

GUIDE TO HEBREW SYNTAX

BETHEL SEMINARY



CENTER FOR BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

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1 General Observations

NOTES:

1.1 Syntax deals with the way words relate to one another to express meaning. Morphology deals with the basic building blocks of a language. A morpheme is the smallest unit of meaning, whether a prefix, suffix or free-standing word. Syntax and morphology make up the stuff of grammar.

1.2 The syntax of word order takes on greatly heightened significance when an inflected language loses its case endings. In English, lacking case endings, the exact same words may mean quite different things depending on word order. (E.g., *The boy hit the ball. The ball hit the boy.*)

2 Syntax of Nouns

2.1 Gender: *only two: masc., Fem.*

2.2 Number: *three: singular, dual, plural*

2.3 Case: *functional rather than formal*

2.3.1 Nominative

2.3.2 Genitive: *after bound forms*

2.3.3 Accusative: *use of **אֵת**, etc.*

2.4 Apposition

2.5 Pronoun: *independent / suffixed / demonstrative / interrogative / relative / reflexive / distributive / reciprocal*

2.6 Definition: *definite/indefinite*

3 Syntax of Adjectives: *attributive / predicate / demonstrative / comparative / superlative*

4 Syntax of Numbers: *cardinal/ordinal/distributive*

5 Syntax of Particles

5.1 Prepositions

5.2 Adverbs

5.3 Negatives

5.4 Conjunctives/Disjunctives

5.5 Relative Particle

5.6 Accusative Particle

5.7 Existential Particle

6 Syntax of Verbs

6.1 Verbal System: *tense / modality / voice / aspect*

6.2 Verbal Stems: *pay attention to transitive/intransitive, causative, and reflexive functions*

6.2.1 Qal

6.2.2 Niphal

6.2.3 Piel

6.2.4 Pual

6.2.5 Hithpael

6.2.6 Hiphil

6.2.7 Hophal

6.2.8 other

7 Syntax of Clauses

7.1 Noun Clauses

7.2 Conditional: e.g., *if...then*

7.3 Causal: e.g., *because...*

7.4 Circumstantial: e.g., *while...*

7.5 Comparative: e.g., *as...*

7.6 Concessive: e.g., *although...*

7.7 Exceptive: e.g., *unless...*

7.8 Restrictive: e.g., *nevertheless...*

7.9 Temporal: e.g., *when...*

7.10 Final / Result: e.g., *in order that...*

7.11 Interrogative: e.g., *will...? is...?*

7.12 Relative: e.g., *who/which*

7.13 Adversative: e.g., *but...*

7.14 Existential: e.g., *there is/was..., there isn't...*

7.15 Equational: non-verbal in present; use *היה* in past or future.

8 Resources

Francis Andersen. *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*. Janua Linguarum, Series Practica 231. The Hague: Mouton, 1974.

Bruce Waltke & M. O'Connor. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990.

Ronald Williams. *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*. 2nd ed. Toronto: University of Toronto, 1976.