ("so that we might be a kind of first fruits").	Agricultural/ cultic offering.	Believers' identity and their calling. Crafts an introduction encouraging ethical behaviour based on James 1:19–27.	First fruits → symbolise dedication, holiness, and serve as a representative sample.	Believers symbolise the start of a renewed creation, acting as a metaphor for moral behaviour and eschatological hope.

Metaphorical Expression	Source Domain	Target Domain	Mapping/ Conceptual Transfer	Theological Implication
τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων ("of his creatures/ creation").	Cosmology/ created order.	Humanity's role within divine creation.	Creation embodies divine craftsmanship, while creatures are the recipients of divine renewal.	Situates the rebirth of believers within the broader framework of cosmic restoration.

Source: Author's own analysis.

The rhetography of this verse transforms conceptual metaphors into a concrete and relational scene. The passage begins with βουληθεῖς, which signifies divine intentionality and prompts the audience to envision God's deliberate act of creation. The subsequent verb, ἀπεκύησεν ("he gave birth"), emphasises divine begetting. This imagery draws on embodied cognition by referencing familiar human birth experiences and projecting them into the divine realm. The text encourages the audience to imagine a God who labours to bring forth new life, contrasting with the destructive depiction of sin in 1:15 (ἡ ἐπιθυμία τίκτει ἁμαρτίαν, ἡ δὲ ἁμαρτία ἀποκύει θάνατον). The repetition of the root (ἀποκύειν) underscores the rhetorical and auditory reversal: what previously resulted in death now produces life. The phrase λόγῳ ἀληθείας extends this sensory and relational dynamic into the auditory domain, as divine speech functions as the instrument of creation. This evokes the auditory image of God speaking life, reinforcing the performative power of divine utterance. The prepositional phrase εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχὴν τινα introduces an agricultural and cultic motif, allowing the audience to visualise the first sheaf or fruit offered to God. Ultimately, τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων expands the perspective to a cosmic scale, situating believers within the entirety of the created order. The rhetography thus moves from intention (βουληθεῖς) to birth (ἀπεκύησεν), utterance (λόγῳ), offering (ἀπαρχή), and finally creation (κτίσματα). This sequence forms a multisensory, layered image where divine will is conveyed through words, giving rise to life and concluding with the sacred elevation of creation.

The embodied effects of the implied multi-effect chiasmi in James 1:16-18, and specifically in James 1:18, are subsequently examined.

9.5.4 The embodied effect of the multi-effect chiasmi in James 1:16–18

In James 1:16–18, an embodied multi-effect chiastic pattern can be identified, in which warning, divine giving, constancy, regeneration, and vocation mutually interpret and reinforce one another. This embodied pattern is summarised in **Table 9.9**.

Table 9.9: Embodied multi-effect chiasmic pattern in James 1:16–18

Chiastic Element	Greek Text (James 1:16–18)	Thematic Focus	Theological Significance
A	Μὴ πλανᾶσθε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί (1:16)	Warning against deception.	Emphasises human fallibility, susceptibility to mistakes, and the importance of judgment.
B	πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθέν ἐστὶν καταβαῖνον (1:17a)	Descent of divine gifts.	Frames goodness as coming “from above,” highlighting divine action and kindness.
C	ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, παρ’ ᾧ οὐκ ἔστι παραλλαγή ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα (1:17b)	Unchanging Father of lights.	Establishes divine constancy, contrasting human variability with God’s reliability.
B'	βουληθεὶς ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς λόγῳ ἀληθείας (1:18a)	Divine generation through the word.	Reflects divine generosity as a creative force that brings new life through truth.
A'	εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχὴν τινα τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων (1:18b)	Humanity as first fruits.	Articulates restored identity and vocation in God’s renewed creation.

Source: Author’s own analysis.

The multi-effect chiasmus operative in James 1:16–18 may be schematically presented in **Figure 9.1**.

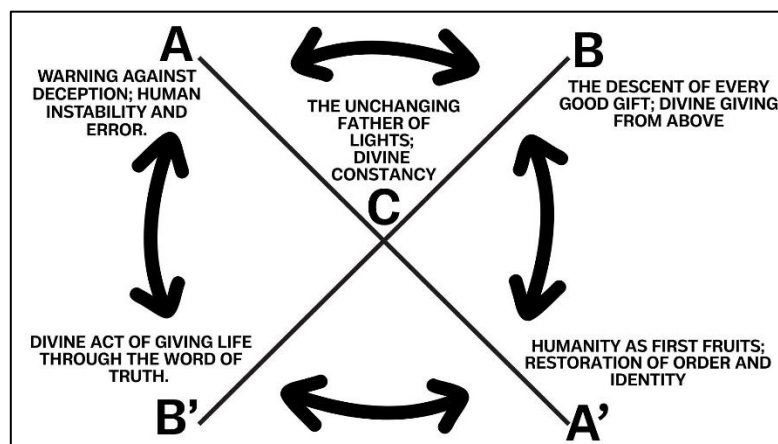


Figure 9.1: Multi-effect chiasmic structure in James 1:16–18

Source: Author’s own diagram.

According to Pelkey's embodied typology of chiasmus, a multi-effect chiasmus extends beyond simple inversion or structural symmetry. It serves as a cognitive and affective framework in which each corresponding element both reflects and transforms its counterpart through reciprocal movement. As a result, meaning develops dynamically through processes of tension, reversal, and embodied resolution.

Within this framework, the chiastic structure of James 1:16–18 operates as a rhombic multi-effect pattern, a symmetrical form that emphasises motion rather than equilibrium. The passage develops as an embodied cycle of transformation:

- **Deviation (A):** Humanity is portrayed as misguided and unstable, progressively distancing itself from divine truth.
- **Divine descent (B):** Divine goodness descends from above, instituting order and constancy.
- **Divine constancy (C):** In contrast to creation, God is characterized by unwavering consistency and reliability.
- **Divine re-creation (B'):** God initiates re-creation through the word of truth.
- **Restoration (A'):** Humanity undergoes renewal and transformation through divine action, as expressed in the phrase, "He gave birth to us by the word of truth."

The multi-layered nature of this structure is evident in its reciprocity between the divine and human realms. Divine descent intersects with human instability, while divine constancy enables human rebirth.

James 1:18, *βουληθεὶς ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς λόγῳ ἀληθείας εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχὴν τινα τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων*, exemplifies a multi-effect chiasmus that integrates divine agency and human transformation within a cohesive, embodied progression.

The chiastic structure of this verse is outlined as follows:

- **A – Divine will (βουληθεὶς):** the initial intention of God, which is the source of transformation.
- **B – Divine action (ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς):** the act of begetting, representing God's generative engagement with humanity.

- **C – Instrument of transformation** (λόγω ἀληθείας): the medium of rebirth, in which the “word of truth” functions as performative and transformative speech.
- **B’ – Outcome for humanity** (εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς): the intended result of God's generative action.
- **A’ – Resulting identity** (εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχὴν τινα τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων): the teleological fulfilment of God's intention, in which humanity is presented as the “first fruits” of creation, restored to divine order.

James 1:18 exhibits a multi-effect chiasmus (A–B–C–B’–A’) that delineates the progression from divine will to human renewal. God’s intention (**A**) and humanity’s re-creation (**A’**) are interconnected through divine begetting (**B–B’**) and the mediating λόγος ἀληθείας (**C**). This structure demonstrates reciprocity between the divine and human realms (Grausso, 2020; Pelkey, 2017), emphasising their mutual interaction and influence. The word of truth functions as the central medium of creation, facilitating the transmission of God's will to renew the cosmos. Thus, the verse encapsulates a dynamic rhythm of divine giving and human transformation, culminating in humanity's presentation as the “first fruits” of God’s redemptive plan.

The multi-effect chiasmus presented in James 1:18 may be illustrated schematically in **Figure 9.2**.

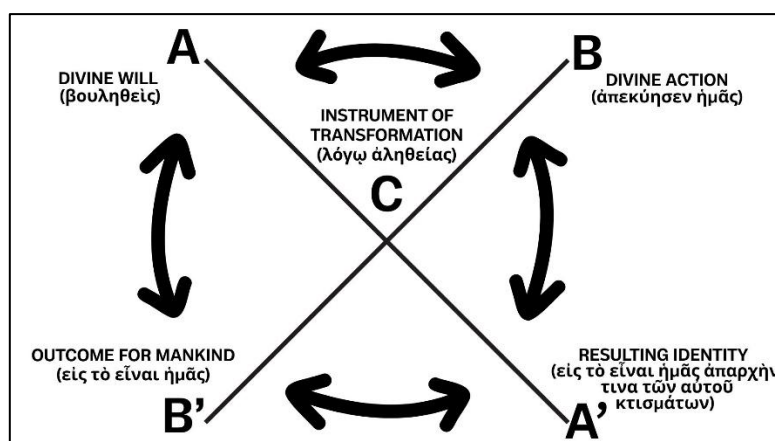


Figure 9.2: Schematic representation of a multi-effect chiasmus in James 1:18

Source: Author’s own illustration

James 1:16–18 offers insight into God’s character and His relationship with humanity. These dimensions are examined in relation to the themes of the wise and suffering slave as well as

Kearney's carnal hermeneutics in the third phase of the multidimensional investigation — the theological–ethical phase.

9.6 Phase 3: the theological and ethical synthesis (the theological ethical phase)

9.6.1 Introduction

James 1:16–18 functions as a theological and rhetorical turning point within the epistle, contrasting human fragility and deception (1:13–15) with divine generosity and reliability. Viewed through the thematic framework of the suffering and wise slave introduced in James 1:1 and informed by Richard Kearney's concept of carnal hermeneutics, this pericope exemplifies a theology of embodied reciprocity. In this interpretation, divine constancy encounters human instability, leading to transformation through the generative λόγος ἀληθείας (“word of truth”).

9.6.2 The suffering and wise slave: wisdom through servanthood

The epistle opens with the self-identification Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος (James 1:1), establishing a hermeneutic of servanthood that shapes both the author's perspective and the text's epistemological framework. The designation “slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” resonates with the δοῦλος-tradition among Israel's prophetic figures, including Moses and the Servant Songs of Isaiah. This identity positions the author — and, by extension, the faithful community — within the paradox of wise suffering, where wisdom is attained through obedience, endurance, and participation in God's purpose. The notion of the “suffering and wise slave” undergirds James's theology of action: the δοῦλος exemplifies embodied faith, acquiring divine wisdom not through abstract reasoning but through ὑπομονή (endurance under trial; cf. 1:2–4). In this way, the servant's suffering forms the hermeneutical foundation for recognising and living out divine truth.

The seed metaphor in James 1:1 is linked to ἀπαρχήν in James 1:18, signifying the first fruits that reach full maturity. This imagery depicts a complete cycle of growth and fulfilment, in which a scattered seed ultimately produces ripe fruit. The connection extends to ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ, highlighting that the dispersed faithful — the suffering and wise slaves — like seed scattered among the twelve tribes in the diaspora, are destined to be gathered, matured, and brought to fruition as the first fruits of God's renewed creation.

9.6.3 Divine generosity and human transformation (James 1:16–18)

Verses 16–18 move from emphasising human deception (Μὴ πλανᾶσθε, 1:16) to highlighting divine faithfulness and generosity (πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον..., 1:17). The progression peaks in the statement that God “gave birth to us by the word of truth” (βουλῆθεις ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς λόγῳ ἀληθείας, 1:18). This shift exemplifies a chiasmic structure: human instability (**A**) is contrasted with divine constancy (**A'**), linked by the descent of divine goodness (**B–B'**). In this pattern, the divine act of begetting (ἀπεκύησεν) signifies more than a metaphor for regeneration; it indicates participation in divine creative life. The motif of the servant underscores this process: faithful followers, like servants, are shaped by divine initiative and become “first fruits” (ἀπαρχήν) of a renewed creation. Consequently, divine constancy is not merely observed but actively expressed through human endurance and renewal.

Kearney's concept of carnal hermeneutics emphasises understanding as an embodied, sensory experience in which meaning is encountered “through the flesh” rather than through abstract reasoning (Kearney 2015:9–11). Within this framework, James 1:16–18 exemplifies a carnal hermeneutic of divine revelation. The descent of divine gifts (καταβαῖνον) and the divine will's (βουλῆθεις ἀπεκύησεν) presentation of revelation highlight its embodied, incarnational character. The λόγος ἀληθείας functions as both the channel and the content of divine benevolence; truth becomes transformative only when embodied in human life, specifically when λόγος is enacted as νόμος and expressed through ethical practice. The δοῦλος, or servant who listens and acts on the word (cf. 1:22–25), exemplifies the reception of the λόγος as a participatory act. Faith, therefore, extends beyond intellectual assent and is manifested through responsive, embodied obedience. In this way, the λόγος ἀληθείας (“word of truth”) becomes the mediating flesh of divine will, uniting hearing, doing, and being in lived revelation.

In summary, when interpreted through Kearney's carnal hermeneutics, James 1:16–18 portrays divine revelation as an embodied and participatory process in which truth becomes transformative through lived action. The λόγος ἀληθείας mediates between divine will and human response, integrating hearing and doing within ethical embodiment. Consequently, the δοῦλος of 1:1 is transformed into the ἀπαρχή of 1:18, representing the renewed creation that interprets divine constancy through faithful, embodied obedience.

9.7 Summary

A structured overview of the main themes in James 1:16–18, clarified through a multidimensional hermeneutical analysis and situated within the broader research aims of this study, is presented in **Table 9.10**.

Table 9.10: Multidimensional thematic synthesis of James 1:16–18

Analytical Dimension	Key Features	Description and function in James 1:16–18
Structural–rhetorical features	Chiastic multi-effect structure (A–B–C–B'–A') in James 1:1:16–18 and in James 1:18. While it preserves ring-like symmetry, its primary aim is transformation rather than simple repetition.	In James 1:16–18, human failure (A) is not simply corrected by divine constancy (B); it is re-created through divine truth (B'), leading to renewed humanity (A'). The focus (C) highlights God's unchanging nature. In James 1:18, the structural elements — (A) divine will, (B) divine action, (C) the instrument of transformation, (B') the human outcome, and (A') the new identity — interact dynamically, each shaping and transforming the other. Meaning develops through transformation rather than mere reversal.
	Progressive movement (Descent–Ascent)	The text moves from divine descent (“every good gift comes down”) to human ascent (“he gave birth to us”), depicting reciprocal motion between God and humanity. The present tense <i>καταβαῖνον</i> (“coming down”) signifies God's continual, ongoing bestowal of good gifts, while the aorist <i>ἀπεκύησεν</i> (“gave birth”) indicates a completed, definitive act of divine regeneration in the past. Together, they convey both God's constant generosity and his once-for-all creative renewal.
	Contrast and cohesion	Contrasts human instability with divine immutability and creates rhetorical cohesion by repeatedly using imagery of giving and birth.
Embodied–cognitive features	Conceptual metaphors	Metaphors of gift, light, birth and first fruits shape the understanding of James 1:16–18: light denotes divine constancy and revelation, birth signifies new creation and moral renewal, gift reflects God's continual generosity and gracious initiative that connects the divine and human, and first fruits represent humanity's transformed identity as the initial sign of God's renewed creation.

Analytical Dimension	Key Features	Description and function in James 1:16–18
	Rhetography	Vivid imagery — gift, light, shadow, descent, birth, and first fruits — stimulates the sensory imagination, transforming abstract theology into embodied experience in which divine generosity, revelation, and renewal become tangible through humanity's transformation as the first fruits of God's new creation.
	Embodied chiasmus (multi-effect pattern)	According to Pelkey's embodied typology, James 1:16–18 creates a rhombic, multi-effect chiasmus in which each element interacts with its counterpart. The structure shows an embodied cycle: human deviation (A) is countered by divine descent (B) and constancy (C), leading to divine re-creation (B') and, ultimately, humanity's restoration (A') through the word of truth.
Theological–Ethical Features	Divine constancy and generosity	God is portrayed as the steadfast “Father of lights,” whose gifts embody divine generosity and constancy.
	Human renewal and ethical response – the suffering and wise slave	James 1:1 introduces the author as a “slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,” establishing a hermeneutic centred on wise suffering, in which endurance and obedience embody faith and divine wisdom. The seed metaphor, connected to ἀπαρχήν in 1:18 and the twelve tribes in the diaspora, portrays the dispersed believers as the first fruits of God's renewed creation, symbolising a cycle of growth, maturation, and divine intention.
	Embodied reciprocity (Kearney's carnal hermeneutics)	Revelation is participatory: divine will “descends” into human life through the word of truth, which becomes incarnate in ethical behaviour. That is living according to the νόμος (“law”, <i>Jesuslogia</i>). Hearing and doing converge in embodied faith.

Source: Author's own analysis.

The following chapter, Chapter 10, focuses on James 1:19-27.

CHAPTER 10 HEARING AND DOING (JAMES 1:19–25)

The first service that one owes to others in community consists in listening to them. Just as love for God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them. It is God's love for us that He not only gives His Word but also lends us His ear. ...Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians because these Christians are talking where they should be listening. But he who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God either; he will be doing nothing but prattle in the presence of God. This is the beginning of the death of the spiritual life, and, in the end, there is nothing left but spiritual chatter and clerical condescension arrayed in pious words.

(Bonhoeffer 1954:97)

10.1 Introduction

Chapter 10 analyses James 1:19–27, the concluding pericope of James 1, which serves as the chapter's rhetorical and ethical culmination. In relation to the preceding sections (James 1:2–18), this passage synthesises the major themes of tested faith, the dynamics of temptation, and the formative role of the word of truth, redirecting them toward practical and communal application. Employing a multidimensional hermeneutic framework, the text is interpreted as a complex interplay of semantic, rhetorical, social, cultural, and experiential elements, in which meaning emerges through both discourse and embodied practice.

For analytical clarity, the passage is divided into five units: James 1:19–20, 1:21, 1:22–25, 1:26, and 1:27. Each pericope is evaluated according to its specific rhetorical function and its role within the chapter's overall argument. James 1:19–20 functions as an introductory exhortation that shapes the embodied posture of receptivity. James 1:21 serves as a transitional call to internal transformation through the implanted word. James 1:22–25 offers an extended metaphorical reflection on the relationship between hearing and doing. James 1:26 presents a critique of deceptive religiosity manifested in speech. James 1:27 provides a summary definition of authentic religious practice.

Viewed through this multidimensional hermeneutic lens, James 1:19–27 emerges as a deliberately structured unit that advances the Epistle's emphasis on integrating belief and practice, while highlighting the embodied, relational, and ethical aspects of faithful living. religion" as caring for the vulnerable and upholding moral integrity within society.

10.2 The relation of James 1:1–18 with James 1:19–27

This chapter argues that James 1:2–18 and 1:19–27 serve as a cohesive, intentionally crafted introduction to the epistle. They are connected through shared themes, structural similarities, and consistent rhetorical techniques. Rather than being two separate sections linked only by similar language, James 1:2–27 functions as an integrated opening that lays out the theological and ethical foundations underpinning the letter's main message. This supports the thesis's goal of employing a multidimensional hermeneutic approach, which emphasises patterns of duality and provides a useful framework for understanding the complex interplay between contrasting or complementary elements. In this method, chiasmus is seen as a key structural mirror of reality, revealing the reciprocal relationship between perceivers and the world they observe. The following discussion expands on this idea.

