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William A. Ross – Elizabeth Robar (eds.): *Linguistic Theory and the Biblical Text,* Cambridge, UK, Open Book Publishers, 2023, 374 pp.[1]

This is a volume of the "Linguistics and the Biblical Text" research group at Cambridge University's Institute for Biblical Research, which contains six papers published in a distinguished series in open-access format. The editors point out that the widespread lack of understanding regarding theoretical frameworks has become a significant issue even within academic circles. Hence this edited collection showcases the key linguistic theories currently employed in the interpretation of biblical languages, aiming to inform both students and scholars about the foundations of many popular language tools and resources they utilize. This volume emphasizes the significance of students and scholars grasping the diverse theories available, which enables them to pinpoint the theoretical framework that aligns most effectively with their own research.

This book serves as a valuable resource for examining biblical languages through a linguistic lens. It offers a thorough yet concise overview of the theories from several prominent modern linguistic schools, addressing both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. Additionally, it includes concrete examples of how these theoretical frameworks can be applied to analyze the Hebrew Bible. Specifically, the six articles in this book introduce Generative Linguistics, Functional Grammar, Cognitive Linguistics, Historical Linguistics, Computational Linguistics, and Complexity Theory, and their application to analyzing certain characteristics of the Hebrew text. Every paper in the book outlines the history and evolution of the theory in question, highlighting its essential theoretical principles and key concepts, as well as its contributions to biblical studies thus far, and potential avenues for future research, application, and collaboration. Notably, each chapter concludes with recommendations for further reading, including manuals, introductions, and foundational texts, along with a comprehensive bibliography of more in-depth studies. This consistent structure across chapters significantly enhances the reader's capacity to compare and contrast the theories as they assess each one.

Below is a detailed summary of the author, the content, the key features, and the importance of each paper.

The first paper, on "Generative Linguistics as a Theoretical Framework for the Explanation of Problematic Constructions in Biblical Hebrew," is written by Jacobus A. Naudé and Cynthia L. Miller-Naudé and illustrates the essential role of linguistic

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[1]   This book is available online here: openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0358

knowledge deriving from Generative Linguistics in the process of interpreting texts. The two authors, Cynthia L. Miller-Naudé (PhD, University of Chicago, 1992) and Jacobus A. Naudé (PhD, University of the Free State, 1996), are both senior professors specializing in premodern Hebrew linguistics. Their article offers a concise historical overview of seven decades of generative linguistic theory, tracing its origins with Chomsky in 1957 up to the present, while highlighting its evolving concepts. It illustrates the significant contributions of generative linguistic theory in identifying and clarifying problematic constructions in Biblical Hebrew. In particular, the following aspects are analyzed with examples: null subjects, constituent order, non-canonical constituent order, pronominal syntax, lexical categories, quantification, relative clauses, empty categories, and null constituents. Additionally, the article discusses the potential for future research in Biblical Hebrew through the lens of linguistics, especially generative linguistics, by adopting a programmatic approach to the meaning-making processes within the languages of the biblical text. At the end of the article, the authors provide a 19-page reference list, which is a very valuable contribution to future biblical studies in multiple languages from a linguistic perspective.

The second paper, "Functional Grammar and the Pragmatics of Information Structure for Biblical Languages," is written by Randall Buth. The author (PhD, University of California, Los Angeles, 1987) serves as the Dean of the Jerusalem Institute for the Whole Word. In this article, he explores Functional Grammar and the Pragmatics of Information Structure in biblical languages. He states that Functional Grammar integrates pragmatic information with formal grammar. Information structure pertains to how language organizes the subject and introductory elements of a text, as well as how it emphasizes important points. Buth differentiates between the standard treatment of subject material and its special marking. Similarly, there are established methods for presenting key points alongside those that are specially marked. The article analyzes cases in Hebrew and Greek. It examines the use of functional grammar in Hebrew scriptures through nine different perspectives. The perspectives and methods shown in these analyses are undoubtedly powerful language tools for correctly understanding the Bible. The paper provides useful inspiration for studying the Bible in other languages within the framework of linguistic theory. Furthermore, by analyzing examples from Greek texts, the author highlights the assertion that functional grammar aids readers in identifying pragmatic signals, thereby enhancing their interpretive abilities.

