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Profecía y Sintaxis: El uso de las formas verbales en los Profetas Menores preexílicos

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While the subtitle indicates, accurately enough, that this book deals with the use of the verbal forms in the preexilic Minor Prophets, a more helpful main title would have been “Profecía y sintaxis *textual*,” so as to indicate that it examines the Hebrew verbal system from the standpoint of text linguistics or discourse analysis. The author’s approach to the Hebrew verb is emphatically text linguistic in nature and owes a great deal to the work of scholars such as Longacre, Talstra, Niccacci, and Buth.

Chapter 1 is entitled “The Problem of Hebrew Verbal System” and sets forth the method and scope of the book. The fact that the “traditional” tense and/or aspect theories of the Hebrew verb (with their focus on the semantics of grammatical forms) are unable to explain its use in a large number of cases in the Hebrew Bible leads the author to seek for a solution to the problem by adopting an approach that focuses on linguistic units larger than the sentence, that is, discourse analysis. In this book the author attempts a text-linguistic analysis of the verb in poetry (specifically, prophetic poetry), a genre that has received comparatively little attention as far as the study of the verbal system is concerned. In order to keep his study synchronic (rather than diachronic) in nature, the author has selected as his corpus those Minor Prophets that can with reasonable confidence be attributed to the preexilic period (thus excluding a debatable book such as Joel): Hosea, Amos, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. (This synchronic approach is highly laudable, though one would perhaps have expected some comment on the inclusion of the third chapter of Habakkuk in the study, which some have alleged to contain “archaic” Biblical Hebrew features.) The author then proceeds to discuss some of the challenges unique to the study of poetic language (8–11) and the question of Hebrew word order (11–14). The remainder of the chapter consists of a survey of recent trends in the study of Hebrew verbal syntax, focusing primarily, though not exclusively, on studies with a text-linguistic framework.

Chapter 2 is entitled “Syntax of the Sentence.” This chapter describes the key parameters that are of relevance to the author’s study: (1) the distinction between prose and poetry (the author is careful to distinguish the conclusions drawn from prose sections of his corpus—a very small percentage of the whole—from the conclusions drawn from poetic sections); (2) sentence type (nominal versus verbal, sentences with the verb *hyh* as a copula, sentences with a participle or infinitive as the predicate); (3) the sentence constituent in initial position (the presence or absence of a *waw* or other particle indicating whether the sentence stands in a syndetic, asyndetic, paratactic, or hypotactic relationship); (4) the frequency of the different verbal forms (by the help of a database the author has assembled an impressive array of statistics concerning the use of the verb in his corpus); and (5) sentence structure (e.g., the order of noninitial sentence constituents, as well as other syntactical structures). It is worth noting that the author also includes data from sentences with ellipsis, that is, in which a verbal form is not explicit but is to be understood from the context (38–40). According to his reckoning this occurs eighty-eight times, amounting to 3.77 percent of his total database. It is unfortunate that he does not actually list these instances, making it impossible to verify his work (this tends to be a fault throughout the book). The statistical findings presented in this chapter and elsewhere are occasionally surprising and suggestive, and one would very much like to see them compared with statistics from other genres in the Hebrew Bible.

Chapters 3–6 are devoted to a text-linguistic analysis of *weqatal*, *wayyiqtol*, *qatal*, and *yiqtol*, respectively. The author begins each chapter with some brief introductory comments (relating to, e.g., morphology, scholarly discussions, and the like) and then proceeds to a detailed analysis of the use of the verbal form in question, taking into account the parameters discussed in chapter 2 (poetry versus prose, initial versus noninitial position, frequency of use, etc.). These chapters provide the real substance of the book, and the author’s discussion is, for the most part, extremely thorough and methodical. Some critical notes could be made at various points. For example, the author’s uncertainty regarding nonjussive uses of the “apocopated” *yiqtol* (as in Hos 6.1; see 179–180 and 234) is a bit puzzling, given that he is aware that the “short” Canaanite **yaqtul* was both a preterite as well as a jussive (see 101 n. 173). Such cases are well-documented in the standard grammars (e.g., Joüon-Muraoka), and one wonders why this was not taken into account. Furthermore, on occasion the analysis of the data is highly disputable, or less than satisfying, to say the least. The analysis of *wayyiqtol* following either a participle or nominal clause is a case in point. In such cases, so the author claims in his concluding chapter, *wayyiqtol* expresses “las acciones inherentes a las cualidades de algo o de alguien, sin ninguna referencia temporal” (226; cf. 123ff.). While this is possible, the author should have at least interacted with the discussion of such examples in the important monograph by Walter Groß, *Wayyiqtol für die Gegenwart?* The absence

of this work from the bibliography is particularly strange, since it is one of the few extensive studies of the verb in Hebrew poetry and would have been extremely relevant to the author's study. Most problematic, however, is the general lack of attention given to the use of the participle. This is no doubt due to the fact that the author considers it to be the predicate of a nominal sentence (202 n. 309), which is a common enough viewpoint. Nevertheless, the evidence clearly indicates that throughout the Hebrew Bible the predicative participle stands in functional opposition to the verbal conjugations as a fully integrated member of the verb system. Even the author's own statistics on page 40 regarding the frequency of the different verbal forms in his corpus suggest a more important role for the participle than is typically attributed to it: by the author's reckoning, participial sentences significantly outnumber sentences with *wayyiqtol* (183 as opposed to 106)! Any theory of the verbal system that fails to reckon with the significance of the participle will inevitably be deficient to some degree.

Chapter 7 is entitled "Text Syntax" and applies the preceding discussion to the study of longer, more continuous sections of text (specifically Amos 6, Nah 2, and Zeph 1). Thus, in contrast to the previous chapters, which examine the different verbal forms individually, this chapter attempts to demonstrate that together they form a coherent system. This chapter develops further the concept of "text type," starting with the basic opposition of "narrative" versus "discursive" texts and proceeding to subdivide the latter category into, for example, "lamentation," "exhortatory discourse," "predictive discourse," and "descriptive discourse."

Chapter 8, the conclusion of the work, provides a very concise and helpful summary of the chief results of the study. Also included are a bibliography and an index of passages (an index of authors cited would have been useful).

This book is intended for linguists; exegetes of the Minor Prophets will probably not find a great deal of new insight here. Nevertheless, the author has filled a gap in the existing literature with a solid, thorough study of the verbal system in prophetic texts. Those who are interested in the application of text-linguistic methodology to the study of the Hebrew verb should find this book appealing.