James 1:2–18 outlines the epistle's theological foundation. Here, the author explains the purpose of trials, the importance of divinely granted wisdom, the link between desire and sin, the nature of God's generosity, and God's gift of new life to believers through the "word of truth." These themes lay the doctrinal groundwork for the subsequent ethical instructions. James 1:19–27 examines the ethical implications of this framework. The passage encourages openness to God's word, disciplined speech, anger control, moral purity, and faithfulness to the "perfect law of freedom and compassion for the vulnerable." In this context, 1:19–27 does not introduce new themes but makes the theological claims of 1:2–18 practical, transforming divine beneficence and divine begetting into tangible obedience (Allison 2013:183–195; Johnson 1995:191–201).

The transition from theology to ethics is clearly expressed. James 1:2–4 encourages enduring trials for maturity (τέλειος), which foresees the qualities outlined in 1:19–20 — being quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger — traits that demonstrate perseverance in the face of difficulties. Similarly, the call for wisdom in James 1:5–8 and the declaration of divine begetting via the "word of truth" in 1:18 find a practical parallel in 1:21–25, where believers are urged to accept the "implanted word" and become doers. The sequence from the "word of truth" (1:18) to the "implanted word" (1:21), culminating in the "perfect law of freedom" (1:25), indicates a theological progression: the revelatory word that gives new life evolves into the guiding word that shapes ethical conduct.

James enhances his argument by emphasising deliberate contrasts. The metaphor of conception and birth for desire, sin, and death in James 1:14–15 sharply contrasts with God's act of creating believers in 1:18, which influences the calls for purity in 1:21 and 1:27 (Allison 2013:173–176). Likewise, the depiction of God as the giver of "every good gift" (1:17) aligns with the blessing promised to those who persist in obeying the liberating law (1:25), portraying the law not as a

burden but as an expression of God's kindness (Laws 1980:72–77; Moo 2000:81–86). The divine begetting in James 1:18, describing believers as the “first fruits” of God's creation, naturally extends into the ethical identity in 1:26–27, where true religion is characterised by restrained speech, mercy towards the vulnerable, and moral integrity.

The connection between James 1:2–18 and 1:19–27 becomes even clearer when key motifs are traced throughout the chapter. The eschatological theme of “blessedness” (μακάριος) creates a vital link between James 1:12 and 1:25. It explains the role of testing in 1:2–4 and 1:12. As Taylor and Guthrie (2006:164) note, James 1:12 and 1:25 form an *inclusio*, connected by shared references to blessedness, endurance (ὑπομονή), the participial γενόμενος, and repeated uses of αὐτός. Additionally, the repeated use of ἔργον and τέλειον in James 1:4 and 1:25 enhances the structural links between these verses and supports the initial *inclusio* established by 1:2–4 and 1:12.

Taken together, these lexical, structural, and thematic connections reveal a deliberate and well-balanced composition. James 1:2–4, 12, and 25 collectively affirm that blessedness belongs to those who endure trials and remain faithful, each incorporating an eschatological dimension: trials foster maturity (1:2–4); those who love God receive the crown of life (1:12); and those who persevere in doing the word are blessed in their actions (1:25). In this arrangement, 1:12 serves as a literary and theological hinge, linking the two main parts of the introduction and expressing the central vision that guides the epistle's opening movement.

10.3 Rhetorical features linking James 1:1–18 to 1:19–27

The recurrence of the term τέλειος in James 1:4, where endurance through trials produces believers who are “perfect”, and in James 1:25, where the law is described as “perfect”, forms a structural inclusion that frames the passage around the overarching theme of Christian maturity. This literary framing highlights spiritual growth as the section's unifying aim. Similarly, the interconnected metaphors of conception, birth, and development, spanning James 1:15–18 (where desire and God are depicted as generative sources) to 1:21–25 (where believers receive the “implanted word” that leads to obedient action), create a coherent developmental progression. This imagery — conceiving, being born, growing, and acting — clarifies the moral logic underpinning the entire paragraph. The transitional phrase ἴστε²²⁹ (“know this” or “take note of

²²⁹ “ἴστε” can be understood as either a perfect indicative active second person plural or a perfect imperative active second person plural form derived from οἶδα. Adam (2013:22) confirms that although ἴστε may

this”) in James 1:19, functions as a rhetorical hinge, indicating that the ethical guidance which follows flows directly from the theological framework established in 1:1–18. A notable feature is also the repeated direct address to “my [beloved] brothers” in 1:2, 16, and 1:19. As scholars have observed (e.g., Bauckham, 1999:64; Cheung, 2003:71), this form of address often marks the beginning of new main sections in James, as is clearly evident in James 1:2 (cf. 2:1; 3:1; 4:11; 5:7).

Throughout the passage, diatribe-style techniques are clearly present. These include direct addresses (“my beloved brothers,” 1:2, 16, 19), stark contrasts (such as double-minded versus single-minded, hearer versus doer), illustrative examples (like the storm-tossed doubter in 1:6–7 and the mirror-gazer who forgets in 1:23–25), and pointed moral maxims (“Blessed is the one who perseveres,” 1:12; “Do not be deceived,” 1:16; “Be quick to hear...,” 1:19; “The anger of man does not produce righteousness,” 1:20; “Receive the implanted word,” 1:21; “Be doers of the word,” 1:22; “True religion,” 1:27). These elements combine to create a vivid, confrontational, and memorable rhetorical style. They also establish a connection between James 1:2–18 and 1:19–27 by integrating illustrative situations with concise ethical directives.

Meanwhile, James enhances the coherence of the two subsections through deliberate wordplay and sound patterns. The repetition of λόγος-related terms, such as “word of truth” (1:18), “implanted word” (1:21), and the emphasis on hearing versus doing the word (1:22–25), creates an interconnected lexical chain that highlights the believer’s response to divine revelation. The contrast between ἀκοή and ποιέω (“hearing” vs. “doing,” 1:22–23, 25) establishes a balanced rhetorical symmetry that encapsulates James’s ethical programme. Additionally, his use of alliteration and assonance, especially in λ- and δ-clusters (λόγος in 1:18, 21–23; λαλῆσαι in 1:19; δόσις and δώρημα in 1:17), generates a rhythmic quality suited to oral transmission. These sound patterns highlight important themes and would have helped early Christian communities easily memorise and share the material. The structural, thematic, and rhetorical elements link James 1:1–18 and 1:19–27, creating a unified and coherent introduction to the epistle.

To summarise, James 1:1–18 and 1:19–27 form an integrated theological–ethical unity in which doctrinal principles lead to practical obedience. In 1:1–18, James presents the theological foundation: God’s purpose of mature perfection (1:4), the believer’s dependence on God for wisdom (1:5), the exaltation of the poor and the humility of the rich (1:9–11), the internal dynamics

function as either indicative or imperative, since James employs the indicative form οἴδατε in James 4:4, the imperative is likely more fitting here.

of temptation (1:14–15), God’s constant goodness (1:17), and the new birth through the word of truth (1:18). This theological base underpins the ethical instructions in 1:19–27, where James urges believers to respond to life’s challenges with attentive listening and controlled anger (1:19–20), to accept and actively obey the implanted word (1:21–25), to practise disciplined speech (1:26), to show compassion for the vulnerable (1:27a), and to pursue moral purity (1:27b). Collectively, these sections illustrate a continuous progression from identity to obedience, hearing to doing, theology to ethics, and internal transformation to external action.²³⁰

10.4 Remarks based on the surface literary features of James 1:19–27

As discussed in Chapter 3, James 1:19–27 exhibits a chiasmic or chiasmic-like structure where paired themes mirror each other and emphasise the central command to be doers of the word. This pattern develops and deepens the motifs introduced in 1:18, especially the call to receive and embody the “word of truth.” The passage unfolds in a balanced way: the outer sections (**A/A’**) focus on observable moral behaviour, the middle parts (**B/B’**) address inner attitude and self-control, and the core (**C**) highlights active obedience as the essential response to the word.

The **A/A’** sections (James 1:19–20 and 1:27) frame the passage with practical expressions of genuine religion: controlling anger and maintaining outward moral purity led to compassionate action and to staying unstained by the world. The **B/B’** elements (1:21 and 1:26) highlight internal transformation: humbly receiving the implanted word aligns with disciplined speech and the avoidance of self-deception. At the centre, the **C** section (1:22–25) serves as the hinge, emphasising that hearing must result in obedient action. Those who merely listen are deceived, while those who internalise and act on the word are blessed. Overall, the chiasmic organisation underlines James’s primary concern: true faith is demonstrated when the received word is embodied in disciplined speech, moral integrity, and compassionate action. This organisational logic is summarised in **Table 10.1**.

²³⁰ Jackson-McCabe (2014:164) argues that the theological coherence of James is based on a typical Hellenistic opposition between *logos* and *desire*. An analysis of the letter’s formal features, thematic development, and rhetorical strategies reveals that this same dichotomy also influences its literary structure. Rather than being a disjointed collection of inherited traditions, James appears as a unified call to resist temptation through humble dependence on a benevolent God—an appeal developed especially in the interconnected areas of righteous action, disciplined speech, and a gentle, self-controlled character.

Table 10.1: Chiastic Organisation and Ethical Trajectory in James 1:19–27

Section	Verses	Thematic Focus	Description
A	James 1:19–20	Outer frame: Ethical behaviour.	Calls for moderation in speech and anger; highlights outward signs of true religious behaviour and sets the moral tone for the passage.
B	James 1:21	Inner transformation.	Encourages believers to embrace the “implanted word” with humility, emphasising an inner mindset of purity and readiness for moral change.
C (centre)	James 1:22–25	Structural and theological pivot.	Central command emphasises acting on the word. It contrasts the self-deception of just hearing with the blessing given to those who do and highlights the “perfect law of freedom.”
B'	James 1:26	Corresponding inner transformation, reflected in outward behaviour.	Emphasises controlling speech and preventing self-deception, aligning with B's call for inward receptivity to the word.
A'	James 1:27	Outer frame: Ethical behaviour.	Defines “pure and undefiled religion” as compassionate care for the vulnerable and remaining unstained by the world. Reflects the outward ethical focus of A.

Source: Author's own analysis.

A ↔ A': The way one experiences anger and reacts to the implanted word (1:18). (**A**) is reflected in moral conduct and social care (**A'**) – both signify outward conduct.

B ↔ B': Receiving the word with humility (**B**) corresponds with controlling one's tongue (**B'**) - both signify inward transformation.

C: At the centre, obedience is emphasised as the key pivot — listening, receiving, and doing.

Like the chiastic pattern observed in James 1:16–18, the structure of James 1:19–27 demonstrates the features of a multi-effect chiasmus. While this passage employs the conventional A–B–C–B'–A' arrangement characteristic of concentric or ring structures, its mirrored elements extend beyond merely reiterating the initial theme. In a typical ring structure, rhetorical circularity occurs when the conclusion echoes the introduction, thereby reinforcing a single, cohesive argument.

In James 1:19–27, however, the corresponding sections each explore different aspects of the theological emphasis introduced in 1:18 — the reception and application of the *λόγος τῆς ἀληθείας*

(“word of truth”). The **A/A'** elements develop this theme through expressions of outward ethical behaviour, the **B/B'** elements examine its implications for internal moral disposition, and the central C unit offers both the theological and ethical high point in the call to be doers rather than merely hearers. This creates a dynamic, forward-moving progression rather than simply restating initial ideas. Furthermore, the symmetrical structure integrates theological affirmation and moral exhortation, weaving divine begetting, inward renewal, and practical obedience into a unified whole. These layered and diverse rhetorical effects are typical of a multi-effect chiasmus. Consequently, while the passage exhibits ring-like symmetry, its complexity and purpose extend beyond the features of a simple ring structure, making “multi-effect chiasmus” (see Grausso, 2020:104–106) the most fitting description.

A comparative analysis demonstrating why James 1:19–27 is better understood as a multi-effect chiasmus rather than a simple ring-structure chiasmus is presented in **Table 10.2**.

Table 10.2: Comparison of ring-structure and multi-effect chiasmus in James 1:19–27

Feature	Ring Structure Chiasmus	Multi-Effect Chiasmus	James 1:19–27
Basic Pattern	A – B – C – B' – A' (concentric).	Follow an A–B–C–B'–A' pattern but work on multiple levels.	Follows the A–B–C–B'–A' pattern.
Primary Aim	Return to the original theme; symmetry emphasises a single central point.	Develop multiple themes simultaneously; the structure moves the argument forward.	Develops outward behaviour, inward attitude, and ethical conduct.
Function of A/A'	Recurrent or symmetrical theme.	Expands the theme in a new direction.	External behaviour reflects genuine religion (1:19–20 ↔ 1:27).
Function of B/B'	Supports the central point.	Present different but interconnected aspects.	To receive the word is to control the tongue.
Function of C (centre)	Focus of the entire structure.	The theological and ethical climax acts as a pivot for various effects.	Be doers of the word (1:22–25).
Movement	Circular (returns to A).	Progressive and inclusive.	Returns to A but explores multiple aspects of the word (λόγος).

Feature	Ring Structure Chiasmus	Multi-Effect Chiasmus	James 1:19–27
Theological Depth	Usually, a single dominant theological or rhetorical aim.	Multiple interconnected objectives.	Mirrors and develops 1:18's ὁ λόγος τῆς ἀληθείας ("word of truth") in various ways.
Ethical Function	Reinforces a single ethical point, and the structure generally aims to "come full circle."	Multiple ethical emphases are interwoven, and the goal involves layered persuasion.	Hearing, receiving, doing; anger; purity; compassion. James 1:19–27 advances theology and ethics simultaneously.

Source: Author's own analysis, based on Grausso (2020:104–106).

The reciprocal relationship between the **A**, **B**, and **C** elements of this chiasmus is further explored in the structural–rhetorical phase of the multidimensional hermeneutic analysis.

James 1:19–27 uses a series of conceptual metaphors that turn theological ideas into sensory, agricultural, cultic, visual, and kinetic images. These metaphors depict receiving the word as an internal, transformative process that needs to be expressed through outward, embodied obedience. This highlights the epistle's focus on the connection between faith and practice. The metaphors identified in James 1:19–27 are synthesised and summarised in **Table 10.3**.

Table 10.3: Conceptual metaphors in James 1:19–27

Conceptual Metaphor	Verse(s)	Underlying Mapping
"My beloved brothers" suggest family kinship.	James 1:19.	Confirms the community's divinely established siblinghood — created through God's begetting by the λόγος ἀληθείας.
Anger as a form of moral pollution.	James 1:20–21	Anger is impurity; sin is filth.
The word is an embedded seed.	James 1:21	The word is a seed; spiritual growth is likened to natural development.
Hearing and doing are like seeing and acting (mirror metaphor).	James 1:22–25	Spiritual perception is sight; obedience is remembrance.
Speech is either a controlled or an uncontrolled force.	James 1:19; 1:26	The tongue is a powerful instrument; speech is a force that must be managed.

Conceptual Metaphor	Verse(s)	Underlying Mapping
Faithfulness to God as covenantal marriage. The exhortation to imitate God's character as the protector of the vulnerable.	James 1:27	Just as a spouse shows fidelity through exclusive commitment and caring for the household, so believers demonstrate covenantal fidelity to God through ethical behaviour and moral purity.
The world is a corrupting influence.	James 1:27	The world is a source of impurity.

Source: Author's own analysis.

The passage's use of metaphors is linked to its rhetography, which is analysed in the second phase of multidimensional hermeneutic analysis, the embodied-cognitive phase. This phase examines the influence of the multi-effect chiasmus on the reader and how its structural dynamics shape interpretative experience. The embodied impact of the multi-effect chiasmus is also explored.

James 1:19–27 integrates theological beliefs with ethical practices, aligning with Kearney's concept of carnal hermeneutics (2015). This interpretative approach foregrounds embodied interpretation, sensory engagement, and the interrelation between language and physical existence. The passage's progression from listening to action, from receiving the implanted word to practising "pure and undefiled religion," underscores a hermeneutic that rejects abstraction by grounding divine revelation in concrete, bodily experience. This perspective aligns with the motif of the suffering and wise slave, a figure who exemplifies obedience through endurance, disciplined speech, and compassionate actions. In the Epistle of James, such embodied obedience is expressed through the restraint of anger, control of speech, care for the afflicted, and the maintenance of moral purity in opposition to worldly corruption, thereby reflecting a wisdom forged through suffering. These themes are consistent with Kearney's assertion that interpretation is mediated by the vulnerable, responsive body and oriented towards acts of hospitality and ethical responsibility.

James 1:19–27 provides a framework for examining how theological meaning is shaped by the lived experience of the suffering yet wise servant, in which embodied practice constitutes the context for both interpreting and enacting the word. These themes are further developed in the third stage of the multidimensional hermeneutic study presented in this thesis, the theological-ethical phase.

10.5 Phase 1: structural and rhetorical mapping (textual-rhetorical phase)

10.5.1 The A-element of the multi-effect chiasmus (James 1:19–20): the outer frame of ethical behaviour

James 1:19–20 serves as the opening of the multi-effect chiasmus spanning 1:19–27 and establishes the outer ethical framework within which the subsequent passage unfolds. The vocative phrase “beloved brothers” (ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί) in James 1:19 acts as a deliberate rhetorical and theological marker in the epistle’s paraenetic discourse. Its frequent recurrence throughout the letter (1:2, 16, 19; cf. 2:1, 5, 14; 3:1, 10; 5:7, 9) shows James’s intention to create and reinforce a communal identity characterised by solidarity, mutual accountability, and moral responsibility (Johnson, 1995:195; Davids, 1983:93). However, as Punt (2012:169) observes, kinship terminology within the broader spectrum of first-century social structures carried a dual significance: while it conveyed closeness and affection, it also served to assert authority, regulate behaviour, and define group boundaries. Family was simultaneously a micro-cosmos, micro-empire, and micro-polis, and was thus regarded as the foundation of society (Punt, 2012:153–154). In this context, James’s affectionate address affirms the community’s divinely instituted siblinghood — created through God’s begetting by the λόγος ἀληθείας (“word of truth,” 1:18) — and at the same time frames the ethical responsibilities emerging from this new identity, further elaborated through the reception of the ἔμφυτος λόγος (“implanted word,” 1:21). Positioned at a crucial point in the discourse, the vocative introduces the triadic admonition of James 1:19. It underscores its moral importance by embedding it within the relational dynamics of the newly established family of God. Furthermore, James’s language reflects a wider early Christian rhetorical tradition where familial imagery serves as a means for theological development and moral encouragement (cf. Romans 12:1; 1 Corinthians 10:14; 1 John 3:2). Thus, the address “beloved brothers” functions not just as an affectionate greeting but as a deliberate element of James’s rhetorical framework, anchoring the moral commands of James 1:19–20 within the communal and theological identity of his audience.

The rhetorical force of the section lies in its tightly constructed paraenetic form. The triad of imperatives, namely “be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (ταχὺς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι, βραδὺς εἰς τὸ λαλῆσαι, βραδὺς εἰς ὀργήν),²³¹ exemplifies classical wisdom exhortation, using succinct, rhythmically balanced commands to promote moral attentiveness and self-control (Johnson

²³¹ Adam (2013:23) observes that the preposition εἰς, when used with the infinitive, typically introduces a purpose or result clause. In this context, it functions as “with regard to, concerning.”

