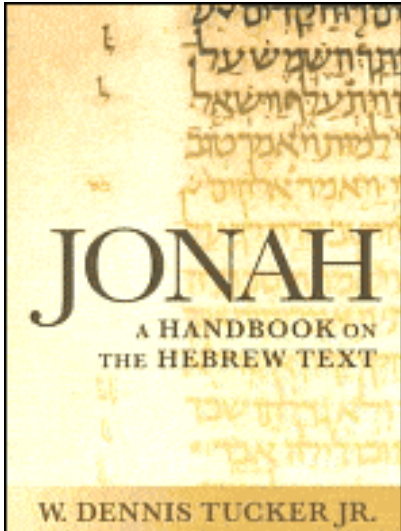


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Tucker, W. Dennis, Jr.

Jonah: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text

Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible

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This is the first volume in the Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible series. In his introduction, Tucker indicates that the series, or at least his own handbook on the Hebrew text of Jonah, is intended to serve students who have moved from introductory grammar to the biblical text. It should be noted at the outset, however, that this is not yet another analytical key, for Tucker is less concerned with morphology, seeking instead to provide help with larger syntactic issues. In practice, this means that, although lexical forms are provided for verbs, it is assumed that readers are able to identify other word classes such as nouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and so forth.

Anyone interested in theological or detailed exegetical comments on the book of Jonah will also look in vain, because, as Tucker notes, “this handbook is singular in focus—to consider the Hebrew text and related issues, syntactic and otherwise” (2). It thus serves as what he calls a “prequel” to the commentaries, providing the kind of syntactic help that is presumed by technical commentaries and omitted by popular ones.

In his introduction Tucker laments that, because introductory grammars have a tendency to focus on the analysis of word classes, when students move to the biblical text, they generally continue with that type of micro-syntactic analysis. What is required, however, is to introduce students to the analysis of clauses and their syntactic functions, to the kind of macro-syntactic analysis, in other words, that has been the focus of modern linguistics.

Tucker seeks to provide this, drawing on discourse analysis and, in particular, the work of Robert E. Longacre (esp. as in *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989], but see also Longacre and Shin Ja J. Hwang, “A Textlinguistic Approach to the Biblical Hebrew Narrative of Jonah,” in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics* [ed. Robert D. Bergen; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994], 336–58) as mediated and developed by Bryan M. Rocine (*Learning Biblical Hebrew: A New Approach Using Discourse Analysis* [Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2000]).

Throughout this handbook Tucker distinguishes between different text types (such as narrative, hortatory, and expository or descriptive discourse), seeking to move “interpretation beyond merely identifying the constituent parts of a sentence” (3) and noting that the different types are marked by distinct verbal constructions. A distinction is also made between “mainline” and “off-the-line” forms of communication, with the former serving as the “backbone” of the discourse and the latter supplying required background information. Next, Tucker provides “discourse profile schemes” for the forms of discourse present in the book of Jonah. As an illustration of these schemes, the one for narrative discourse is here reproduced (see 4–5).

Mainline

1a. *Wayyiqtol*

1b. Pivotal/climactic event on the mainline: Isolated *weqatal*

Off-the-line

2. Topicalization: X + *qatal*

3. Embedded direct speech

4. Relative past background: *qatal* in dependent clause

5. Relative non-past background: *yiqtol* in dependent clause

6. Backgrounded activities: Participle

7. Embedded procedural discourse

8. Transition marker: *wayyiqtol* of הַיָּהֲוֵה

9. Scene setting: Verbless clause

10. Unrealis scene setting: Negation of any verb by לֹא

Each scheme is introduced with the help of additional explanatory comments, such as that “hortatory discourse is the primary form of direct speech in the book of Jonah, with mainline forms occurring in the imperative..., cohortative..., and jussive” (6). Some comments on embedded discourse follow. Tucker points out, for instance, that the psalm in chapter 2 is embedded within Jonah’s narrative structure in that the chapter both begins and ends with narrative. He also explains that, while narrative is the primary mode

of discourse, hortatory and expository discourses feature in the form of direct speech. Further, he stresses that the switch from one mode to another is indicated by means of cues such as the verb אָמַר.

