

Literary Structure: Chiasmus

Hebrews 12:18-29 is structured as a **chiasmus** that highlights a powerful contrast between the Old Covenant at Mount Sinai and the New Covenant at Mount Zion. This literary device uses a symmetrical, ring-like pattern in which the first half (A, B, C) of the passage reflects the second (A', B', C'), drawing the reader's focus to a central, pivotal message (X).

A The Tangible Former Mountain and Earthly Fire (12:18)

Focus: The physical, terrifying mountain that can be touched and defined by blazing fire, darkness, gloom, and a whirlwind.

B God's Terrifying Voice Heard on Earth (12:19-20)

Focus: The terrifying sound of the trumpet and the divine voice that the listeners could not endure.

C Moses, the Mediator of the Old Covenant (12:21)

Focus: Moses acts as the intermediary, crying out in fear and trembling due to the terrifying scene.

X The New Reality: Zion, the Mountain of God (12:22-23)

Focus: Believers no longer approach a physical mountain of judgment but have "Mount Zion" and Jerusalem as permanent security and unhindered access to God's presence, rather than an earthly shadow.

C' Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant (12:24)

Focus: Jesus acts as the supreme intermediary, presenting sprinkled blood that speaks better than Abel's vengeful blood.

B' The Heavenly Warning Not to Refuse the Voice that Speaks (12:25)

Focus: A stern warning not to reject Him who speaks from heaven, ensuring that escape is impossible for those who turn away and apostatize.

A' The Intangible Future Kingdom and God as a Consuming Fire (12:26-29)

Focus: The transition to an unshakeable future kingdom, with the believers' responsibility to respond with profound gratitude and reverent worship, concludes with the warning that "our God is a consuming fire".

Hebrews 12:19 – "Begging" out of Fear

- **The Text:** *"Those who heard it **begged** that no further word be spoken to them."*
- **The Context:** The author is describing the historical scene at Mount Sinai when God gave the Law. The presence of God was so terrifying (thunder, lightning, thick darkness, and an explosive trumpet blast) that the Israelites could not handle the raw presence of God.
- **The Meaning of the term in Hebrews 12:19:** In this context, the word means to ***beg off, entreat, or desperately plead*** to be excused. The people were not defiant; they were simply paralyzed by fear and begged for Moses to step in as a mediator because they thought they would die.

Hebrews 12:25 – "Refusing" out of Rebellion

- **The Text:** *"See to it that you do not **refuse** Him who is speaking."*
- **The Context:** The author shifts from Mount Sinai (the Old Covenant of Law) to Mount Zion (the New Covenant of Grace through Jesus Christ).
- **The Meaning of the term in Hebrews 12:25:** In this context, the exact same word shifts in English to mean ***refuse, reject, or turn away from***. Because God's presence is no longer through terrifying earthly signs but from heaven through His Son, there is no excuse of "paralyzing fear". Turning away now is seen as an act of willful spiritual negligence or disbelief

Verse	English Translation	Meaning of <i>Paraitéomai</i>	Motivation
Hebrews 12:19	"Begged" / "Entreated"	Pleading to be excused from a terrifying experience.	Fear & Awe at God's physical power.
Hebrews 12:25	"Refused" / "Rejected"	Willfully turning down or dismissing a message.	Apathy or Unbelief toward God's grace.

By using the same Greek word twice, the author creates a powerful wordplay argument: If the Israelites were punished when they merely begged off from an earthly warning out of raw fear, how much more liable are we if we willfully refuse the message of the so great salvation coming directly from heaven?