1995:197). The tripartite structure constructs a memorable ethical maxim. Simultaneously, the intentional antithetical parallelism between “quick” and “slow” (ταχύς/βραδύς) generates a rhetorical tension that emphasises James’s wider concern with ethical discernment and behavioural dualities.

The phrase introducing the triad of imperatives, ἔστω δὲ πᾶς ἄνθρωπος (let every person), functions as a broad call to everyone — embedding the subsequent instructions (“quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger”) within a universal and communal context. The phrase promotes inclusivity (no believers are excluded), authority (the imperative is a mandatory ethical standard, not optional advice), and a shift (James moves from theological roots in 1:18 to practical ethical outcomes in 1:19–27). Therefore, it offers a universal command, acting as a rhetorical bridge from identity to behaviour. It emphasises the community aspect of the teachings and highlights the triad (hearing, speaking, anger) as crucial, non-negotiable markers for the community defined by the word of truth.

This outer frame draws on Jewish sapiential tradition, echoing Proverbs’ warnings about impulsive speech and the destructive power of anger (cf. Proverbs 14:29²³²; 17:27²³³). By adopting this wisdom-instruction tone, James positions himself as a wisdom teacher guiding the community toward a disciplined, reflective way of life. Verse 1:20 is syntactically and rhetorically tied to 1:19 through the explanatory conjunction γάρ, signalling that verse 20 provides the reason believers must be “slow to anger.” The *command* is “Restrain your speech and temper,” while James 1:20 provides the *basis* for it: human anger is incapable of accomplishing God’s purposes. Verse 20, ὀργὴ γὰρ ἀνδρὸς δικαιοσύνην θεοῦ οὐκ ἐργάζεται, presents interpretative challenges because the genitive construction δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ (“the righteousness of God”) has been one of the most discussed syntactical and theological expressions in the New Testament (Adam, 2013:24). Grammatically, θεοῦ can function in several possible genitive roles, each conveying a distinct

²³² Proverbs 14:29 (LXX) states: μακρόθυμος ἀνὴρ πολὺς ἐν φρονήσει ὁ δὲ ὀλιγόψυχος ἰσχυρῶς ἄφρων. – A patient man is great in understanding, but the short-tempered one is very foolish.

²³³ Proverbs 17:27 (LXX) asserts: ὃς φείδεται ῥῆμα προέσθαι σκληρόν ἐπιγνώμων μακρόθυμος δὲ ἀνὴρ φρόνιμος. – The one who refrains from uttering a harsh word is discerning, and a patient man is prudent. Proverbs 14:29 and 17:27 highlight James 1:19–20 by demonstrating that James’s exhortation stems from and enriches a well-established Jewish wisdom tradition that links patience, controlled speech, and restrained anger with genuine discernment and moral maturity. James adopts these themes but weaves them into his theological vision of a community reborn by God’s “word of truth,” where wise behaviour is both the result and proof of new birth.

interpretative nuance. The possible genitive constructions of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ are summarised in **Table 10.4**.

Table 10.4: Possible genitive constructions of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ

Genitive category	Translation and meaning	Interpretative focus
Subjective Genitive	The righteousness that God performs.	God's act of saving, judging, or keeping covenant, and the justification He grants or credits to humanity, regardless of human worthiness.
Objective Genitive	The righteousness directed toward God.	Human behaviour that is righteous before God: the righteousness that God requires from humanity.
Possessive Genitive	The righteousness that belongs to God.	God's inherent attribute or quality.
Epexegetical Genitive	The righteousness, namely God himself or God's way of being righteous.	Defines righteousness by associating it with God's nature or way of acting.
Source Genitive	The righteousness that comes from God.	Righteousness that comes from or is granted by God.
Attributive Genitive	God-like righteousness or divine righteousness.	The genitive functions adjectivally, describing the righteousness as having a divine quality or standard.

Source: Author's own analysis.

In James 1:20, the genitive construction δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is best understood, given the verse's intertextual context, as a genitive expressing both possessive and attributive qualities²³⁴, indicating the type of righteousness that both belongs to God and reflects His character. The most consistent interpretation is therefore “the righteousness that belongs to God” or “the God-like

²³⁴ Johnson (1995:198) considers the phrase to refer to the righteousness that is characteristic of God. He highlights that the imagery of new birth in James 1:18 supports the idea that believers should reflect God's character. Davids (1983:85) suggests that the phrase points to “the behaviour that God considers right,” connecting the genitive to God's moral standards rather than to human righteousness towards God (an objective genitive). Moo (2000:81) affirms the possessive interpretation, stating that “God's righteousness” in James signifies the conduct aligning with God's will and character. He also notes the link between God's act of begetting (1:18) and the ethical behaviour expected from the community. Adam (2013:24) argues that the simplest interpretation is to treat it as an attributive genitive, conveying the idea that human activity does not produce the justice associated with God.

righteousness God demands.” This view aligns closely with the argumentative flow of James 1:18–27, where the community’s divinely bestowed identity must be demonstrated through tangible ethical behaviour. As those “begotten by the word of truth” (1:18), urged to “welcome the implanted word” (1:21), and called to live out this word through obedient practice (1:22–25), believers are expected to exhibit a way of life that mirrors God’s own character. Consequently, James’s statement that “human anger does not produce the righteousness of God” (1:20) cannot be seen as an objective genitive — righteousness aimed at God — but must be understood as the divinely defined moral life that the renewed community is called to display. While a secondary echo of the subjective genitive (“the righteousness God performs”) might be present, given the emphasis on God’s regenerative activity in 1:18, the phrase focuses on the ethical standard of life that reflects God’s nature. Uncontrolled, reactive anger is therefore incompatible with the divine righteousness that the community, as God’s new creation, is called to embody.

The **A**-element of the multi-effect chiasmus in James 1:19–27 functions not only as the opening boundary of the structure but also creates an *inclusio* with the concluding verses (1:26–27), where themes of disciplined speech and genuine religious practice reappear as markers of true piety. This framing device emphasises the moral coherence of the unit, illustrating that emotional restraint and careful speech are essential, rather than secondary, to what James describes as “pure religion.” The initial call to be “quick to hear” prepares the way for the central movement of the chiasmus, which turns on the shift from hearing to doing the word (1:22–25). In this way, the language of “hearing” in 1:19 serves as both a lexical and a structural link, guiding the reader toward the core of the chiasm: the vital connection between reception and action. Therefore, the **A**-element sets out the ethical stance needed to engage with God’s word — attentiveness, humility, restraint, and the renunciation of anger — forming the outer framework that prepares the community for the deeper theological and ethical discussion at the heart of the unit.

10.5.2 The B-element of the multi-effect chiasmus (James 1:21): inner transformation

10.5.2.1 Introduction

Structurally and rhetorically, this verse functions as a pivotal point within the multi-effect chiasmus of James 1:19–27, linking the initial **A**-element (1:19–20) to the central **C**-element (1:22–25). The verse opens with *διὸ* (“therefore”), signalling a logical and thematic transition from the instructions in James 1:19–20 (“quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger”) to practical ethical application. It integrates external moral directives, such as regulating speech and controlling anger, with the internal acceptance of God’s word. Two parallel imperatives delineate the moral and spiritual

actions: ἀποθέσθαι πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν (“rid yourselves of all moral filth”) and δέχεσθαι τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον (“receive the implanted word”). The verse establishes a balanced contrast between rejecting sin and embracing the divine word, highlighting the moral and spiritual duality central to James’s ethical framework. James 1:21 exhibits a linear structure: a negative exhortation (ἀποθέμενοι ...), a positive exhortation (δέξασθε ...), and a result clause (τὸν δυνάμενον σῶσαι τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν), thereby presenting a two-part exhortation followed by a rationale.

10.5.2.2 The negative exhortation in James 1:21 (διὸ ἀποθέμενοι πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν καὶ περισσεῖαν κακίας ἐν πραΰτητι)

The negative exhortation in James 1:21 is introduced by the aorist middle participle ἀποθέμενοι, which — according to Adam’s (2013:23) analysis — functions as an attendant circumstance participle that takes on the force of the main imperative δέξασθε (“receive”). This interpretation is preferable to understanding the participle either temporally (as if one must first discard impurity before receiving the word) or instrumentally (as if receiving the word requires removing impurity). The participle governs the accusative objects πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν καὶ περισσεῖαν κακίας, raising the interpretative issue of whether James identifies two separate moral faults²³⁵ or uses overlapping terms to form a single intensified concept — namely, a hendiadys²³⁶.

Several features support the interpretation of the passage as hendiadic. Firstly, the semantic fields of ῥυπαρία (“moral filth”)²³⁷ and περισσεῖα κακίας (“abundance” or “overflow of wickedness”)²³⁸ overlap considerably, both falling within the domain of moral impurity. This semantic closeness is characteristic of hendiadys in Jewish and Greco-Roman moral discourse, where near-synonymous terms are paired to enhance rhetorical effect. Secondly, James’s

²³⁵ Moo (2000:79-81), Adam (2013:25), Allison (2013:698–704), and Martin (1988:28–30) treat the two nouns as separate elements rather than a hendiadys; emphasising their distinct but complementary ethical domains.

²³⁶ Johnson (1995:114-115) and Davids (1983:84-86) note that overlapping concepts suggest a unified, intensified meaning, characteristic of a hendiadys. This rhetorical device involves two nouns linked by “and” to convey a single idea, often with one noun emphasising the other, such as “nice and warm” meaning “nicely warm” or “sound and fury” meaning “furious sound.” This rhetorical device adds force, vividness, or poetic quality.

²³⁷ Louw and Nida (1988, Domain 88.256) explain ῥυπαρία as “a state of moral impurity and filth – ‘moral impurity, moral filth, filthiness.’”

²³⁸ Louw and Nida (1988, Domain 88.105) define κακία as “the quality of wickedness,” indicating something harmful and damaging—essentially ‘wickedness, evil, badness.’ Adam (2013:25) explains that περισσεῖαν, which modifies κακία, signifies an “excess of wickedness” or a “[super]abundance of wickedness.” Additionally, κακίας is a subjective genitive, meaning “wickedness abounds.”

paraenetic and wisdom-focused style aligns with the rhetorical strategies of Jewish sapiential writings, which often employ hendiadys to amplify ethical exhortations, for example, the paired expressions in Proverbs (eg, “trouble and calamity”, “strife and discord”)²³⁹. In this literary and rhetorical setting, the contrast in James 1:21 becomes more vivid: the community is called to reject not two separate vices, but “every morally filthy excess of wickedness,” to be adequately prepared to receive the implanted word. Therefore, the hendiadic interpretation best explains the verse’s rhetorical economy and emphatic force.

The phrase *ἐν πραΰτητι* (“in meekness/gentleness”) acts as a manner prepositional phrase, with *ἐν* denoting the manner or disposition for the action. Although grammatically it could describe either the act of removing moral impurity or the acceptance of the implanted word, the rhetorical and syntactic patterns in James suggest a more specific role. Firstly, the construction *ἐν* + noun of disposition + imperative is typical of James’s paraenetic style. A close parallel appears in James 2:2²⁴⁰, where a similar prepositional phrase describes a behavioural attitude. This intertextual pattern shows that James often uses *ἐν* + a virtue term to specify how a commanded action should be performed. In James 1:21, he places the phrase *ἐν πραΰτητι* at the front not just for syntactical variety but for emphasising its importance — positioning the disposition before the imperative *δέξασθε* (“receive”) to highlight the necessary spiritual attitude. Second, thematically, “meekness” aligns more naturally with receiving rather than removing. In Jewish wisdom traditions, *πραΰτης* signifies a teachable, humble, receptive spirit — exactly the attitude needed to accept divine instruction (Sirach 3:17–20)²⁴¹. Conversely, “putting away filthiness and wickedness” (*ἀποθέμενοι πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν...*) calls for firm moral renunciation, not meekness. Therefore, the semantic

²³⁹ Proverbs 1:26 (LXX) states: *τοιγαροῦν κἀγὼ τῇ ὑμετέρῳ ἀπωλείᾳ ἐπιγελάσομαι· καταχαροῦμαι δὲ ἡνίκα ἂν ἔρχηται ὑμῖν ὄλεθρος*. – Therefore, I will laugh at your destruction in return; I will rejoice when ruin comes upon you. Two terms overlap semantically (laugh and rejoice) and combine into a single idea of ruin. Proverbs 17:14 (LXX) explains: *ἐξουσίαν δίδωσιν λόγοις ἀρχὴ δικαιοσύνης· προηγείται δὲ τῆς ἐνδείας στάσις καὶ μάχη*. – The beginning of righteousness grants authority to words, but before poverty arrives, there is discord and conflict. *Στάσις καὶ μάχη* is often used as an example of a paired near-synonym in Proverbs, analysed as a hendiadys or a reinforcing doublet.

²⁴⁰ James 2:2 describes the community’s attitude towards the rich and poor: *ἐὰν γὰρ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς συναγωγὴν ὑμῶν ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος ἐν ἐσθῇτι λαμπρᾷ, εἰσέλθῃ δὲ καὶ πτωχὸς ἐν ῥυπαρᾷ ἐσθῇτι ...* – For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes ... The phrase’s resemblance to James 1:21, a prepositional expression denoting an attitude or state connected to an action, underscores this as characteristic of James’s writing style. James often connects calls to action with inner moral virtues that provide ethical guidance actions.

²⁴¹ Sirach 3:17 (LXX) states: *τέκνον ἐν πραΰτητι τὰ ἔργα σου διέξαγε καὶ ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπου δεκτοῦ ἀγαπηθήσῃ* – Child, carry out your works in meekness, and you will be loved by an acceptable (or discerning) person. This verse reflects the same virtue vocabulary as James 1:21, linking meekness with ethical conduct and relational favour.

connection provides strong support for interpreting the phrase as a modifier of the second clause. Additionally, the sentence's structure reinforces this interpretation. James employs a negative-positive paraenesis pattern: negative, "Put away all filth and the abundance of wickedness"; positive, "Receive the implanted word," accompanied by the qualifying attitude, "in meekness." The placement of ἐν πραΰτητι between these elements enables it to function as a hinge. Rhetorically, James prepares his audience for the appropriate spiritual disposition required for positive action. Meekness serves as the soil in which the implanted word can take root and flourish, an image that aligns with the metaphor of the word as seed. (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23²⁴²).

Thus, the phrase ἐν πραΰτητι is best interpreted as modifying δέξασθε, suggesting that receiving the implanted word requires a humble, teachable attitude. By emphasising this phrase, James highlights that ethical change is not only the outcome of moral effort (removing impurity) but also of spiritual posture (receiving meekly).

10.5.2.3 The positive exhortation in James 1:21 (δέξασθε τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον)

In James 1:21, the positive exhortation is introduced by the aorist middle imperative δέξασθε ("receive, welcome," second person plural). It is modified by the prepositional phrase ἐν πραΰτητι ("in meekness/gentleness"), with τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον ("the implanted word") serving as its direct object. The adjective ἔμφυτος, a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament, carries a well-established Hellenistic sense — "implanted," "inborn," or "innate" — as seen in Philo's description of the νόμος ἔμφυτος (Legum Allegoriarum 3.161)²⁴³, evoking the idea of an internal, divinely embedded moral principle. James positions this term within his characteristic paraenetic structure: a vice-removal, an imperative, and a motivational clause, urging his audience first to

²⁴² 1 Peter 1:23 relates birth through the word: ἀναγεγεννημένοι οὐκ ἐκ σπορᾶς φθαρτῆς ἀλλὰ ἀφθάρτου διὰ λόγου. — Having been born again, not from perishable seed but from imperishable, through the word.

²⁴³ The term ἔμφυτος is absent from Legum Allegoriarum 3.161; however, the passage provides the conceptual foundation for later expressions such as ἔμφυτος λόγος or ἔμφυτος νόμος. Specifically, it introduces the idea that God implants a divine element in the human soul through the act described by ἐνεφύσησε ("he breathed into" or "he blew into"), thereby generating an internal disposition toward virtue, reason, or law. The central connection lies in the verb ἐνεφύσησε, which Philo and other authors interpret as God endowing the human soul with divine attributes such as reason, law, or virtue. In Second Temple Jewish and Hellenistic contexts, ἔμφυτός commonly denotes what is innate, natural, or inborn, a meaning well documented in Philo and broader Hellenistic moral philosophy. These conceptual parallels have prompted some scholars to interpret the phrase as referring to an innate moral law or a form of natural reason, and to occasionally align it with the Stoic concept of implanted rationality. For instance, Jackson-McCabe (2019:45–71) proposes a Stoic-influenced background for the term ἔμφυτος λόγος, drawing a comparison between the implanted word and the implanted reason (λόγος) found in Greco-Roman moral discourse.

“put off” moral defilement and then to “welcome” the implanted word. The apparent paradox of receiving a word that is already implanted has prompted discussion among commentators (e.g., Davids 1983:93–94; Johnson 1995:194; Adam, 2013:25), but the verb *δέχομαι*²⁴⁴ often indicates a posture of receptive acceptance rather than initial acquisition, suggesting humble openness to God’s instruction.

This interpretation aligns with James 1:18, where God “brought us forth by the word of truth”; the same divine word that creates believers now calls for acceptance and practice. The metaphors shift from birth (1:18) to planting (1:21), both emphasising the internalisation of divine instruction. Structurally, τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον acts as the link between the new birth and the subsequent call to be “doers of the word” (1:22), leading into James’s discussion of the law — the perfect law of freedom (1:25), the royal law (2:8), and the law of liberty (2:12). Scholars observe that James’s wisdom-infused understanding of νόμος corresponds with a Jewish-Christian view of the Torah internalised within the believer (Allison 2013:277–283; Moo 2000:87–88), echoing prophetic themes of the law written on the heart (Jeremiah 31:33 [MT], Jeremiah [38:33 LXX]; Ezekiel 36:26–27 [LXX])²⁴⁵.

A comparable motif appears in the Epistle of Barnabas, where the author describes the internalisation of God’s law as constitutive of the New Covenant (Whitlark, 2010:144–165). Although Barnabas does not employ the exact phrase τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον, he consistently depicts believers’ transformation through God’s inscription of His will on their hearts. In Barnabas 2:6, God’s “new law of our Lord Jesus Christ, being without the yoke of necessity”, serves as a divine gift that enables correct spiritual discernment. Later, in 6:14²⁴⁶ Barnabas portrays God removing

²⁴⁴ Louw and Nida (1988, Domain 34.53) define *δέχομαι*, among others, as “to accept or welcome someone in a friendly manner; to receive, to accept, or to entertain as a guest.”

²⁴⁵ Jeremiah 38:33 (LXX) emphasis: *ὅτι αὕτη ἡ διαθήκη ἣν διαθήσομαι τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραὴλ μετὰ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐκεῖνας φησὶν κύριος διδοὺς δώσω νόμους μου εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν γράψω αὐτοὺς καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτοῖς εἰς θεόν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔσονται μοι εἰς λαόν* – For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and I will write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Rhetorically and ethically, Jeremiah and James emphasise the internalisation of divine guidance: Jeremiah describes God inscribing the law on the mind and heart, while James talks about believers receiving the implanted word. This internal process transforms understanding into practical obedience and moral integrity, linking Jewish covenant expectations with Christian ethical responses. The ἔμφυτος λόγος continues this prophetic theme of an inwardly inscribed law, guiding discipleship through both acceptance and action.

