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Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi  
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## **A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax**

*A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* introduces and abridges the syntactical features of the original language of the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament. Scholars have made significant progress in recent decades in understanding Biblical Hebrew syntax. Yet intermediate readers seldom have access to this progress because of the technical jargon and sometimes-obscure locations of the scholarly publications. This guide is an intermediate-level reference grammar for Biblical Hebrew. As such, 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 to a lesser extent 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.

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## *Preface*

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 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 on Biblical Hebrew. To this end, we have included extensive references in

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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 and 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 2. 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.