Tucker concludes the introduction by commenting on the tendency of Hebrew grammars to apply syntactic labels that are more appropriate to the study of Greek or Latin than Hebrew. He argues, for instance, that in the case of Hebrew nouns, because the lack of changes to their form means that their “case” can only be established at the level of syntax, labels such as “nominative,” “genitive,” “dative,” and “accusative” should be avoided. Instead, he follows Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jackie A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze (*A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* [Biblical Languages: Hebrew 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999]), who prefer to employ designations such as “adjunct” and “complement,” defining the former as “non-verbal elements that can be removed from the predicate, or verbal phrase, without disrupting or influencing the construction,” whereas complements are understood to be “obligatory, non-omissible, and non-verbal parts of the predicate or verb phrase” (8). In his analysis of the Hebrew text of Jonah, Tucker consistently indicates whether nonverbal material functions as an adjunct or as a complement to the verb.

This brings me to the main part of Tucker’s book, the actual handbook on the Hebrew text of Jonah. Presumably in order to allow students to study the text section by section, Tucker has broken it up into the following units: 1:1–3; 1:4–6; 1:7–12; 1:13–16; 2:1–10; 2:11; 3:1–4; 3:5–9; 3:10; 4:1–4; 4:5–7; and 4:8–11. Each of these opens with an English translation, which has been provided “in an effort to aid readers in seeing how the various clauses and sentences function together in the larger text” (9). The translation is followed by the Hebrew text, which is reproduced verse by verse.

Next, Tucker offers an analysis of each Hebrew clause, commenting on issues such as its function, discourse type, and related syntactic aspects, before discussing the individual words or word groups that make up that clause. To give an example of this approach, on Jonah 1:2, Tucker begins by commenting on the clause קוֹם לְךָ אֶל-נִינְיָהָ הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה, noting that this is “embedded hortatory discourse” and that it is a “mainline” form of communication, before proceeding to analyze the individual word groups קוֹם לְךָ, אֶל-נִינְיָהָ, and הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה. In his analysis, Tucker does not offer any translations of the words or phrases under discussion, and because readers are expected to be competent to identify word classes such as nouns, prepositions, and conjunctions, morphological analysis is limited to verbs.

In this case, Tucker explains that קוֹם לְךָ is a qal imperative second-person masculine singular from קוֹם, adding that in an asyndetic construction such as קוֹם לְךָ the main idea is

introduced in the second verb. He also mentions Andersen's suggestion that the first imperative be understood as a hortatory particle that marks the clause as an exclamation. (Unfortunately, the reference is somewhat obscure in that the bibliography does not list any works by Andersen, who also does not feature in the index.) A reference to Bruce K. Waltke and Michael O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990) follows, to the effect that they take the phrase as a type of interjection, as does the explanation that the JPS and NRSV render the construction with the phrase "go at once." The entry ends with Tucker pointing out that the verbs קוּם and הִלַּךְ, in similar constructions, frequently feature in "prophetic commissioning formulas."

In addition to the features mentioned in this summary of Tucker's entry on קוּם לָךְ (i.e., morphological analysis of verbs, references to works on Hebrew grammar and to modern translations of the book of Jonah), Tucker occasionally also engages in exegetical discussion (there are references to relevant commentaries and even to some dedicated scholarly articles on various aspects of the book of Jonah). In addition, there are some comments on the translation offered by the LXX, but as with Tucker's exegetical notes, these are limited to those cases where the discussion contributes to the analysis of the phrase's syntactic function. A bibliography and an author and subject index conclude the book.

This is a useful tool that is set to serve its purpose well, which is to help students who have mastered introductory Hebrew grammar to move to the biblical text, in this case the book of Jonah, by providing assistance with larger syntactic issues. My main reservation is with the introduction, which is far too brief to be of real help. Especially students who are not familiar with the work of scholars such as Longacre, Rocine, van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze may require further assistance with issues such as the discourse profile schemes offered by Tucker. However, that limitation notwithstanding, this book can undoubtedly help readers move beyond the micro-syntactic analysis offered by most introductory Hebrew grammars and enable them to come to a better understanding of clauses and their syntactic function—and thus to a better understanding of the biblical text itself.