²⁴⁶ Barnabas 6:14 states: *Ἰδε οὖν ἡμεῖς ἀναπεπλάσμεθα καθὼς πάλιν ἐν ἐτέρῳ προφήτῃ λέγει Ἰδοὺ λέγει κύριος ἐξελαῶ τούτων τουτέστιν ὧν προέβλεπεν τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου τὰς λιθίνας καρδίας καὶ ἐμβαλῶ σαρκίνας ὅτι αὐτὸς ἐν σαρκὶ ἔμελλεν φανεροῦσθαι καὶ ἐν ἡμῖν κατοικεῖν* – See, therefore, we have been remade, as it is also stated in another prophet: ‘Behold,’ says the Lord, ‘I will remove from them’—that is, from those whom the Spirit of the Lord foresaw—‘their hearts of stone and will give them hearts of flesh,’ because He Himself was about to be revealed in the flesh and to dwell within us. These ideas reflect the same constellation of new-covenant

hearts of stone and giving hearts of flesh, with Christ revealed in the flesh to dwell in believers. An explicit use of ἔμφυτος occurs in 9:9, τὴν ἔμφυτον δωρεάν τῆς διδαχῆς (“the implanted gift of the covenant”), referring to the inward, covenantal law God places within His people (cf. Jeremiah 31:33 [MT], Jeremiah 38:33 [LXX]; Ezekiel 36:26–27 [LXX]), contrasting with mere literal observance of Torah.

Whitlark (2010:161) also mentions Irenaeus’ link between implantation, freedom, and empowerment within the new covenant. Irenaeus’s use of ἔμφυτος is significant because he consistently employs the language of “implanting” within a framework of divine enablement associated with the new covenant. For Irenaeus²⁴⁷, Christ’s coming inaugurates the new covenant, which he describes as the life-giving law (*Adversus Haereses* 4.34.4). This covenant does not abolish the demands of the Mosaic Law; instead, it heightens them while granting the liberating power needed to fulfil this greater moral ideal. God provides a new heart and spirit, proclaiming freedom so His people can honestly praise Him (*Adversus Haereses* 4.33.14). Crucially, Irenaeus employs the language of implanting to explain this enabling work. Commenting on Christ’s deepening of the commandments in the Sermon on the Mount, he states that Christ did so “not to oppose the law but to fulfil it and to implant (ἐμφυτός) its righteous requirements within us” (*Adversus Haereses* 4.13.1). He contrasts the bondage of the old covenant with “the Word who sets the soul free” (*Adversus Haereses* 4.13.2), noting that this liberating teaching deepens believers’ devotion and service to God. For Irenaeus, the extension of Jesus’ commandments signifies greater freedom because “a deeper subjection and piety have been implanted (ἐμφυτός) in us toward our liberator” (*Adversus Haereses* 4.13.3). This close connection between implantation, freedom, and new-covenant empowerment will prove particularly important when revisiting the Epistle of James.

Whitlark (2010:162–163) notes that across Jewish and Christian literature, ἔμφυτος and its cognates are frequently associated with a form of divine empowerment. This empowerment is not an innate human capacity or a natural faculty arising from creation; rather, it is a divine gift that elevates and exceeds what human beings possess by nature. Within this context, the authors of

motifs found in Jeremiah 31:33 MT (Jeremiah 38:33 LXX) and Ezekiel 36:26–27 (LXX). Barnabas 6:14 closely echoes Ezekiel 36:26–27 (LXX): ‘I will remove the heart of stone ... and give you a heart of flesh, and I will put my Spirit within you ...’ But the framework remains the new covenant of Jeremiah 38:33 (LXX), the divine inner inscription of His will and His indwelling presence.

²⁴⁷ Irenaeus’ principal work, *Against Heresies* (*Adversus Haereses*), was composed around 180–190 CE, amid the peak of the Gnostic-Christian dispute. The original Greek version of Irenaeus’ text survives only in fragments. For most of *Against Heresies*, we rely on Latin, Armenian, or Syriac translations, along with later Greek quotations.

the Epistle of Barnabas, *Adversus Haereses* and the Epistle of James employ *ἐμφυτος* language in a distinctly new-covenant register, using it to describe God’s transformative work within the believer.

This understanding conflicts with the interpretation put forward by Jackson-McCabe (2019:45–71). He places *ἐμφυτος* and related terms within the context of Stoicising Judaism, as seen in writers such as Philo. In this context, the *ἐμφυτος νόμος* signifies natural reason — an innate rational faculty that can be aligned with the “perfect law” through which a person attains true freedom. Greek lexical usage supports this perspective, as *ἐμφυτος* often means “inborn,” “natural,” or “innate.”

The choice between these interpretative options largely depends on how one situates the Epistle of James — its date, cultural environment, and relationship to the broader Jewish tradition. Suppose James is read within a Jewish context not yet sharply distinguished from non-Christian Judaism (Robbins, 1996:141–151). In that case, the *λόγος* is less likely to refer to a regenerating new-covenant word and more likely to evoke the Torah, reinterpreted through the lens of *Jesuslogia* — the law James exhorts his audience to embody and describes as the perfect law that characterises those who are genuinely free. As outlined in Chapter 9, *λόγος* progresses naturally into *νόμος* as divine wisdom (James 1:5) moves from revelation, to regeneration, to moral embodiment, and ultimately to eschatological evaluation (Bauckham, 1999:155; Johnson, 1995:198).

Theologically and rhetorically, James 1:21, Barnabas and Irenaeus present a shared vision in which divine instruction is internalised, leading to transformation rather than remaining external and legalistic. In these contexts, the *ἐμφυτος λόγος* serves as a divine gift that needs to be received, embodied, and acted upon. James’s appeal to “welcome the implanted word” highlights that God’s word, once planted within, requires active acceptance and obedience, ultimately guiding ethical behaviour that aligns with God’s character and reflects the law of true freedom (James 1:25).

10.5.2.4 The result clause in James 1:21 (τὸν δυνάμενον σῶσαι τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν)

The result clause in James 1:21 — τὸν δυνάμενον σῶσαι τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν (“which is able to save your souls”) — serves as a vital part of the epistle’s theological and rhetorical framework. Structurally, this clause acts as the final element in the verse’s paraenetic pattern: the eradication

of vice, the positive command to accept the implanted word, and ultimately the motivational or outcome clause that anchors the exhortation in an eschatological aim.

In James 1:21, the result clause serves as the basis for the imperative *δέξασθε* by shifting the focus from human moral effort to divine agency inherent in the implanted word. The *λόγος*, described as “the one who can save your souls,” personified by the attributive present participle *τὸν δυνάμενον*, signifies an active, ongoing power rooted in God’s act of begetting, as in James 1:18 (“he brought us forth by the word of truth”). This interpretation counters Jackson-McCabe’s (2019:45–71) suggestion that *ἐμφυτος* refers to an innate rational faculty within a Stoicising Jewish context. Instead of relying on natural law or human rationality, James bases the community’s obedience on divine power implanted within them. This view aligns with Whitlark’s (2010:162–163) argument that *ἐμφυτος* and similar terms consistently represent divine empowerment in Jewish and early Christian writings, understood not as an innate human trait but as a covenantal gift that requires reception, embodiment, and enactment.

The grammar of *τὸν δυνάμενον σῶσαι* emphasises this point: the attributive *present* participle (see Jordaan 2014:36–37) depicts the ongoing effectiveness of the implanted word. At the same time, the *aorist* infinitive *σῶσαι* frames salvation as a singular, complete eschatological event. Together, they reveal a dynamic flow of continuous divine activity aimed towards final deliverance, mirroring James’s already/not-yet soteriology (Whitlark 2010:159–163; Allison 2013:292–294; Moo 2000:89–90). Because *σῶζω* in James retains consistent eschatological significance (2:14; 4:12; 5:20), the implanted word’s ability “to save your souls” anchors the epistle’s moral demands in God’s ongoing transformative work rather than in human autonomy. As a rhetorical hinge, the clause integrates James’s theological reasoning: the divine word that begets (1:18) must be received (1:21), enacted (1:22–25), and ultimately becomes the internalised *νόμος* — the perfect law of liberty — that defines the community’s ethical identity (2:8, 12). Salvation therefore progresses along a continuum of revelation, regeneration, moral embodiment, and eschatological assessment, held together by the active, saving power of the implanted word. In this way, James 1:21 stands at the centre of the letter’s soteriological and moral vision, showing that the *λόγος* which initiates new life is the very *λόγος* that sustains and consummates it.

At the centre of the multi-effect chiasmus, the **C**-section (1:22–25) acts as the structural and theological hinge, emphasising that genuine hearing necessarily results in obedient action. Merely listening leads to self-deception, whereas internalising and acting on the word brings blessing. The discussion now turns to this core element.

10.5.3 The C-element of the multi-effect chiasmus (James 1:22–25): structural and theological pivot

The passage (James 1:22-25) begins with an exhortation: Γίνεσθε δὲ ποιηταὶ λόγου καὶ μὴ μόνον ἀκροαταί, παραλογιζόμενοι ἑαυτούς (“Become doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves”). The *present* imperative γίνεσθε (present imperative middle, second person plural from γίνομαι) indicates a continuous, enduring, or evolving stance rather than a one-time, completed action (Jordaan, 2014:8–9). It therefore issues an identity-shaping command that invites the audience into a perpetual process of transformation instead of a temporary or isolated moral act. The paired expressions ποιηταὶ λόγου/μὴ μόνον ἀκροαταί (doer of the word/not only a hearer) establish a binary contrast, creating a rhetorical juxtaposition, further highlighted by the participle παραλογιζόμενοι (present participle middle nominative masculine plural from παραλογίζομαι²⁴⁸, used attributively, modifying the masculine ἀκροαταί), which portrays passive hearing as a form of self-deception. James thus equates failure to act with cognitive distortion: hearing without obeying signifies misinterpreting one’s own spiritual state. These frameworks echo earlier warnings against deception in James 1:16 (μὴ πλανᾶσθε [do not be deceived]) and anticipate later criticisms of self-deceptive religiosity in James 1:26 (τούτου μάταιος ἡ θρησκεία [this religion is worthless/foolish]).

The clause ὅτι εἴ τις... (“if anyone”) in James 1:23 creates a parabolic comparison: εἴ τις ἀκροατὴς λόγου ἐστὶν καὶ οὐ ποιητής (“if someone is a hearer of the word [objective genitive] and not a doer”), such a person is comparable to someone who looks at their face in a mirror only to forget their own appearance (τὸ πρόσωπον τῆς γενέσεως)²⁴⁹ immediately. The narrative progresses

²⁴⁸ Louw and Nida (1988, Domain 88.153) describe παραλογίζομαι as to deceive others through arguments or false reasons, effectively meaning ‘to deceive.’ The nuance of the term involves using faulty logic or engaging in self-deception. The reflexive ἑαυτούς emphasises that the failure to act is not passive but self-inflicted. Adam (2013:27) comments, “Put very colloquially, those who think they can hear the word and not do it are kidding themselves.”

²⁴⁹ The phrase τὸ πρόσωπον τῆς γενέσεως, meaning “the face of the source” or “the face of the birth,” challenges translators because its components allow for multiple interpretations, and the genitive τῆς γενέσεως is semantically flexible. The noun γένεσις in Koine Greek covers a wide range of meanings, including birth, origin, descent, nature, physical constitution, existence, life course, or created being. (Louw and Nida, 1988). This multivalence complicates translation since James does not specify which nuance he intends. The genitive τῆς γενέσεως can be read as an attributive (“the face of one’s birth,” implying the natural face one is born with), a genitive of quality (“the face belonging to one’s nature” - indicating the person’s true, innate self), or an objective genitive (“the face produced by birth/nature” - emphasising creaturely identity). Different translations emphasise various nuances, resulting in diverse renderings such as “his natural face”

through a series of participles and verbs — κατανοοῦντι²⁵⁰... κατενόησεν ...ἀπελήλυθεν... ἐπελάθετο — which form a chain illustrating a shift from attentive observation to complete forgetfulness. The alliteration and assonance in κατανοοῦντι, κατενόησεν, ἀπελήλυθεν and ἐπελάθετο heighten the rhetorical effect of the parable. Given the nature of ancient mirrors, which often reflected dim or distorted images, the metaphor underscores the fragility of human self-awareness and highlights the epistemic failure of those who hear without obeying; they lose not just information but their sense of self (εὐθέως ἐπελάθετο ὁποῖος ἦν [he immediately forgets who he was]).

James 1:25 serves as the culminating positive counterpart to the negative depiction in 1:23–24, completing the contrastive pattern at the heart of the **C**-element of the multi-effect chiasmus (1:22–25). Structurally, the verse is constructed around a sequence of participles that trace the progression from attentive engagement (ὁ δὲ παρακύψας εἰς νόμον τέλειον τὸν τῆς ἐλευθερίας [he who bends over and looks into the perfect law of freedom]), to enduring obedience (παραμείνας [residing]) and ποιητῆς ἔργου [a deed-doer]), ultimately leading to eschatological blessedness (οὗτος μακάριος ἐν τῇ ποιήσει αὐτοῦ ἔσται [“this one will be blessed in his doing”]). The initial *aorist* participle ὁ δὲ παρακύψας (“the one who has stooped/bent to look intently”) presents a decisive act of engagement with “the perfect law, the law of liberty.” Unlike the superficial glance of the forgetful hearer (1:23–24), παρακύψας depicts bending forward, suggesting scrutiny. This posture is reinforced by the following *aorist* participle παραμείνας (“having remained”), which introduces a rhetorical progression: the ποιητῆς ἔργου (doer of the work) both examines (παρακύψας) and perseveres (παραμείνας) in what has been examined.

The participial chain is followed by two antithetical nominal descriptions: οὐκ ἀκροατῆς ἐπιλησμονῆς γενόμενος ἀλλὰ ποιητῆς ἔργου (“not having become a forgetful hearer but a doer of work”). The

(NRSV, ESV), “his face in a mirror” (paraphrased), or “the face of his birth/nature” (literal). Most scholars (Davids, 1983:98–100; Johnson, 1995:201–202; Moo, 2000:91–92; Allison 2013:91–92; Adam, 2013:27–28) interpret τὸ πρόσωπον τῆς γενέσεως as “his natural face,” meaning the face one has by birth or nature. However, the genitive is intentionally evocative, allowing James to highlight the importance of self-forgetfulness: the person who does not do the word forgets not just information but their God-created identity (ὁποῖος ἦν). Adam (2013:27–28) notes that the function of the genitive in this phrase depends on how the noun is understood; the most probable interpretation is an attributive genitive.

²⁵⁰ κατανοοῦντι is the present participle active, dative masculine singular form of κατανοέω, used attributively with ἀνδρὶ. Adam (2013:27) notes that ἔοικεν (perfect indicative active, third person singular from εἶκα) in James 1:23 and in James 1:6 are the only occurrences in the New Testament of this relatively common Greek verb, making it a *hapax legomenon*. Ἀνδρὶ serves as the dative complement of ἔοικεν.

contrast is sharpened rhetorically by an attributive genitive ἐπιλησμονῆς, another *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament, which echoes the verb ἐπελάθετο in 1:24 and forms a wordplay linking forgetfulness with the failure to act. The phrase ποιητῆς ἔργου²⁵¹ (literally, a deed-doer) functions as James’s equivalent of covenant faithfulness and participation in embodied obedience. The effect is a reversal of the earlier pattern: whereas the forgetful hearer looked → left → forgot, the faithful doer looks → remains → acts. The contrast between James 1:23–24 and James 1:25 is outlined in **Table 10.5**.

Table 10.5: Contrast between James 1:23–24 and James 1:25

James 1:23–24: The Forgetful Hearer	James 1:25: The Obedient Doer
εἴ τις... ἀκροατής — hears without doing.	ὁ δὲ παρακύψας... ποιητής — engages and acts.
Looks at a mirror (surface glance).	Bends down (παρακύψας) to examine the law, with emphasis on intent.
Verbal chain: κατενόησεν → ἀπελήλυθεν → ἐπελάθετο (looks → leaves → forgets).	Participial chain: παρακύψας → παραμείνας → ποιήσας (examines → remains → acts).
Immediate forgetfulness (εὐθέως ἐπελάθετο).	Perseverance (παραμείνας)
Distorted self-knowledge; identity loss (εὐθέως ἐπελάθετο ὅποιος ἦν).	True self-knowledge in God’s “perfect law of liberty”.
No blessing.	“μακάριος ἐν τῇ ποιήσει” — blessing in doing

Source: Author’s own analysis.

Rhetorically, James 1:25 achieves its persuasive force through alliteration, parallelism, and balanced antithesis. The repeated *παρα*-prefix (παρακύψας/παραμείνας) creates phonetic cohesion. The adversative ἀλλά structurally divides the verse into two moral portraits, mirroring Hebrew wisdom’s two-ways tradition (see Lockett, 2008:269–287). The promise part of James 1:25, οὗτος μακάριος ἐν τῇ ποιήσει αὐτοῦ ἔσται (“this one will be blessed in his doing”), not only

²⁵¹ The genitive in the phrase ποιητῆς ἔργου can be understood as a genitive of quality or an attributive genitive (Adam, 2013:30). Literally, it means “a doer of work,” with the genitive ἔργου describing the noun ποιητής. Functionally, the genitive acts adjectivally, implying “an active doer,” “a practitioner,” or “someone who performs deeds.” This usage resembles Hebrew idioms found in the LXX, where a genitive signals a defining trait, such as “man of truth” or “sons of disobedience.”

forms the rhetorical climax but also echoes the beatitudinal tradition (cf. Psalm 1:1; Matthew 5:3–12), reinforcing James’s integration of the Jesus tradition.

Intertextually, the verse draws together several strands of biblical tradition. The expression νόμος τέλειος recalls Old Testament and Jewish descriptions of the Torah as “perfect” (Psalm 18:8 [LXX])²⁵², while τὸν τῆς ἐλευθερίας²⁵³ evokes prophetic new-covenant motifs in which divine instruction is internalised and liberating (Jeremiah 38:33 [LXX]; Ezekiel 36:26–27). In James, the implanted word (ἐμφυτος λόγος – 1:21) becomes internal law (1:25; 2:8, 12), suggesting that the “law of liberty” is the fulfilled law as interpreted and enacted through the teaching of Jesus, or *Jesuslogia* (cf. Matthew 5–7).

The promise of blessedness, which concludes James 1:25, places this verse within the eschatological framework of James’s soteriology: blessing anticipates divine approval at the final judgment (cf. 1:12; 2:12–13; 5:7–11). Therefore, both structurally and rhetorically, James 1:25 serves as the climax in demonstrating how the implanted word achieves its saving purpose (1:21): through acceptance, internalisation, perseverance, and action. In this way, James 1:25 becomes the theological centre of the exhortation to be doers of the word, not merely hearers.

