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978-1-107-07801-7 — A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax
Bill T. Arnold , John H. Choi
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A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax

Second Edition

BILL T. ARNOLD
Asbury Theological Seminary

JOHN H. CHOI†

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A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax introduces and abridges the syntactical features of the original language of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. An intermediate-level reference grammar for Biblical Hebrew, it assumes an understanding of elementary phonology and morphology, and it defines and illustrates the fundamental syntactical features of Biblical Hebrew that most intermediate-level readers struggle to master. The volume divides Biblical Hebrew syntax and morphology into four parts. The first three cover the individual words (nouns, verbs, and particles) with the goal of helping the reader move from morphological and syntactical observations to meaning and significance. The fourth section moves beyond phrase-level phenomena and considers the larger relationships of clauses and sentences.

Since publication of the first edition, research on Biblical Hebrew syntax has substantially evolved. This new edition incorporates these developments through detailed descriptions of grammatical phenomena, including occasional insights from discourse linguistics. It retains the labels and terminology used in the first edition to maintain continuity with the majority of entry-level and more advanced grammars.

Bill T. Arnold is the Paul S. Amos Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Asbury Theological Seminary. He is the author of *Genesis* (New Cambridge Bible Commentary, 2009) and *Introduction to the Old Testament* (2014).

John H. Choi† (1975–2015) earned degrees from The University of Chicago, Asbury Theological Seminary, and the PhD in Hebraic and Cognate Studies from Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion. He authored *Traditions at Odds: The Reception of the Pentateuch in Biblical and Second Temple Period Literature* (2010).

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In memoriam

John H. Choi

1975–2015

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Preface to the Second Edition

My coauthor and I were gratified by the reception of the first edition of *GBHS* in 2003, and we were of course quite pleased when the Press decided a second edition was in order. This newly revised and expanded edition adds several features, such as a new section on relative pronouns at the end of Chapter 4, and generally updates the discussion throughout. In particular, I have added discussion and footnotes to aid the student in moving as seamlessly as possible between traditional grammatical categories and a relatively new subdiscipline in biblical studies – that of discourse linguistics. This has involved expanding the discussion at certain junctures, providing more explanation of the discourse linguistic approach as compared to traditional explanations, and of course, an updated bibliography. From the beginning, John and I envisioned this little book as a bridge between beginning grammars and advanced reference grammars, and therefore as a tool to help intermediate students. The need for such a bridge is even greater today than it was in 2003 because of continued advances in our understanding of the specifics of Hebrew grammar. It is my hope that the changes introduced in this second edition will make the bridge easier to cross.

I have retained the same paragraph numbering throughout, making it easy to locate a discussion whether one is referring to the first or the second edition. For example, *GBHS* ¶3.1.3

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will be the location for "Piel (the D Stem)" in both editions regardless of pagination.

I owe much to my student, Joseph Hwang, who assisted me immeasurably in the task in several ways. Also, my colleague Professor John A. Cook has been an important conversation partner, always gracious at points where we do not agree, and gently nudging, coercing, and correcting me on certain points. Professor Lawson G. Stone made several contributions, always displaying his measured and erudite good sense. I also gratefully acknowledge once again his permission to use a variation of his chart of derived stems in Appendix B, as in the 2003 edition. Dr. Dale Walker graciously made detailed comments and suggestions on the first edition, Dr. David Schreiner assisted with bibliographic details, and my student, Brad Haggard, assisted with the indexes.

Sadly, my coauthor was stricken with cancer just after we signed the contract for this second edition. After a valiant fight, John was taken from us entirely too soon, and the sense of loss remains a heavy burden for all who knew him well, but especially for his beloved Sylvia and for Sophia and Ethan. The task of revising *GBHS* has been all the more difficult because of so many memories of happier days when John and I worked together on the first edition nearly fifteen years ago. Having completed the task, I have no higher honor than to dedicate this volume to his memory; זכרונו לברכה.

Bill T. Arnold

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Preface to the First Edition

This book is intended to introduce basic and critical issues of Hebrew syntax to beginning and intermediate students. It grows out of eighteen collective years of experience in teaching Biblical Hebrew to seminarians. Each year, we teach or supervise the instruction for approximately 180 students in preparation for ordained ministry or other religious professions. Our experiences led us to conclude that a significant gap exists between, on the one hand, the current scholarly understanding of Hebrew syntax, based on significant progress in the discipline in recent decades, and on the other hand, the understanding of Hebrew syntax among our students. The problem seemed compounded by the lack of an intermediate-level grammar, holding a position between beginning grammars and advanced reference grammars. In addition, the ever-growing demands on theological education today have resulted in less time to master Biblical Hebrew. Often the first thing omitted in a beginning Hebrew course is an overview of syntactical features. Our purpose, then, has been simply to bridge the gap, as best as we can, between our students and the best of current research on Biblical Hebrew syntax.

This book, then, is not intended to replace the standard reference grammars, which we have consulted constantly in the process, but to present to beginning and intermediate students a means of entry into the latest scholarship

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on Biblical Hebrew. To this end, we have included extensive references in the footnotes where appropriate. In particular, we have been most influenced by the unity brought to bear on the Hebrew verbal system by Bruce K. Waltke and Michael O'Connor. We have also consulted frequently the grammars by Joüon-Muraoka, Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley, and to some degree those by van der Merwe-Naudé-Kroeze and Meyer. Through interaction with these and other sources of scholarship, we feel that we have, at several points, introduced innovations in our explanations of Biblical Hebrew syntax in an attempt to refine the way we read and interpret the Bible today.

We express appreciation to our colleagues Joseph R. Dongell, David L. Thompson, Lawson G. Stone, and Brent A. Strawn for helpful suggestions on several points, and especially Dr. Stone for permission to use his chart in Appendix B. We also benefited greatly from the comments and suggestions of the anonymous external reviewers hired by Cambridge University Press. The editors of the Press have been exemplary in every way, and we note especially Andrew Beck, who has been a source of encouragement from the beginning. In addition, Phyllis Berk and Janis Bolster made many improvements during the production process.

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