

Brian Tabb, review of D. Garrett and J. DeRouchie, *A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*, *JETS* 52 no. 4: 832-34.

A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew. By Garrett, Duane A. and Jason S. DeRouchie. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Academic, 2009. \$49.99, hardback.

Duane Garrett of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Jason DeRouchie of Bethlehem College and Seminary have together written a superb introductory grammar that is clearly presented and user friendly for both teachers and students of biblical Hebrew. *A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* is a complete revision of Garrett's 2002 work, *A Modern Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, also with Broadman and Holman. Those familiar with Garrett's earlier grammar will notice that the new volume has been arranged into 41 chapters and 8 appendices as compared with 62 chapters in the previous work. Further, Garrett's 2002 text included student exercises at the end of each chapter, while the latest edition has placed all student exercises in a full-length workbook, sold separately.

As explained in the preface, chs. 1-26 cover the material typically introduced in a first-year grammar, including an introduction to weak verbs and derived stems. More detailed study of the Qal verb is given in chs. 27-30 and of the derived stems in chapters 31-35. Chapters 36-41 function essentially as an introduction to intermediate Hebrew, with an overview of the Masoretic cantillation system and a particular emphasis on text syntax and literary structure at the discourse level. Appendix 1, "Basics for Using Your Hebrew Bible," is alone worth the price of the book. Here the authors orient students to

the modern editions of the Masoretic Text, the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* and the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, including the canonical ordering and book titles, the Masorah, and the Textual Apparatus. This appendix also includes a clear and succinct introduction to Old Testament textual criticism.

One distinctive feature of *A Modern Grammar* is the introduction of many elements of Hebrew grammar in stages. For example, the authors introduce ten rules for accent shift and vowel formation in ch. 4 and then use these rules to explain many subsequent concepts, such as plural nouns (pp. 29-31), the Qal *qatal* conjugation (p. 53), construct chains (pp. 76-78), and pronominal suffixes (pp. 90-91). Similarly, the construct relationship between nouns is introduced in the very first chapter (p. 10) but is expanded upon on pp. 16 and 48 before a chapter-length treatment on pp. 74-80. The authors return again to discuss construct chains on p. 93 in the chapter on pronominal suffixes and on p. 102 in the chapter on adjectives.

Another distinctive of *A Modern Grammar* is the approach taken to teaching Hebrew verbs. The authors begin discussing Hebrew verbs very early in the course of study, at ch. 6 (in comparison, Ross introduces verbs at ch. 10, Kelley and Pratico/Van Pelt introduce verbs at ch. 12). Unlike the recent Hebrew grammars by Ross and Pratico/Van Pelt, Garrett and DeRouchie use updated terminology for verbal conjugations, such as *qatal* rather than *perfect*, *yiqtol* rather than *imperfect*, and *wayyiqtol* rather than *waw consecutive*, though they do acknowledge that lexicons use the traditional terminology (p. 51). This allows for a clear explanation of the importance of perfect and imperfect *aspect* in their introduction of Hebrew verbs (esp. pp. 35-39, 52, 60).

In chs. 6-7, students learn 31 Hebrew verbs as inflected vocabulary (mostly from weak roots) to allow them to begin to read complete Hebrew sentences in the workbook exercises, though fuller verb paradigms are not introduced until later (beginning in chapter 9, with the Qal *qatal* [*perfect*]). So in ch. 6, students learn the verb form יִפֹּל with the gloss “(he) will fall” and the alternative translations “(he) should fall / used to fall / is falling.” The verbal root נִפַּל is learned in ch. 11, and a fuller discussion of I-Nun roots comes in ch. 20. One reason that Garrett and DeRouchie introduce weak verbs early in the curriculum is to make the point to students that “weak” roots, which are far more common in the Hebrew Bible than “strong” roots, are not irregular but are very consistent in following the rules that govern their patterns (see pp. 50-51).

Nearly every chapter of the grammar includes diagrams, tables, and “blackboard” visuals to walk students step by step through the spelling and formation of Hebrew words and phrases. The diagrams of the seven major verbal stems on p. 135 are particularly clear and helpful. The grammar also includes a CD with audio and powerpoint files to assist students with mastery of the alphabet, vocabulary, and basic verb paradigms. Additional materials for instructors, such as quizzes, exams, and powerpoint lectures, are provided on the publisher’s website.

DeRouchie and Garrett teach a “classical” pronunciation for biblical Hebrew, though they do note modern pronunciations in a few instances (for example, pp. 3, 70). There is some potential for confusion among students if the instructor uses a modern Hebrew pronunciation in class or if any of the students know modern Hebrew. Most chapters in *A Modern Grammar* are on average between 8 and 9 pages in length, though chapter length and the amount of information varies significantly at times. For example,

ch. 7 is less than three pages, while ch. 33 is a full 14 pages. Also, the authors delay introducing the definite article until ch. 8 and the conjunction until ch. 10, concepts introduced earlier in many other grammars.

The reviewer has used *A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* in both seminary and lay-level classroom settings in pre-publication draft form and now in the final, published edition. Garrett and DeRouchie offer a well-conceived approach to teaching beginning Hebrew that guides students into intermediate Hebrew in chs. 36-41 and positions them well for Hebrew exegesis. This grammar should receive strong consideration as an introductory text for biblical Hebrew at the college or seminary levels.

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