James 1:22–25 establishes the core principle that true acceptance of the word (ἐμφυτος λόγος) must be demonstrated through obedient actions. James 1:26 then directly builds on this by providing a specific example — controlling the tongue — as a practical way to assess whether one’s faith is genuine. In this way, James 1:26 reflects the broader ethical demand expressed in the **C**-element of the chiasmus. Both passages warn against the danger of self-deception: 1:22 discusses παραλογιζόμενοι, deceiving themselves by hearing without acting, while 1:26 points to ἀπατῶν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ, the self-deception of those who fail to restrain their speech. James thus links neglecting action (1:22–24) with unrestrained speech (1:26), viewing both as indicators of

²⁵² Psalm 118:8 [LXX] describes the Torah: ὁ νόμος τοῦ κυρίου ἄμωμος ἐπιστρέφει ψυχὰς ἢ μαρτυρία κυρίου πιστὴ σοφίζουσα νήπια — The law of the Lord is without defect, restoring souls; the testimony of the Lord is trustworthy, making the simple wise. The adjective ἄμωμος (“blameless, flawless”) is semantically close to τέλειος (“perfect, complete, mature”), though the words are not identical.

²⁵³ Adam (2013:29) notes that the article τὸν, which appears after its noun and before the genitive τῆς ἐλευθερίας, functions as an adjectiviser, transforming the genitive phrase τῆς ἐλευθερίας into an attributive modifier of νόμον τέλειον. The phrase τῆς ἐλευθερίας functions as an attributive (or qualitative) genitive, describing a characteristic quality of the law. Therefore, “the perfect law, the law characterised by freedom” or “the perfect law that is defined by freedom.” In this interpretation, freedom reflects the nature or essential attribute of the law. This interpretation is supported by commentators such as Moo (2000:91–95), Johnson (1995:207–209), Davids (1983:98–101) and Adam (2013:29).

the same fundamental issue. While James 1:22–24 contrasts the forgetful listener with the obedient doer who “perseveres” and is “blessed in his doing” (1:25), James 1:26 considers what such “doing” entails, highlighting controlled speech as its primary outward sign. The verse, therefore, states that without disciplined speech, one’s religion is μάταιος — empty or worthless.

At the same time, James 1:26 mirrors the earlier instruction in 1:21, the **B**-element of the multi-effect chiasmus. Verse 1:21 insists on the inner disposition required for receiving the word, laying aside moral impurity and welcoming the implanted word “in meekness,” an attitude marked by humility and self-control. Verse 1:26 applies this inner posture to outward behaviour: the capacity to “bridle the tongue” serves as the visible test of whether such inner meekness is genuine. James 1:21 calls readers to receive the implanted word, whilst James 1:26 exposes those whose “religion” (θρησκεία), their actions based on the implanted word (ἐμφυτος λόγος), is merely an appearance. The two verses mirror one another by contrasting genuine transformation (1:21) with superficial religiosity (1:26).

Together, James 1:21 and James 1:26 frame James 1:22–25 by shifting the focus from inward purification to outward ethical expression, creating a cohesive argument about true obedience and authentic religion. The structure and rhetorical design of the **B**’-element of the multi-effect chiasmus, James 1:26, is therefore analysed.

10.5.4 The B’-element of the multi-effect chiasmus (James 1:26): corresponding inner transformation, reflected in outward behaviour

10.5.4.1 The rhetorical structure of James 1:26

James 1:26 exemplifies a clear rhetorical structure — condition, contrast, and verdict — that aligns with a traditional wisdom-admonition pattern often seen in Jewish sapiential writings and early Christian teachings²⁵⁴. The structural flow of James 1:26, which may be divided into three sequential parts, is outlined in **Table 10.6**.

²⁵⁴ Relevant examples of wisdom-admonition patterns from Jewish sapiential literature and early Christian paraenesis that parallel the structure of James 1:26 (condition → contrast → verdict), are as follows: Proverbs 30:12 (LXX) states: ἔκγονον κακὸν δίκαιον ἑαυτὸν κρίνει τὴν δὲ ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἀπένιψεν — A wicked offspring that judges itself righteous but has not washed away its filth. Proverbs 30:12 (LXX) strongly reflects the claim → contrast → verdict rhetorical pattern. The structure is: “Claims to be righteous” (claim), “but remains filthy” (contrast), implied — “thus not truly righteous: (verdict). I John 2:4 says: ὁ λέγων ὅτι ἔγνωκα αὐτόν καὶ τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ μὴ τηρῶν, ψεύστης ἐστίν καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν — The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments is a liar, “The one who says, ‘I know Him...’” (claim), “...and does not keep His commandments...” (contrast, negation), “...is a liar, and the truth is not

Table 10.6: Structural flow of James 1:26

Component	Greek Text	Function	Explanation
1. Condition (Protasis)	εἴ τις δοκεῖ θρησκὸς εἶναι	Introduction of a self-assessment.	The verse begins with a conditional clause (εἴ τις) that indicates a hypothetical scenario. The condition concerns a person's self-assessment: someone who considers or imagines themselves to be θρησκὸς ("religious," relating to outward piety, ritual, and expression). This introduces the theme of perceived religious identity, which James immediately questions.
2. Contrast (Negative Specification)	μὴ χαλιναγωγῶν γλῶσσαν αὐτοῦ ἀλλὰ ἀπατῶν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ	Exposure of inconsistency.	Two participles highlight: • External failure – not restraining the tongue. • Internal delusion – deceiving one's own heart. Both contrast appearance with ethical reality, exposing the gap between claimed and genuine religion.
3. Verdict (Apodosis)	τούτου μάταιος ἡ θρησκεία	Evaluative judgment.	Declares such religion as worthless (μάταιος [futile, empty]) and challenges self-perception by offering an objective divine judgment.

Source: Author's own analysis.

James 1:26 is consequently analysed in terms of its rhetorical structure, namely the condition (protasis), contrast, and verdict (apodosis), as well as its inner texture and intertexture.

in him" (verdict). Matthew 7:21 claims: Οὐ πᾶς ὁ λέγων μοι· κύριε κύριε, εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἀλλ' ὁ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. – Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Structure: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,'" (claim), "...but (ἀλλ') the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (contrast), "will enter the kingdom of heaven" (verdict). The outcome suggests the judgment: Only the obedient will enter the kingdom. The "verdict" is eschatological — either entering or being excluded from the kingdom.

10.5.4.2 Analysis of the rhetorical structure of James 1:26

As observed, James 1:26 exhibits a tightly crafted rhetorical movement that unfolds through a classical protasis–contrast–verdict structure.

The protasis (“If anyone thinks he is religious...”) introduces a case of self-perceived piety through a first-class conditional clause (εἰ). This construction assumes the condition to be true for the sake of argument. The subject τις (indefinite pronoun, nominative masculine singular) keeps the scenario generic, allowing James to address a broad moral type rather than a specific individual. Central to the clause is the verb δοκεῖ (present indicative active, third singular from δοκέω), which in this context indicates not genuine religious integrity but a self-evaluated or presumed status. This sense of subjective assessment is reinforced through the predicate nominative construction with the infinitive εἶναι. The term θρησκὺς²⁵⁵, functioning here as the predicate nominative, is a New Testament *hapax legomenon* and denotes outward or ritual expressions of devotion. As Adam (2013:31) observes, while infinitives typically take a predicate accusative, in constructions involving δοκεῖ εἶναι, especially when no explicit subject is present, the predicate nominative is expected. Parallel examples appear in Luke 22:24; Acts 17:18; 1 Corinthians 14:37; and Galatians 2:9. Thus, the protasis constructs a grammatically precise and rhetorically deliberate scenario in which James challenges the reliability of self-defined religiosity, setting the stage for the contrast and verdict that follow.

James further intensifies the warning through a contrast that reveals the discrepancy between appearance and behaviour: the one who “does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart” shows an ethical contradiction that undermines the original claim. The contrasting middle section contains two participial clauses: μὴ χαλιναγωγῶν γλῶσσαν αὐτοῦ (“not bridling his tongue”, i.e., external failure) and ἀλλὰ ἀπατῶν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ (“but deceiving his heart”, i.e., internal delusion). The rhetorical impact lies in the contrast between appearance and reality.

The imagery of the bridled tongue (μὴ χαλιναγωγῶν²⁵⁶ γλῶσσαν αὐτοῦ) echoes James 1:19, where the listeners are admonished to be βραδὺς εἰς τὸ λαλῆσαι (slow to speak) and is elaborated on in

²⁵⁵ The term *θρησκεία* refers to religious worship, particularly “external, that which consists in ceremonies or cultic rites.” Antiochus IV Epiphanes used *θρησκεία* to describe Jewish worship, which did not include eating pork and food offered to idols (see 4 Maccabees 5:2, 6, 13, 22–23 [LXX]).

²⁵⁶ Louw and Nida (1988: Domain 88.85) describe *χαλιναγωγῶν* (present active participle, nominative masculine singular of *χαλιναγωγέω*) as a figurative extension of the literal verb meaning “to control with a bit or bridle.” Although the literal sense does not appear in the New Testament, the figurative usage conveys

James 3:1–12. The consonant cluster of guttural sounds (χαλιναγωγῶν γλῶσσαν)²⁵⁷ emphasises the imagery of straining or controlling an animal. Psalm 39:1 (LXX 38:2)²⁵⁸ and a spectrum of sapiential traditions (e.g., Proverbs 10:19)²⁵⁹ emphasise speech as a primary marker of wisdom and moral integrity. By shifting from the external (“tongue”) to the internal (“heart”), James reveals a dual exposure of behaviour and self-deception, echoing New Testament intertexts such as Matthew 7:21²⁶⁰ and 1 John 2:4²⁶¹, where verbal claims are tested and invalidated by actual conduct.

The verse culminates in a decisive verdict (“this person’s religion is worthless”), introduced by the demonstrative pronoun τούτου, placed at the front for emphasis, and followed by the predicate adjective μάταιος²⁶², which signifies futility and the emptiness of idolatrous or ethically barren worship. This final evaluative statement reverses the self-assessment in the protasis and aligns the verse’s logic with the wider progression in James 1:19–27: outward claims to devotion become meaningless if not supported by disciplined speech and the kind of enacted faith further described in 1:27.

the idea of exercising firm restraint or strict self-control over a particular faculty — In this case, the tongue. The verb χαλιναγωγέω occurs twice in the New Testament and only in James 1:26 — μὴ χαλιναγωγῶν, and in James 3:2 — χαλιναγωγῆσαι (the infinitive form).

²⁵⁷ The phrase contains a dense sequence of guttural consonants, particularly χ, γ, and γγ, which produce a harsh, throaty acoustic effect: χα-λι-να-γω-γῶν, γλῶσ-σαν. These consonants require the speaker to constrict the back of the throat. When read aloud, the line emits an audible “grinding” sound, reflecting the tension of pulling back on a bridle. These sounds create an auditory image that reflects meaning: the harsh χ and γ evoke the friction of tightening reins, and the repetition of γ across both words links the ideas of restraint and tongue. Therefore, James is not only describing control but also illustrating its sound through the language itself.

²⁵⁸ Psalm 39:1 (MT) or Psalm 38:1 (LXX) explains: εἶπα φυλάξω τὰς ὁδοὺς μου τοῦ μὴ ἁμαρτάνειν ἐν γλώσσῃ μου· ἐθέμην τῷ στόματί μου φυλακὴν ἐν τῷ συστήναι τὸν ἁμαρτωλὸν ἐναντίον μου. — I said, ‘I will guard my ways, so that I might not sin with my tongue. I placed a guard on my mouth when the sinner stood before me.’

²⁵⁹ Proverbs 10:19 (LXX) comments on the restraint of speech: ἐκ πολυλογίας οὐκ ἐκφεύξῃ ἁμαρτίαν· φειδόμενος δὲ χειλέων νοήμων ἔσῃ. — By excessive talking, you will not escape sin, but the one who restrains his lips will be prudent.

²⁶⁰ Matthew 7:21 reflects on ethical conduct: Οὐ πᾶς ὁ λέγων μοι· κύριε κύριε, εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἀλλ’ ὁ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. — Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

²⁶¹ 1 John 2:4 states: ὁ λέγων ὅτι ἔγνωκα αὐτόν καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ μὴ τηρῶν, ψεύστης ἐστὶν καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν — Whoever says, “I have come to know him,” yet does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in such a person.

²⁶² Louw and Nida (1988: Domain 65.37) describe μάταιος as indicating something that lacks substance or effectiveness, making it futile, empty, or of no real value. It characterises something as useless because it is without meaningful content or outcome.

James 1:27, the **A'**-part of the multi-effect chiasmus, is further discussed.

10.5.5 The A'-element of the multi-effect chiasmus (James 1:27): outer framework describing ethical behaviour

10.5.5.1 Introduction

In analysing James 1:27 as the **A'**-element of the multi-effect chiasmus, attention must be given not only to the inner and intertextual textures but also to the extra-textual context, aligning with Robbins's category of social and cultural texture. The instruction to "visit orphans and widows in their affliction" (ἐπισκέπτεσθαι ὀρφανοὺς καὶ χήρας ἐν τῇ θλίψει αὐτῶν) raises important contextual questions: Why are these groups singled out, and what makes them especially vulnerable within the ancient Mediterranean world? Their mention suggests more than a general call to charity; it reflects well-established social realities where orphans and widows often lacked economic protection, legal standing, and familial advocacy. Therefore, a multidimensional reading of James 1:27 must include this sociocultural dimension alongside literary considerations, as the audience's understanding of the plight of these groups shapes the exhortation's rhetorical impact and ethical purpose.

10.5.5.2 Exploring the inner texture of the text

Spencer (2020:101) observes that James 1:26–27 functions as both a summary and a practical reflection of the themes developed throughout chapter one. The "doer of the word" described in 1:22–25 is identified as the same individual who endures trials with wisdom (1:2–4, 12–18), seeks wisdom appropriately (1:5–8), listens before speaking (1:19–21), and maintains a proper perspective on wealth (1:9–11). In 1:26–27, James integrates these elements by connecting internal attitudes with outward actions, beginning with the ethical significance of speech. Internally, individuals are instructed to guard their hearts against self-deception through controlled speech (1:26); externally, genuine obedience is demonstrated through tangible acts of care for society's most vulnerable, specifically orphans and widows (1:27). The passage concludes with a call to self-examination in relation to the surrounding world (κόσμος), emphasizing the necessity of moral separation from its corrupting influences.

The two verses form a balanced contrast: verse 26 focuses on what must be avoided, whilst verse 27 highlights what must be done. The repetition of *θηρησκέια* at the end of James 1:26 and the beginning of 1:27 (*anadiplosis*) creates a rhetorical hinge, reorienting the concept of "religion"

from external ritual observance to practical, ethical faithfulness. Although *θρησκεία* often denotes outward religious rites, James reshapes its meaning to describe authentic worship expressed through disciplined speech, compassionate care for the vulnerable, and moral purity. The adjectives *καθαρά* (“pure”) and *ἀμίαντος* (“undefiled”)²⁶³ reinforce this redefinition: *καθαρά* evokes the ritual categories of purity familiar from the Old Testament (e.g., Leviticus 10:10 [LXX])²⁶⁴, while *ἀμίαντος*, though absent from the LXX, resonates with the frequent biblical warnings against defilement (*μιαίνω*). As Davids (1983:102–103) notes, Philo’s pairing of *καθαρά καὶ ἀμίαντος* (*Legum Allegoriarum* 1.50)²⁶⁵ suggests complete moral integrity or pure, unstained religion. James anchors this vision of purity in the practical obligation “to care for orphans and widows,” signalling that true worship is measured not by cultic gestures but by ethical responsibility and compassionate action.

10.5.5.3 Exploring the intertexture of the text

The expression “*θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ*” may be interpreted either as a Granville Sharp construction (Adam, 2013:32) or as a hendiadys. Although these two grammatical phenomena overlap conceptually, they remain analytically distinct. Their respective applications to James 1:27 and their differences are set out in **Table 10.7**.

²⁶³ Adam notes that the pairing of *καθαρά* (“pure”) and *ἀμίαντος* (“undefiled”) is an example of *hendiadys* and can be translated as “pure, unstained worship”.

²⁶⁴ Leviticus 10:10 (LXX) states: *διαστεῖλαι ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν ἁγίων καὶ τῶν βεβήλων καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν ἀκαθάρτων καὶ τῶν καθαρῶν* – Distinguish between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean. Leviticus 10:10 establishes a key priestly duty: to distinguish between what is holy and what is profane, and between what is clean and what is unclean. This emphasis on ritual discernment and purity underpins a fundamental principle in Israel’s ethical and liturgical practices. When James uses the terms *καθαρός* (“pure”) and *ἀμίαντος* (“undefiled”) in 1:27, he echoes this priestly vocabulary of purity. Although James shifts the focus from ritual to ethics, the underlying logic remains similar: the people of God must exercise discernment about what aligns with God’s holiness and what is corrupted by the “world” (*κόσμος*).

²⁶⁵ Philo in *Legum allegoriarum* 1.50 states: *ἐὰν μέντοι γε τὰ ἄμικτα καὶ σύγκλυδα εἰς ταὐτὸν ἄγης, χώριζε καὶ διάκρινε τῆς καθαρᾶς καὶ ἀμιάντου φύσεως τῆς ἀναφερούσης τὰ ἄμωμα τῷ θεῷ, αὕτη δὲ ἐστὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον· τούτου γὰρ ἀλλότριον τὸ λέγειν ἔργον τι εἶναι ψυχῆς, ἐπὶ θεὸν πάντων λαμβανόντων τὴν ἀναφορὰν, καὶ τὸ τὰ ἄκαρπα τοῖς καρποτόκοις ἀναμιγνύναι· μῶμος γὰρ τοῦτό γε, τὰ δὲ ἄμωμα τῷ θεῷ προσάγεται*. – But if, on the other hand, you gather things that are incompatible and confused, you must separate and distinguish them from the pure and undefiled nature that offers unblemished sacrifices to God; and this nature is the altar. For it is foreign to this nature to claim that any work belongs to the soul, since all things have their offering directed towards the God of all. It is also inappropriate to mix fruitless things with those that bear fruit; for this is a blemish, whereas what is without blemish is offered to God. Philo interprets the pure and undefiled nature (*ἡ καθαρὰ καὶ ἀμίαντος φύσις*) as that which offers “unblemished sacrifices to God”. For Philo, purity entails separating the incompatible and refusing to mix the fruitless.

Table 10.7: Granville Sharp construction and hendiadys in θεῶ καὶ πατρί (James 1:27)

Granville Sharp construction	Hendiadys
A grammatical rule: two nouns, singular, personal, connected by καὶ under one article, referring to one person. In James 1:27, the dative nouns θεῶ καὶ πατρί, coordinated by καί, both refer to God (who is the Father).	A rhetorical or literary device: two words connected by “and” that convey a single idea, often with the second term adding a nuance.
Focuses on identity.	Focuses on expression or meaning.
Used to show that the two nouns refer to the same person, thus θεός and πατήρ refer to the same person.	Used to indicate that the two nouns operate as a single conceptual entity. Together, the nouns express one unified idea — “God in his paternal and protective character.”

Source: Author’s own analysis, drawing on Adam (2013:32).

Thus, the Granville Sharp construction refers to one person — God — while the hendiadys conveys a single idea — God, specifically understood as Father — central to the care of orphans and widows.

Commentators (Spencer, 2020:102; Davids, 1983:103; Martin, 1988:53) note that this designation resonates with the portrayal of God in Psalm 67:6 (LXX)²⁶⁶, where God is named both “Father of the orphans” (τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν ὀρφανῶν) and “judge of the widows” (κριτοῦ τῶν χηρῶν). This psalmic portrayal complements James’s emphasis on authentic *θρησκεία*, as the prophets repeatedly condemn superficial worship while emphasising mercy, justice, and moral integrity (Isaiah 1:11–17 [LXX]; Hosea 6:6 [LXX]; Micah 6:8 [LXX]). Ng (2003:48–50) further observes that Psalm 67 (LXX) contains motifs echoed in James 1:27: joyful praise recalls the positive sense of *θρησκεία*. At the same time, the psalm’s reference to God’s holy dwelling (τόπος ἅγιος) aligns with James’s language of the “pure and undefiled” (καθαρὰ καὶ ἀμίαντος) life.

Jordaan’s (2019, 95–102) analysis of the pairing “widows and orphans” (χηρῶν τε καὶ ὀρφανῶν) in 2 Maccabees 3:10²⁶⁷ underscores the significance of this phrase. He contends that the

²⁶⁶ Psalm 66:6 (LXX) describes God as: τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν ὀρφανῶν καὶ κριτοῦ τῶν χηρῶν ὁ θεὸς ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ αὐτοῦ — Father of the orphans and judge of the widows is God in His holy dwelling.

²⁶⁷ 2 Maccabees 3 describes an incident during Seleucus IV’s reign (187–175 BCE), involving an attempt to steal the Jerusalem temple treasury. The chapter highlights the temple’s holiness, notes corruption among some Jewish officials, and shows God’s protection of sacred funds. Seleucus IV, needing money to pay tribute to Rome, learns from an official named Heliodorus that the temple holds large sums. When Heliodorus tries to take these funds, high priest Onias III explains that the treasury is not public revenue, but a special reserve deposits. 2 Maccabees 3:10 states: τοῦ δὲ ἀρχιερέως ὑποδείξαντος παρακαταθήκας εἶναι

expression signifies more than just a common grouping: it emphasises the plight of the most vulnerable, who are neglected by religious authorities pursuing their own interests. Referring again to Psalm 67:6 (LXX), Jordaan shows that God himself becomes the protector and Father of marginalised households. James's reversed order — ὀρφανοί καὶ χήραι — may deliberately evoke this tradition, subtly calling on the divine concern expressed in the psalm. In this intertextual context, God the Father is portrayed as the implied patron and guardian of fatherless households.

Against this background, James 1:27 encourages its readers to embody God's fatherly concern by caring for orphans and widows "in their distress" (ἐν τῇ θλίψει αὐτῶν). This is not just a moral call but a reassertion of Psalm 67's portrayal of God as Father and protector. Because the community is formed "according to the likeness of God" (καθ' ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ, James 3:9), they are called to imitate God's character by becoming guardians of the vulnerable. Acts of care thus serve as clear outward signs of God the Father's compassion. Therefore, the reference to ὀρφανοί καὶ χήραι in James 1:27 functions not only as a rhetorical device but as a plea for the community to engage in God's paternal justice by offering tangible support to fatherless households.

10.5.5.4 Exploring the social and cultural texture of James 1:27

Westbrook (2017:95) observes that women and children in early Christian assemblies remained subject to Roman law and its social expectations. This observation raises a critical question for interpreting James 1:27: how were widows and fatherless children treated in the broader Roman context? Westbrook (2017:55) further notes that a non-elite widow over thirty, especially one with dependent young children, often faced severe financial hardship after her husband's death. In Roman society, a child deprived of a father was effectively regarded as having lost both parents, as reflected in the term ὀρφανός (fatherless). The father's death entailed the loss of economic security, household protection, and social standing.

Westbrook (2017:56) identifies several factors that contributed to the precarious circumstances of orphans, including the father's outstanding debts, funeral expenses, obligations to settle

χιρῶν τε καὶ ὀρφανῶν – "But when the high priest pointed out that the funds had been entrusted as deposits of widows and orphans..." These trust funds were established for vulnerable groups — widows and orphans — and kept in the temple according to Jewish law. They were not intended for state tax or seizure. These funds served a sacred, charitable purpose, emphasising the temple's role in safeguarding society's most vulnerable. The context of 2 Maccabees 3:10 highlights the connection between genuine piety and caring for widows and orphans, with the temple acting as the guardian of vulnerable households and God as the ultimate protector of the fatherless.

legacies, payment of the widow's dowry, and the division of the estate among surviving children. These financial pressures often led to impoverishment, with a range of consequences: diminished marital prospects for orphaned girls, delayed or socially unequal marriages, restricted access to education, and the need for both boys and girls to enter the workforce at an early age, sometimes in exploitative conditions such as prostitution. Widows, meanwhile, frequently assumed full responsibility for supporting and managing the household, which often strengthened the bond between widows and their children within lower social classes.

These historical insights clarify the concerns underlying James 1:27. In the Roman context, the treatment of ὀρφανοί καὶ χήραι, or families without fathers, frequently involved economic hardship, menial labour, and sexual exploitation. The exhortation to “visit” (ἐπισκέπτεσθαι) such households, therefore, carries significant ethical implications. James underscores that authentic worship is expressed through social action, specifically by caring for fatherless families as representatives of God the Father. This context suggests that the letter may address circumstances in which Christian leaders and members exhibited the same moral indifference or exploitation toward widows and orphans as was common in Roman society. Such neglect or misuse could indicate conformity to prevailing societal standards rather than adherence to divine expectations. This analysis prompts further consideration of the relationship between caring for vulnerable groups and the imperative to “keep oneself unstained from the world” (ἄσπιλον ἑαυτὸν τηρεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου) in James 1:27.

10.5.5.5 The implied link between care for fatherless households and keeping oneself spotless from the world (ἄσπιλον ἑαυτὸν τηρεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου): the inner textual, and intertextual texture

De Beer and Jordaan (2021:34–35) highlight the implicit link between the two infinitival clauses in James 1:27 — ἐπισκέπτεσθαι ὀρφανοὺς καὶ χήρας ἐν τῇ θλίψει αὐτῶν²⁶⁸ (“to visit fatherless households and widows in their distress”) and ἄσπιλον ἑαυτὸν τηρεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου (“to keep oneself unstained from the world”). The expected coordinating conjunction καί (“and”) is missing, although most translations²⁶⁹ assume it and interpret the two actions as parallel expressions of

²⁶⁸ Adam (2013:32) defines αὐτῶν as a subjective genitive (“they suffer”) that modifies ἐν τῇ θλίψει, indicating the context or circumstance.

²⁶⁹ Die Bybel 2020 Vertaling; Die Bybel Afrikaans 1933/1953; Die Bybel Afrikaans 1983/1992; Bybel vir Almal 2007; English Bible for the Deaf 2020; GNB; KJV; CEV; The Holy Bible ESV Anglicised 2016 (texts consulted on website <https://biblesa.co.za/Bible>).

“pure and undefiled religion.” Both clauses use infinitival verbal nouns (ἐπισκέπτεσθαι, τηρεῖν), which function as exegetically infinitives explaining *θρησκεία καθαρὰ καὶ ἀμίαντος* (“pure and undefiled religion,” cf. Blass, Debrunner and Funk 1961 §390; Jordaan, 2014:32, 104). The key interpretative issue concerns the relationship between the two infinitives. One view holds that each infinitive independently broadens the definition of authentic worship — supporting the implicit insertion of *καί*: “Pure and undefiled religion is: to visit fatherless households and widows in their distress, **and** to keep oneself unstained from the world.” An alternative view sees the infinitives as sequentially related: the second, *τηρεῖν*, further specifies or intensifies the first. In this interpretation, caring for the vulnerable is not simply one element of pure religion; it is the practical means by which one remains unstained from the world. Here, no implicit *καί* is necessary, and the verse forms a cohesive, ethical statement: “Pure and undefiled religion is to visit fatherless households (orphans and widows) in their distress, **thereby** keeping oneself unstained from the world.”

This latter interpretation gains strength when James 1:27b is considered within its broader intertextual and intra-textual context. Jeremiah 3:19 (LXX)²⁷⁰ depicts God yearning for a father–child relationship with Israel. However, this familial metaphor shifts in Jeremiah 3:20 (LXX)²⁷¹ to the image of marital unfaithfulness: Israel is compared to “a woman unfaithful to her husband.” Similar imagery appears in James, where God is depicted both as Father (1:27a) and, by implication, as the wronged covenant spouse (Van Zyl, 2000:107–108). Within James itself, this marital imagery is reinforced: James 4:5 portrays God as jealously longing for his people’s loyalty, and James 4:4 directly addresses those who befriend the world as *μοιχαλίδες* (“adulteresses”), because “friendship with the world is enmity with God.” In James, as in related texts (e.g., Corpus Hermeticum 6.4²⁷²; 1 John 5:19²⁷³), the *κόσμος* signifies the realm of evil governed by the devil. Therefore, James 4:7 urges believers to submit to God and resist the devil, presupposing a covenantal struggle in which fidelity to God precludes alignment with the world. Ng’s observation

²⁷⁰ Jeremiah 3:19 (LXX) emphasises: *καὶ ἐγὼ εἶπα γένοιτο κύριε ὅτι τάξω σε εἰς τέκνα καὶ δώσω σοι γῆν ἐκλεκτὴν κληρονομίαν θεοῦ παντοκράτορος ἐθνῶν καὶ εἶπα πατέρα καλέσετε με καὶ ἂν ἐμοῦ οὐκ ἀποστραφήσεσθε* – And I said, ‘Let it be so, Lord,’ for I will set you among my children and give you a choice land, an inheritance of God the Almighty among the nations. Moreover, I said, ‘You will call me Father, and you will not turn away from me.

²⁷¹ Jeremiah 3:20 states concerning Israel’s faithfulness: *πλὴν ὡς ἀθετεῖ γυναῖκα εἰς τὸν συνόντα αὐτῇ οὕτως ἡθέτησεν εἰς ἐμὲ οἶκος Ἰσραὴλ λέγει κύριος* – But like a woman who is unfaithful to the one who is joined to her, so has the house of Israel been unfaithful to me,” says the Lord.

²⁷² Corpus Hermeticum 6.4 states: *ὁ γὰρ κόσμος πλήρωμά ἐστι τῆς κακίας* – Since the world is full of malice.

²⁷³ 1 John 5:19 observes: *οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐσμεν καὶ ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται* – We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

(2000:50) that *ἀμίαντος* carries sexual connotations is particularly relevant here. The term modifies *ἡ κοίτη* (“marriage bed”) in Hebrew 13:4²⁷⁴ and relates to purity in Wisdom 3:13 (LXX)²⁷⁵. This indicates that the cluster of adjectives in James — *καθαρός, ἀμίαντος, ἄσπιλος* — evokes not only moral integrity but also the purity associated with the marriage covenant.

If this covenantal imagery underpins James 1:27, then “keeping oneself unstained from the world” means remaining faithful to the divine spouse. Such fidelity must manifest practically, demonstrated through obeying the Father’s will — establishing a protective household for society’s most vulnerable members, the fatherless and widows. This active expression of covenant loyalty stands in sharp contrast to a social environment in which these groups are often neglected or exploited. James implicitly condemns any Christian who imitates societal neglect, as it betrays the covenant they claim to uphold. Considering these inter- and intra-textual factors, the second infinitive, *τηρεῖν* (“to keep”), is best understood not as a separate requirement but as an intensification and clarification of *ἐπισκέπτεσθαι* (“to visit”). Compassionate care for the fatherless and widows is the essential means by which believers stay unstained from the world; covenant fidelity is enacted through covenantal responsibility. Accordingly, James 1:27 may be translated: “Pure and undefiled religion is this: to visit fatherless households (orphans and widows) in their distress, and in doing so (thus, thereby) to keep oneself unstained from the world.”

10.5.5.6 Summary of the analysis of James 1:27

Within the Roman socio-historical context, *ὀρφανοί καὶ χῆραι*, or fatherless households, were frequently marginalised and relegated to menial labour or prostitution. Against this backdrop, the ethical imperative of James 1:27 becomes especially significant. James underscores the necessity of caring for these vulnerable groups (*ἐπισκέπτεσθαι*) as the defining feature of authentic *θρησκεία*, deliberately redirecting attention from passive belief or ritual observance to active, socially responsible engagement.

²⁷⁴ Hebrew 13:4 discusses faithfulness: *Τίμιος ὁ γάμος ἐν πᾶσιν καὶ ἡ κοίτη ἀμίαντος, πόρνους γὰρ καὶ μοιχοὺς κρινεῖ ὁ θεός* – Marriage is to be honoured among all, and the marriage bed kept undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers.

²⁷⁵ Wisdom 3:13 relates: *ὅτι μακαρία στεῖρα ἡ ἀμίαντος ἥτις οὐκ ἔγνω κοίτην ἐν παραπτώματι ἔξει καρπὸν ἐν ἐπισκοπῇ ψυχῶν* – Blessed is the barren woman who is undefiled, who has not known a sinful union; she will have fruit at the visitation of souls.

The epistle urges believers to assume a surrogate paternal role on behalf of God the Father, thereby directly challenging and subverting the exploitative norms of the *κόσμος*, which often neglected or exploited such households. This exhortation addresses not only prevailing societal practices but also potential shortcomings within the early Christian community, where widows and orphans may have been neglected, marginalised, or exploited in ways like those in the broader culture.

James grounds this ethical reorientation in a theological perspective informed by texts such as Psalm 67:6 (LXX) and by the conviction that all humans bear God's image (*καθ' ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ*, James 3:9). Consequently, religious devotion is redefined as alignment with God's life-giving and creative character. Within the covenantal marriage metaphor central to James's theology, caring for fatherless households serves as both a divine representation and a tangible demonstration of covenantal faithfulness.

From this perspective, the socially vulnerable serve as ethical arbiters within the community; their treatment reveals whether believers genuinely embody devotion or merely perform it. Accordingly, James calls on Christians to identify fatherless households, discern their specific needs, and respond with sustained, meaningful care, thereby making their well-being a primary indicator of authentic faith rather than religious pretence.

This ethical focus is underscored by the chiastic structure of James 1:19–27, framed by kinship language. The passage opens (**A**; James 1:19) with the familial address *ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί* ("my beloved brothers"), situating the community as a household established by the word of truth (1:18). It concludes (**A'**; James 1:27) with corresponding familial imagery: God is identified as Father, and believers are called to care for fatherless households as an expression of divine kinship. This progression, from addressing the community as beloved siblings to urging them to embody the Father's care, establishes a balanced relational dynamic. The chiastic structure reinforces James's central message: membership in God's family requires reflecting the Father's character through active, protective love. Hearing and doing the Word are not merely abstract obligations but acts of covenantal family loyalty, demonstrated through care for society's most vulnerable.

10.5.6 The logical coherence and interrelated dynamics of the multi-dimensional chiasmus in James 1:19–27

Analysis of the interconnected chiastic elements demonstrates that the structural pattern of James 1:19–27 — **A (1:19–20), B (1:21), C (1:22–25), B' (1:26), A' (1:27)** — exemplifies a multi-

dimensional rhetorical and theological progression. This sequence traces a progression from attentive listening to active engagement, and from internal disposition to observable ethical conduct.

The **A/A'** framework distinguishes between false and true religion. It begins in James 1:19–20 by emphasising disciplined listening, restrained speech, and controlled anger. It concludes in James 1:27 with the ideal of pure religion expressed through covenant fidelity, social responsibility, and moral purity. Ethical conduct toward fatherless households serves as a concrete indicator of authentic faith, representing fidelity within the metaphor of the marital relationship between God and His people, where faithful spouses act with integrity and compassion. These external markers reinforce one another; the prohibitions in **A** correspond ethically to the prescriptions in **A'**.

Within this structure, **B** (James 1:21) and **B'** (James 1:26) form the second pair, each underscoring factors that either facilitate or hinder the authentic reception of the word. **B** emphasises the need to remove moral impurity so the implanted word can effect transformation in the believer. Conversely, **B'** exposes the self-deception of those who do not control their speech, thereby invalidating their professed devotion.

At the centre, **C** (James 1:22–25) serves as the theological and rhetorical focal point. The mirror metaphor exposes the inadequacy of passive hearing and calls for embodied obedience. This central section clarifies the structure by elucidating the nature of deception in **B/B'** and distinguishing superficial from authentic religion in **A/A'**. The resulting chiasmus integrates ethical action, moral development, and communal identity. The community established through the *λόγος* (1:18) is thus called to move beyond passive hearing to active obedience, as demonstrated in regulated speech, moral integrity, and concrete care for the socially marginalised. Each element reinforces the others within the concentric framework.

The multi-effect chiasmus operative in James 1:19–27 is outlined schematically in **Figure 10.1**.

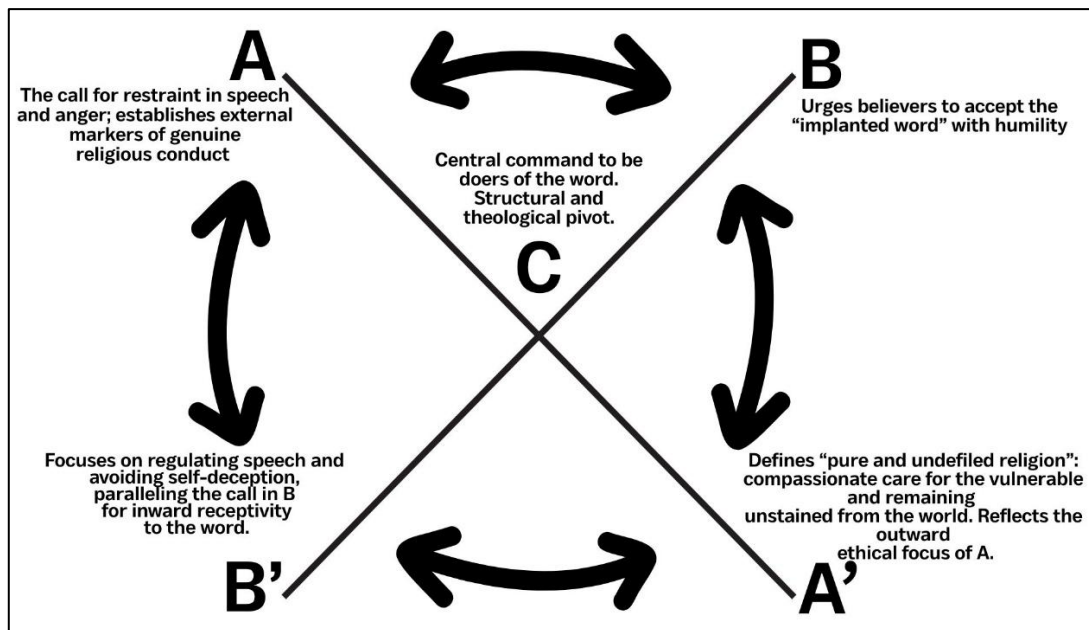


Figure 10.1: Multi-effect chiasmatic structure in James 1:19–27

Source: Author's own diagram.

James 1:19–27 constructs a complex network of conceptual metaphors — sensory, agricultural, cultic, visual, and kinetic — that translate theological claims into vivid, embodied imagery. These metaphors present the reception of the word as an internal, transformative process that necessarily leads to external, embodied obedience, thereby underscoring the epistle's emphasis on the unity of faith and practice. The rhetorical function of these metaphors is directly connected to the passage's rhetography, which is analysed in the second phase of the multidimensional hermeneutic analysis, known as the embodied-cognitive stage. This stage investigates how the multi-effect chiasmus shapes the reader's interpretative experience and examines its embodied impact.

10.6 Phase 2: the embodied-cognitive phase (embodied and socio-cultural engagement) of the investigation.

10.6.1 Analysis of the conceptual metaphors in James 1:19–27 and its rhetography

A comprehensive analysis of the conceptual metaphors in James 1:19–27 is presented in **Table 10.8**. This analysis highlights the interconnections among metaphorical language, cognitive mapping, and theological instruction by examining each metaphor in terms of its source domain — the familiar experiential or physical context from which meaning is drawn — and its target domain — the abstract ethical or spiritual reality articulated by the text. In addition, the table

explores the rhetographical function of these metaphors, showing how they engage the reader's senses, imagination, and embodied cognition to reinforce the epistle's moral and theological aims. The theological significance of each metaphor is thereby clarified, illustrating how James transforms ordinary experiences — such as family relations, agriculture, bodily perception, speech, and ritual purity — into vivid representations of faith in action. Taken together, the analysis demonstrates that these metaphors function not merely as cognitive or literary devices but as formative instruments guiding the community's ethical and spiritual development.

Table 10.8: Conceptual metaphors and theology in James 1:19–27

Conceptual Metaphor	Verses	Source Domain	Target Domain	Rhetographic Function	Theological Meaning
“My beloved brothers” as kinship language.	1:19	Family and sibling relationships.	Christian community identity.	Conveys the warmth, intimacy, and responsibilities of family bonds to shape communal identity.	Affirms that believers are divine-born siblings (1:18), connecting ethical encouragement to their divine family identity.
Anger as a form of moral pollution.	1:20–21	Dirt, impurity, contamination.	Moral and spiritual corruption.	Conveys a visceral feeling and visual image of contamination that needs to be removed.	Highlights the incompatibility of anger with God's righteousness; it calls for purification before receiving the word.
The word is a planted seed.	1:21	Agriculture, horticulture, and growth cycles.	Spiritual development and ethical change.	Encourages readers to imagine internal germination and growth. The seed metaphor and its related growth are reflected in James 1:1 ('the twelve tribes in the diaspora') and again in 1:18 ('the first fruits of his creation').	God's word is generative, yielding new life and ethical fruit when nurtured with humility.

Conceptual Metaphor	Verses	Source Domain	Target Domain	Rhetographic Function	Theological Meaning
Speech as a controlled or uncontrolled force.	1:19; 1:26	Animal harnessing and force dynamics.	Moral discipline and spiritual development.	Evokes vivid sensory images of a powerful entity, like a force, tool, or animal, that requires restraint.	Proper speech is a mark of true religion; uncontrolled speech shows spiritual falsehood.
Hearing and doing resemble seeing and acting (mirror metaphor).	1:22-25	Visual perception, reflection, and memory.	Moral perception and obedience.	Creates vivid visual imagery of self-recognition and forgetfulness, emphasising the contrast between hearing and acting.	Faithful obedience involves ongoing self-awareness before God; neglecting this leads to hypocrisy.
Faithfulness to God as a covenantal marriage (implied with καθαρός, ἀμίαντος, ἄσπιλος).	1:27	Marriage, household duties, and relational fidelity are common social constructs.	Spiritual integrity, covenantal faithfulness, and moral purity.	James uses relational imagery (household, visiting, protection) to engage readers' senses and imagination, making abstract ethical imperatives tangible. He creates emotional, moral, and relational imagery of a faithful spouse contrasted with an adulterous one.	Ethical care for the marginalised is essential to faithfulness to God; acting for the vulnerable shows covenant loyalty and preserves one's purity from worldly corruption.
The world is a corrupting influence.	1:27	Dirt, contaminants, and external impurities.	Moral corruption caused by societal evil.	Conveys the image of being stained, creating a tangible feeling of contamination.	Faithful discipleship requires avoiding the world's corrupting influences by practising holy living. This holiness means resisting societal trends that exploit the vulnerable.

Source: Author's own analysis.

Collectively, these metaphors demonstrate how James 1:19–27 establishes an embodied moral and theological framework in which faith is conceptualised, experienced, and enacted through the body's sensory and relational capacities. Through motifs of kinship, agriculture, purity, perception,

and covenantal marriage, the text engages embodied cognition, allowing readers to comprehend and experience the requirements of faithful obedience. This interconnected network of metaphors informs the moral imagination by grounding theological claims in concrete, lived bodily realities, as reflected in the passage's rhetographic texture. As a result, James unifies hearing and doing, inward renewal and outward action, and personal holiness and communal responsibility, presenting a coherent progression toward a faith that is both observable and active in daily life.

10.6.2 The embodied impact of the multi-effect chiasmus in James 1:19–27

Pelkey's (2021:30–54) three principal features of rhombic chiasmus, also termed "multi-effect chiasmus" by Grausso (2020:104–106), provide a robust framework for analysing the structure of James 1:19–27. First, rhombic chiasmus is inherently geometric, defined by movements of contraction, expansion, and release (Pelkey 2021:33–35). Second, it generates a "third space" at its centre, a productive interpretative zone where opposing elements are held in tension and integrated into new meaning (Pelkey 2021:39–41). Third, it fulfils a cognitive function by facilitating conceptual transformation, moving audiences from disconnection or passivity towards greater participation and engagement (Pelkey 2021:46–48).

James 1:19–27 exemplifies all three features. Its chiastic pattern — **A** (1:19–20), **B** (1:21), **C** (1:22–25), **B'** (1:26), **A'** (1:27) — illustrates the geometric movement identified by Pelkey. The structure contracts toward the central unit and then expands outward, with verses 22–25 forming the most extensive and developed section. This arrangement forms a rhetorical "diamond," intensifying the centre both conceptually and verbally. It thereby fulfils Pelkey's spatial criterion by focusing the reader's attention on a central point of rhetorical emphasis before directing them towards ethical application.

The passage further illustrates Pelkey's concept of a "third space." The central section (James 1:22–25) not only links the surrounding themes of hearing and acting but also introduces a new synthesis through the mirror metaphor. By contrasting looking, forgetting, and doing, this segment reconfigures the relationship between listening and obedience into a unified vision of embodied action. This interpretative midpoint functions as Pelkey describes: a productive centre that transforms the surrounding elements rather than merely reflecting them.

Finally, the structure meets Pelkey's cognitive criterion. Its inward movement fosters introspection, akin to self-examination in a mirror, while its outward expansion encourages readers to express their faith through practical, ethical actions (1:26–27). The chiasmus thus

guides readers through the transformation it advocates, moving them from passive reception to active, embodied obedience.

Thus, James 1:19–27 functions not merely as a simple A–B–C–B’–A’ inversion but as a complex, multi-layered structure that simultaneously elicits cognitive, emotional, spatial, and embodied responses. The expansion of the centre and the narrowing of the outer sections create a rhombus-like form that visually and conceptually underscores the imperative to “do the word.” Consequently, the chiasmic structure guides the reader’s interpretative movement inward toward the central exhortation and outward toward faithful action, thereby embodying the very dynamic the passage seeks to instil. The rhombic chiasmus identified in James 1:19–27 is illustrated schematically in **Figure 10.2**.

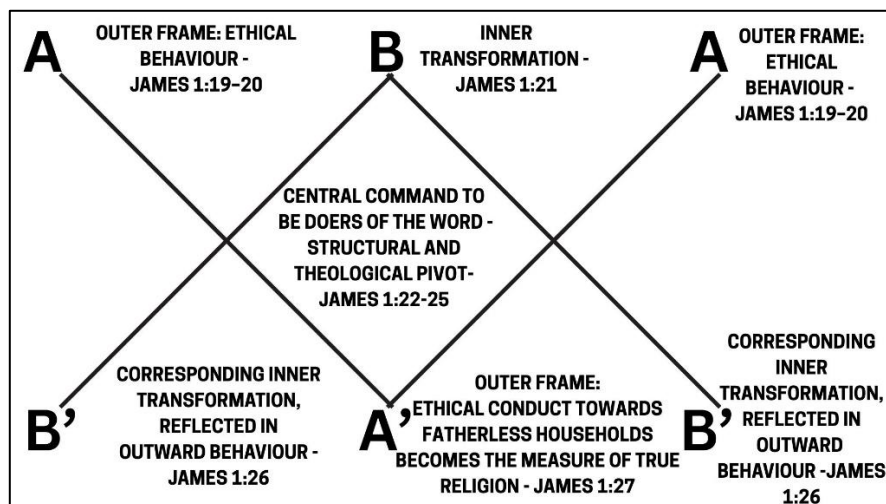


Figure 10.2: Rhombic (multi-effect) chiasmic structure in James 1:19–27

Source: Author’s own diagram.

James 1:19–27 offers a model for expressing theological significance through ethical action, consistent with Kearney’s carnal hermeneutics (2015), which emphasises interpretation through the senses, the body, and the interaction of word and flesh. The passage moves from hearing to doing, showing that the implanted word becomes authentic only when enacted in practices such as controlled speech, restrained anger, care for the vulnerable, and moral integrity. This pattern reflects the motif of the suffering yet wise servant, whose obedience is shaped by endurance and expressed through compassion. James thus supports Kearney’s view that interpretation is mediated by the vulnerable, responsive body and realised through hospitality and ethical responsibility. James 1:19–27 shows that embodied practice is the context in which the word is both interpreted and fulfilled. This insight underpins the theological-ethical phase of the multidimensional hermeneutic analysis discussed below.

10.7 Phase 3: the theological and ethical synthesis (the theological ethical phase)

10.7.1 James 1:19–27 as carnal hermeneutics: hearing and doing in the household of God

James 1:19–27 offers a clear example of carnal hermeneutics, interpreting God's word through embodied, sensory, and socially formative practices. Rather than treating theology as abstract or purely cognitive, the "implanted word" (1:21) is expressed in concrete actions that support the community as God's household. The passage's chiasmic structure underscores this point. The opening address, "my beloved brothers" (1:19), and the closing reference to God as "Father," together with the call to care for "orphans and widows" (1:27), present interpretation as a relational and embodied process. Understanding the word, therefore, requires active participation in kinship practices, especially towards those without familial protection.

10.7.2 Carnal hermeneutics and the wise servant (James 1:19–21)

The initial imperatives — to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger (1:19) — situate interpretation within embodied experience. Hearing, speech, and emotional restraint are loci for discerning wisdom, not merely preliminary moral disciplines. Attentive listening demonstrates openness to the word, restrained speech recognises the ethical significance of language, and controlled anger resists impulses that disrupt communal life. The exhortation to remove moral defilement (1:21) further underscores that bodily dispositions shape receptivity to the implanted word. For James, divine wisdom is cultivated in a body whose habits, gestures, and emotional responses are formed through obedience.

10.7.3 From the implanted word to the mirror image (James 1:22–25)

At the core of the chiasmus, James extends bodily hermeneutics by highlighting the gap between hearing and doing. The mirror analogy (1:23–24) portrays failed interpretation as a bodily failure rather than an intellectual one. What is overlooked is not merely information but identity — the moral essence of the wise servant. This disconnect between perception and action illustrates the disembodied interpretation criticised by carnal hermeneutics.

In contrast, the individual who "looks intently into the perfect law of freedom" and perseveres (1:25) employs an interpretative approach in which meaning endures through practice. This act

of gazing symbolises ongoing, embodied engagement that shapes behaviour and habits. To “do” the word is to engage actively with its meaning, with obedience indicating genuine understanding.

10.7.4 Religion embodied: speech and vulnerability in the community (James 1:26–27)

James transitions from emphasising personal discipline to focusing on community expression. He highlights that controlling speech (1:26) is a key sign of genuine religion, since speech is a physical act with social significance. When verbal behaviour conflicts with one's devotion, it exposes the emptiness of religious practice. The definition of pure religion in 1:27 connects theology to caring for orphans and widows, who are the most vulnerable in the ancient household economy. In this view, faith is demonstrated through actions that rebuild kinship, offer protection, and uphold dignity. God's fatherhood is reflected in the community's engagement with vulnerable individuals and its response with tangible care.

10.7.5 Chiastic framing and embodied kinship (A–A')

The outer frame of the A–B–C–B'–A' structure unifies the passage by centring it on embodied kinship.

- **A** (1:19): The phrase “my beloved brothers” identifies the audience as God's newly begotten family (1:18), a context in which wisdom is cultivated through attentiveness and mutual responsibility.
- **A'** (1:27): The identification of God as “Father” and the call to care for orphans and widows define the community's vocation as extending divine kinship to those without protection.

This structural symmetry reinforces the assertion that interpretation and embodiment are inseparable. Reception of the word necessarily produces practices that reflect God's familial care.

10.7.6 Conclusion

James 1:19–27 presents a hermeneutical perspective grounded in embodied obedience, sensory discipline, and communal duties. Wisdom is developed not just through comprehension but also via active participation in God's restorative work, such as managing speech, resisting harmful urges, and caring for the vulnerable. For James, interpretation is incarnational: the word is experienced through the body and affirmed through practices of justice, protection, and love within

the community of faith. The passage illustrates a carnal hermeneutic where theology and moral life are deeply interconnected.

10.8 Summary

A structured overview of the main themes in James 1:19–27, clarified through a multidimensional hermeneutical analysis and situated within the broader research aims of this study, is presented in **Table 10.9**.

Table 10.9: Multidimensional thematic synthesis of James 1:19–27

Analytical Dimension	Key Features	Description and function in James 1:19–27
STRUCTURAL–RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF JAMES 1:19–27		
Overall Structural Design	Multi-effect chiasmus (A–B–C–B'–A').	James 1:19–27 is structured as a multi-effect chiasmic unit that guides the passage's flow and emphasis. Its arrangement offers ethical guidance within a clear rhetorical framework, allowing corresponding elements to illuminate one another while emphasising the core theological message.
James 1:19–20 serves as the opening A-element of a multi-effect chiasmus in James 1:19–27.	Sets the ethical basis for the whole unit.	James 1:19–20 highlights the ethical core of the passage through a kinship metaphor that emphasises communal identity and moral authority. By referencing first-century family customs, James presents the audience as a divinely established household created by the “word of truth,” from which moral duties arise naturally. The three-part instruction — be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger — draws on Jewish wisdom traditions and employs balanced parallelism to advocate self-control as a shared value. Verse 20 offers the theological reasoning: human anger conflicts with the righteousness that God requires of the renewed community. Together, these verses serve as the opening boundary of the chiasmic structure and foreshadow its conclusion, framing the progression from listening to acting on the word and anchoring the whole passage in a unified communal and ethical perspective.

Analytical Dimension	Key Features	Description and function in James 1:19–27
James 1:21 serves as the B-element in the multi-effect chiasmus in James 1:19–27.	Forms an essential link between the initial ethical framework (1:19–20) and the main call to act on the word (1:22–25).	Beginning with διό (“therefore”), this verse redirects attention from external controls to inner moral change. It pairs a negative call to reject moral corruption with a positive instruction to receive the implanted word meekly, highlighting humility as essential for spiritual openness. The ending clause emphasises the word's life-changing and powerful nature, portraying it as active and transformative. Overall, James 1:21 connects inner attitude with obedient action, presenting true faith as both receptive and morally influential.
James 1:22–25 forms the C-element and theological centre of the multi-effect chiasmus in 1:19–27.	Hearing–doing antithesis; law of liberty. Situated between the call to accept the implanted word (1:21) and the final judgments on true religion (1:26–27), this section marks the essential transition from inner acceptance to external action.	In James 1:22–25, the core element and theological focus of the chiasmus shifts from inward receptivity (1:21) to outward action, emphasising that genuine faith requires embodied obedience. Verse 22 encourages continuous engagement — “be doers of the word, not hearers only” — and warns against self-deception through passive listening. The mirror analogy (1:23–24) illustrates moral and epistemic failure, while verse 25 urges the faithful to respond with scrutiny, perseverance, and practical action, leading to the promised blessing. Intertextually, the “perfect law of liberty” alludes to Jewish descriptions of the Torah as perfect and incorporates new-covenant motifs in which divine instruction becomes internalised and liberating — transforming instruction itself and demonstrating that the implanted word fulfils its saving purpose through active, lived practice.
James 1:26 functions as the B'-element in the multi-effect chiasmus of 1:19–27.	This aligns with James 1:21 by showing how true inner transformation can be validated or revealed as false through outward behaviour. Consequently, verse 1:21 (inner receptivity) and 1:26 (outward evidence) cover the broader context of 1:22–25, highlighting that authentic faith is demonstrated through disciplined, obedient actions.	James 1:26 connects internal transformation (1:21) with outward behaviour, showing that true religion is validated through ethical actions. The verse uses a wisdom-admonition structure — conditional, contrasting, conclusive — to highlight the gap between self-perceived piety and actual conduct: failing to “bridle the tongue” while deceiving oneself indicates superficial religiosity. The final judgment — “this person's religion is worthless” — emphasises that authentic faith is judged by discipline in speech and moral integrity, not appearance. The placement of the demonstrative τούτου emphasises the judgment, while μάταιος highlights the futility and emptiness of such religiosity.

Analytical Dimension	Key Features	Description and function in James 1:19–27
James 1:27 functions as the A'-element of the multi-effect chiasmus in 1:19–27.	Completes the outer ethical framework set at the start of the unit. Although it begins with kinship language addressing “beloved brothers” (1:19), it ends by identifying God as Father and urging the community to express that paternal care through tangible ethical actions. Thus, the structure transitions from emphasising communal identity to highlighting communal responsibility.	James 1:27 redefines true religion as ethical action rather than mere ritual observance. Through anadiplosis, the concept of “religion” shifts from empty gestures (1:26) to a “pure and undefiled” devotion, demonstrated by disciplined speech, caring for orphans and widows, and upholding moral integrity. Intertextually, the verse mirrors God’s character as protector of the vulnerable (Psalm 67:6 LXX), encouraging the community to imitate this fatherly concern. Socially, it confronts the exploitation of widows and orphans in the Roman context. The linked infinitives (ἐπισκέπτεσθαι ὀρφανοὺς καὶ χήρας ἐν τῇ θλίψει αὐτῶν, ἄσπιλον ἑαυτὸν τηρεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου) suggest caring for the vulnerable to remain unstained by the world, framing moral purity as covenantal loyalty. Ultimately, James 1:27 emphasises practical, compassionate care as the essence of authentic religion and true membership in God’s family.
EMBODIED–COGNITIVE ANALYSIS OF JAMES 1:19–27 (SEE PARAGRAPH 3.1)		
Embodied–cognitive features	Conceptual metaphors	James 1:19–27 employs a series of conceptual metaphors to convey its moral and theological message. Kinship terms such as “my beloved brothers” ground the exhortation in a sense of community, while anger and reckless speech are portrayed as moral contaminants that threaten genuine faith. God’s word is likened to a seed that must be carefully cultivated through obedience, and the mirror metaphor shows that merely hearing without acting leads to self-deception. Language about purity emphasises covenantal loyalty to God, contrasting with the world’s corrupting influence. Overall, these images underscore that true faith is expressed through disciplined behaviour, faithful obedience, and compassionate actions that reflect God’s nature.

Analytical Dimension	Key Features	Description and function in James 1:19–27
	Rhetography	Images serve a rhetorical purpose by appealing to readers' senses and moral imagination. Kinship language conveys warmth, intimacy, and shared responsibility, fostering a sense of community. Metaphors of pollution and staining vividly illustrate moral contamination that must be removed or avoided. Seed imagery encourages readers to envision inner growth and productivity, while portraying speech as a powerful force highlights the importance of restraint. The mirror metaphor underscores the danger of self-recognition without corresponding action. Relational and covenantal imagery — particularly the faithful versus adulterous relationship — makes ethical demands concrete, emotional, and compelling, reinforcing James's call for embodied, faithful obedience.
	Embodied chiasmus (multi-effect pattern).	Pelkey's concept of rhombic (multi-effect) chiasmus offers a framework for understanding James 1:19–27 as a dynamic structure in both geometric and cognitive terms. The A–B–C–B'–A' pattern narrows toward an expanded central section (1:22–25) before widening again, creating a rhombus-like shape that emphasises the passage's main message. This central part functions as Pelkey's "third space," integrating listening and action into a cohesive concept of embodied obedience, symbolised by the mirror metaphor. Cognitively, the inward movement encourages self-reflection, while the outward movement inspires ethical behaviour, especially in speech and caring for the vulnerable. The chiasmus serves not only as a literary device but also as a guiding framework, leading readers from passive listening to active, embodied faith.
THEOLOGICAL-ETHICAL ANALYSIS OF JAMES 1:19–27		
Theological–Ethical Features	Ethical response – the suffering and wise slave	James 1:19–21 presents the wise servant as one who embodies God's word through disciplined practice. Wisdom is demonstrated not solely through reflection but also through obedient attentiveness, including listening promptly, speaking with care, restraining anger, and eliminating moral impurity. The wise servant permits the implanted word to transform bodily habits and emotional responses, thereby exemplifying faithful service within a life characterised by humility, self-control, and openness to divine instruction.

Analytical Dimension	Key Features	Description and function in James 1:19–27
	Embodied reciprocity (Kearney's carnal hermeneutics)	James 1:19–27 presents a bodily hermeneutic in which God's word is first encountered through embodied experience before being grasped in abstract terms. Interpretation requires disciplined listening, measured speech, emotional regulation, and moral purification. These practices establish the body as the primary locus of meaning. The central mirror metaphor underscores this embodied approach, suggesting that genuine understanding emerges only when perception is cultivated and sustained through obedient action. The passage concludes with an appeal to communal embodiment, where careful speech and care for the vulnerable render theology concrete. For James, meaning is realised not solely in cognition but through tangible, relational actions that manifest God's paternal love.

Source: Author's own analysis.

Chapter 11 concludes the study by presenting a final synthesis that highlights a multidimensional, embodied rhetorical reading of James. This approach integrates embodied cognition, carnal hermeneutics, chiasmus typologies, and Robbins's socio-rhetorical textures. The chapter shows that meaning arises from the interplay of bodily, rhetorical, structural, and social factors, thereby transcending simplistic binary oppositions.

CHAPTER 11 THE FINAL SYNTHESIS – A MULTIDIMENSIONAL, EMBODIED-RHETORICAL READING OF JAMES 1:1-27

A text's career outstrips the finite horizon lived by its author. What the text says now matters more than what the author meant to say.

(Ricoeur, 1976:87)

Because our bodily existence inaugurates our primary “consonance with the world,” it remains our first line of resistance and exposure to others. Existence comes into its own in the body and finds there its originary sense. Expression does not exist apart from the body, and the body does not exist apart from expression.

(Kearney, 2011:114)

11.1 A multidimensional, embodied hermeneutic of James

This study emphasised a significant issue in contemporary research on the Epistle of James: the tendency to treat its contrasts as rigid moral binaries rather than interconnected facets of lived ethical experience. Although James is often described as didactic and ethically dualistic — commonly associated with the traditional “Two Ways” motif of life and death — such interpretations oversimplify the text's rhetorical complexity, vivid imagery, and relational depth. As Sheets-Johnstone (2000:173) notes, binary oppositions rooted in dualistic thinking often overlook the everyday, consistent experiences of living bodies. Building on this idea, this study re-examined how oppositions operate in ancient Christian moral discourse, suggesting that in James, they are not merely fixed either-or choices but create tension-filled dimensions that shape an embodied moral landscape. With James 1:1–27 as its focus, the thesis argued that the letter's ethical perspective emerges from the dynamic interplay of bodily perception, social relations, and theological meaning.

Throughout Jewish wisdom traditions and early Christian moral teaching, the Two Ways motif has long served as a pedagogical model for contrasting ways of life. Numerous scholars have noted James's engagement with this tradition, emphasising his distinctions between belief and practice, such as faith and doubt, hearing and doing, humility and arrogance, peace and conflict, purity and pollution, and stability and instability (Smith, 1993; Van Zyl, 2000; Lockett, 2008; Watson, 2007, 2019, Johnson, 199). As explained earlier, the difficulty lies not in identifying these oppositions but in recognising that they are not fixed or mutually exclusive. When interpreted as rigid either-

or choices, the Two Ways become overly simplistic and abstract, obscuring the embodied, relational, spatial, and social realities that James consistently explores. This analysis argued that these contrasts are intentionally designed to foster ongoing ethical reflection in real-life community contexts.

To address this interpretative challenge, the thesis introduced a multidimensional framework that transcends strict dualism by embracing dynamic duality. Rather than treating James's oppositions as fixed moral limits, the study proposed that they are interconnected poles whose ongoing tension generates ethical significance. Therefore, the Two Ways do not present a limited choice requiring a final decision; instead, they delineate the broad outline of a moral landscape inhabited by individuals. In this space, embodied agents continuously negotiate desires, speech, anger, labour, poverty, power, and communal belonging, all within a world perceived as infused with divine presence. James's view of moral development is not about choosing between abstract options but about ongoing bodily participation in a relational, tension-laden ethical environment.

James 1:1–27 articulates its ethical vision through a diverse range of metaphors derived from bodily perception and the natural world. The text utilises imagery such as trials that foster endurance (1:2–4), wind-driven waves (1:6), plants that either flourish or wither under the sun (1:10–11), desires culminating in sin and death (1:14–15), and the implanted word as a living seed (1:21) to convey moral lessons through vivid sensory language. The passage underscores ethical discernment through attentiveness and compassion, exemplified by the mirror that reveals self-deception (1:23–24), the unwavering generosity of the “Father of lights” (1:17), and the imperative to care for orphans and widows (1:27), each of which reflects God's nurturing and paternal character. These metaphors connect ethical responsibility to bodily awareness, relational conduct, and ecological imagination, thereby requiring an interpretative approach attentive to rhetorical form, embodied experience, and social practice.

The study also showed that these metaphors do more than compare moral ideas; they create a liminal or “third space” for ethical development. This space is a dynamic, tangible zone between stability and chaos, growth and decay, listening and acting, faith and deeds. In James's deeply theological ecological view, bodies are not detached moral entities, but fragile, perceptive beings rooted in land, light, time, and social ties. Ethical understanding and change unfold within this dynamic relational space, where human bodies encounter others, the natural world, and God. Moral life is therefore not merely about choosing between opposing ideals but about actively engaging with a divinely ordered yet tension-filled world.

To address this complexity, the study developed a multidimensional hermeneutical model grounded in Vernon K. Robbins's socio-rhetorical criticism and enriched by insights from

embodied cognition, carnal hermeneutics, and chiasmic typology. Rather than applying these approaches sequentially, the model integrated them as interrelated dimensions within a single framework attentive to rhetorical form, bodily experience, social relations, and theological vision.

As mentioned earlier, this framework was developed through three linked interpretative stages. First, it conducted a structural and rhetorical analysis (the structural-rhetorical phase) to identify chiasmic patterns and track shifts across syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic levels. Second, it incorporated embodied and socio-cultural aspects by examining metaphor, rhetography, marginality, intertextual memory, community dynamics, and embodied chiasmus (the embodied-cognitive phase). Third, it offered a theological–ethical synthesis (the theological-ethical phase) that analysed sacred authority, ideological critique and the development of ethical agency. Together, these stages showed that meaning in James arises from the interplay of rhetorical structure, embodied cognition, social influence, and the sacred, rather than from any single interpretative method.

As the analysis of James 1:1–27 demonstrated, chiasmus is integral to shaping the letter’s ethical outlook. Rather than focusing on fixed moral opposites such as hearing versus doing or faith versus action, James’s intricate chiasmic structures — including multi-effect, hourglass, and exclusion patterns — highlight themes of transformation, reversal, and moral tension. These rhetorical devices engage the audience in a continuous process of discernment and practice, framing the Two Ways not as abstract choices but as real-life orientations cultivated through bodily discipline, intentional speech, perseverance, restraint, and care for others. Recognising these chiasmic patterns thus reveals an ethical vision rooted in embodied participation rather than rigid moral dichotomies.

This final chapter synthesises these themes by revisiting the key relational questions that have shaped the study. It examines the links between God, the universe, and humanity; how humans are embedded in their environment and space; the depiction of Christ in relation to the audience; social bonds within communities; gendered dynamics; the material embodiment of ideas and values; and the creation of liminal or “third spaces” through perceived binaries (see Chapter 1, paragraph 1.4). Together, these insights reveal a complex, textured textual world in which James aims to shape embodied individuals and communities. Instead of primarily providing doctrinal statements or rigid moral rules, the letter aims to promote practical wisdom, relational responsibility, and a community life centred on wholeness. This chapter summarises the study’s findings and incorporates James’s relational and embodied ethical perspective, thereby highlighting the text’s nuanced texture.

11.2 Revisiting the study's core relational questions

Table 11.1 synthesises the study's findings by revisiting the central relational research questions and linking them to the analysis of James 1:1–27. Instead of providing additional exegetical detail, the table serves as a conceptual map that demonstrates how each research question is addressed across the pericopes and rhetorical units examined in Chapters 4–10. By correlating specific passages with relational, embodied, ecological, and communal themes, the table illustrates that the study's multidimensional approach locates meaning within relationships and transitional spaces, rather than in fixed categories or abstract doctrine. This approach both summarises the findings and demonstrates the study's internal coherence, thereby preparing for the final synthesis and underscoring its original contribution.

Table 11.1: Synthesis of research questions and findings

Core relational research question	James 1:1–27 — Synthesised findings with textual reference
How are relationships between God, the universe, and humanity constructed in James 1:1–27?	The Epistle of James portrays God as the stable, life-giving centre of a morally dynamic universe. In James 1:1, God and Jesus Christ occupy the chiasmic centre of the opening formulation, grounding identity and authority in relational rather than institutional terms. This structure not only demonstrates rhetorical skill but also positions James's self-understanding between two divine referents, suggesting that his authority derives entirely from his relationship with God and Jesus Christ. The chiasmic centre thus serves as a generative and mediating "third space" of identity that resists conventional religious categorisation. From an embodied–cognitive perspective, this introduction presents identity as something lived and practised. The name Ἰάκωβος evokes Jacob, the patriarch of the twelve tribes, associated with struggle, wisdom, and covenantal endurance, while also recalling the historical James, the brother of Jesus, known for piety, leadership within the Jerusalem community, and martyrdom. The designation δοῦλος emphasises an embodied posture of submission and allegiance, shaping a <i>habitus</i> in which endurance, wisdom, and faithful service are inseparable. This theological orientation shapes the chapter's ethical logic. James 1:2–4 and 1:12 situate endurance within an eschatological horizon, interpreting present trials in light of divine promise. James 1:13–15 clearly distinguishes God's holiness from disordered human desire, while James 1:16–18 presents God as the unchanging "Father of lights," whose beneficence continually enters the created order. Finally, James 1:27 urges believers to reflect divine compassion through tangible care for the vulnerable, particularly orphans and widows. Collectively, these passages articulate an ethical vision structured by the tension between divine constancy and human fragility, in which moral formation develops through relational responsiveness rather than mechanistic causality.

Core relational research question	James 1:1–27 — Synthesised findings with textual reference
How does James depict human embeddedness within environment, space, and the material world?	Human existence is consistently portrayed as embedded in spatial and ecological contexts. James 1:1 employs diaspora and seed-scattering imagery to convey vulnerability and exposure. James 1:2–4 utilises the metaphor of refining fire to link bodily sensations with moral development, while James 1:5–8 uses wind-driven waves to symbolise instability. James 1:9–11 situates social status within natural cycles, exemplified by the image of a fading flower. James 1:12 employs a race-and-competition metaphor, and James 1:13–15 draws on sexual and gestational imagery to caution against temptation. James 1:16–18 introduces cosmic motifs such as light, shadow, and descent, and James 1:22–25 employs the mirror to illustrate how bodily perception informs ethical identity. Overall, ethical meaning is constructed within lived, physical realities.
How is Christ portrayed in relation to the audience, explicitly or implicitly?	Christ is directly mentioned in James 1:1 and influences the ethical outlook throughout the passage. The <i>δοῦλος</i> motif reflects an identity shaped by Christology, highlighting obedience and perseverance. James 1:2–4 and 1:12 reveal a recurring theme of suffering resulting in vindication, inspired by Christ, even if not explicitly stated. Christ is implicitly shown as the Judge in an eschatological context (James 1:2–4, 12). Furthermore, James 1:19–27 emphasises this theme through calls for disciplined obedience, humility, and service. The audience is encouraged to embody the <i>Jesuslogia</i> . Christ functions not just as an abstract doctrinal figure or wisdom teacher but as a role model for practical ethical conduct.
How are social bonds and communal identity constructed and sustained?	The concept of community is articulated through kinship terms such as “twelve tribes,” “my brothers,” and “beloved brothers,” as well as shared ethical practices. James 1:1 transforms a dispersed group into a unified community. Verses 2–4 emphasise endurance as a collective trait, while verses 5–8 caution that instability can undermine relationships. Verses 9–11 redefine communal honour by elevating humility over wealth. The passage in James 1:19–27 characterises communal faithfulness through prudent speech and care for orphans and widows, highlighting social responsibility as fundamental to ethical integrity.
How are gendered dynamics and power relations invoked and reconfigured?	Power is often reinterpreted through the lenses of servanthood, endurance, and vulnerability. In James 1:1, authority is rooted in loyal service rather than dominance. James 1:2–4 reconfigures Greco-Roman conceptions of masculinity by associating maturity with endurance rather than honour. The repeated address, “My brothers,” underscores a male-centred perspective and emphasises the exclusion of women. James 1:13–15 employs reproductive imagery to interrogate generative power, portraying human desire as a false creator that produces death rather than life. Collectively, these rhetorical strategies indirectly challenge traditional hierarchies.

Core relational research question	James 1:1–27 — Synthesised findings with textual reference
How are ideas and values materially embodied rather than abstractly stated?	James consistently translates abstract ethical ideas into tangible practices. Joy is found even amidst suffering (1:2–4), and wisdom is revealed through perseverance rather than intellect alone (1:5–8). Desire takes on a physical form as it heads towards death (1:13–15), and rebirth occurs through divine action (1:18). Obedience is shown in attentive listening, careful speech, and compassionate care (1:19–27). This approach makes theological concepts accessible through habitual bodily practice, blending theology with everyday lived experience.
How does James create liminal or “third spaces” through perceived binaries?	In James 1:1–27, meaning lies in liminal spaces rather than fixed oppositions. James 1:1 contrasts authority with humility; verses 2–4 link joy and suffering; 5–8 place faith and doubt amid experiential turbulence; 9–11 challenge distinctions between low and high status through ecological decay; verse 12 mediates between trial and temptation; 13–15 balance divine holiness with human responsibility; and 19–25 synthesise hearing and action. Literary devices such as multi-effect, rhombic chiasmus (1:1, 2–4, 13–15, 16–18, 19–27), ring structure or hourglass (1:5–8), and exclusionary chiasmus (1:9–11) consistently create “third spaces” that foster ethical formation.
What overall theological-anthropological vision emerges from James 1:1–27?	James presents a holistic anthropology in which God, the body, community, and the cosmos are inseparably interconnected. Ethical life is shaped by relational, embodied, and transitional processes rather than by rigid moral binaries or abstract doctrine. James 1:1–27 depicts moral formation as participatory, ecological, and communal, oriented towards wholeness (τέλειος) achieved through lived wisdom rather than prescriptive moralism.

Source: Author’s own analysis.

A close look at James 1:1–27, using key relational questions, reveals a complex moral framework. Here, meaning comes from real-life, ecological, and community relationships, not just abstract ideas or strict rules. God is shown as the steady, life-giving centre whose constant goodness supports human moral choices. Meanwhile, people are seen as vulnerable and shaped by their surroundings, social ties, and daily habits.

James 1:1–27 traces a progression from the author’s self-identification as a servant of God to a call to blend joy and suffering (1:2–4), to seek wisdom in uncertain times (1:5–8), to critique wealth and status (1:9–11), to integrate trials and temptations (1:12), to examine how desire and temptation operate in the body (1:13–15), to describe the gift of new life from God (1:16–18), and finally to show that hearing and doing cannot be separated (1:19–27). Throughout, James creates spaces where opposites are held together in helpful ways. He redefines authority as service, maturity as endurance, wisdom as steadiness, and faith as action within the community. The text’s structure, primarily through repeated patterns, supports this relational approach and encourages

readers to grow ethically rather than follow fixed rules. Overall, James presents a view in which God, the body, community, and the world are interconnected, and in which ethical wholeness (τέλειος) arises from lived, relational wisdom rather than from strict moral rules.

11.3 Conclusion: embodiment, texture, and ethical formation in James 1:1–27

This study demonstrates that a multidimensional, embodied–rhetorical reading of James 1:1–27 redefines the Two Ways motif as a dynamic domain of ethical discernment characterised by contrast, tension, and movement, rather than as a static moral binary. By integrating socio-rhetorical analysis, embodied cognition, carnal hermeneutics, and chiasmic typology, the thesis illustrates that James advances moral understanding through lived, relational practice rather than through abstract categorisation.

From a South African perspective informed by *ubuntu*, this interpretation advocates for an integrative anthropology in which identity, embodiment, and moral agency are constructed through communal belonging, mutual care, and the pursuit of relational harmony. The study employs a critical lens to address the androcentric assumptions in James and its negative portrayal of sexuality, which characterises desire (ἐπιθυμία) as a source of sin and death. This methodology integrates ethical insight with ideological critique. Although the thesis centres on James 1:1–27, the hermeneutical framework developed is applicable to other sections of James, to comparative early Christian texts on duality and moral formation, and to contemporary debates on embodied ethics, communal responsibility, and vulnerability. James is therefore positioned as a dialogical and generative text whose ethical significance develops through embodied practice, social contestation, and interpretative engagement. Future research could expand this multidimensional, embodied–rhetorical framework to additional New Testament and early Jewish texts to investigate how ethical formation arises through relational structures, embodied metaphors, and communal practices across diverse historical and cultural contexts.

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