The third paper, "Cognitive Linguistic Theory and the Biblical Languages" by William A. Ross, provides an overview of Cognitive Linguistic theory, emphasizing its significance for the study of ancient languages in the Bible. The author (PhD, University of Cambridge, 2018) works as an associate professor of Old Testament at the Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina. His article begins with a brief examination of the historical background and origins of Cognitive Linguistics, which is summarized from its early foundations in the nineteenth

century, which was the era of diachronic, comparative linguistics, to the appearance of structuralism represented by Ferdinand de Saussure's (1857–1913) *Cours de linguistique générale* in 1916, then continues to Franz Boas (1858–1942), Edward Sapir (1884–1939), and especially Leonard Bloomfield (1887–1949). In 1933, Bloomfield emphasized the systematic nature of language and the importance of methodology, claiming that linguistics did not intersect with other fields. Ross then describes the development of linguistics from structuralist empiricism to the new theoretical paradigm of Generative Grammar, with Noam Chomsky (1923–) as its ideological pioneer in the mid-20th century, pointing out that transformational generative grammar focuses on the formal principles that describe how the speaker's mind generates grammatical sentences given specific language parameters, namely, the so-called universal principles inherent in human thinking. As scholars became increasingly dissatisfied with the limited level of abstraction achieved by Generative Linguistics, Cognitive Linguistics emerged within a broader movement away from formalist theories, known as Functionalism. In contrast to Formalism, Cognitive Linguistics and the functionalist approach consider language not to be an independent psychological system, but to be integrated with the entirety of human cognition. Cognitive Linguistic theory is interested not only in knowledge of a language, but also in language as a form of knowledge, even an "integral part of cognition" itself.

At the conclusion of the article, the author expresses optimism about future research and the practical applications of cognitive linguistics theory. The author notes (on page 157) that even scholars who frequently engage with language may not be well-versed in language theory itself. For those who are already acquainted with cognitive linguistics – or at least those who are in the process of learning it – the potential for research on biblical languages and its applications in biblical interpretation is virtually limitless. This insight undoubtedly provides a clear direction for future researchers and holds significant academic value.

The fourth article, titled "Historical Linguistics and Biblical Languages," is authored by Kaspars Ozoliņš (PhD, University of California, Los Angeles, 2016), who serves as an assistant professor of Old Testament at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. As is well known, historical linguistics boasts a rich tradition within the broader realm of linguistic studies. Many of the methods and theoretical frameworks employed in this field are particularly relevant to biblical studies, especially those examining the ancient languages of the Bible. Analyzing the types of linguistic change that occurred across different languages can offer valuable insights for dating biblical texts. Additionally, understanding the external linguistic influences that shaped the biblical languages, as well as their historical contexts (including Semitic and Indo-European influences), is essential for exploring the various synchronic features of the Bible. This knowledge can also enhance text-critical evaluations of biblical texts.

The fifth article, titled "Computational Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Texts," is authored by Willem Th. van Peursen (PhD, Leiden University, 1999), who serves

as a professor of Old Testament at the Faculty of Religion and Theology at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. His article in this book delves into the diverse applications of computational linguistics within biblical languages. It traces the field's development from the 1970s and 1980s, which began with text representation, to the creation of morphological and syntactic databases. Up until the early 21st century, the majority of computational linguistic efforts were centered on rule-based analysis, facilitating systematic and widespread examination of biblical texts. However, since the early 2000s, the influence of statistical methods and machine learning has started to permeate biblical studies, although many of these applications remain in the experimental stage. As a result of the emergence of various computational strategies in recent decades, computational linguistics has evolved into a collection of methods rather than a singular theory, leading to a complex and multifaceted relationship with other linguistic theories.

The concluding article is "Out of the Analytic Silo: A Complexity Theory Approach to the Study of Biblical Texts," written by Sophia L. Pitcher (PhD, University of the Free State, 2020), who is currently a Research Fellow at the University of the Free State and an Adjunct Professor of Classical Hebrew at North Central University. In this paper, she points out that Complex Systems Theory focuses on characterizing and modeling the interactions among the elements of a complex system, especially those that emerge from the dynamic and frequently unpredictable relationships between these components. Building on the ideas of Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008),[2] this paper describes seven core characteristics of complex systems: 1) Dynamicity. Complexity theory argues that because language, language use, and language development are ongoing, dynamicity is likely to be the defining characteristic of language as a complex system. 2) Heterogeneity. Complex systems embody multiple dynamic, heterogeneous components. 3) Openness. Complex systems are open, allowing energy, matter, or other influences to enter from the outside. This paper specifically addresses two aspects of openness. One is that some categories of words in a vocabulary are more open than others; for example, nouns increase or decrease more than prepositions. Another is that words can undergo transformations that result from the interaction of lexical input with other dimensions of the language. This paper uses the example of the disappearance of case in Biblical Hebrew to illustrate how morphological changes trigger phonological processes that change the vowel structure of monosyllabic nouns. 4) Interconnectivity. This paper uses the morphophonology of the Biblical Hebrew conjunction *waw* as an example to illustrate the interconnectivity between the many components, dimensions, and contextual factors that complex systems exhibit. 5) Emergence. Complex systems exhibit emergent behavior when the dynamic interactions between lower-level components and dimensions of the system produce new phenomena that contribute to the properties of the system. An organism or discourse

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[2] Diane Larsen-Freeman – Lynne Cameron: *Complex Systems and Applied Linguistics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008.

is not just the sum of its parts, but rather the result of the interaction of the parts of the system. 6) Nonlinearity. The characteristic definition of nonlinearity is "change that is disproportionate to the input," and idioms are used as an example to illustrate the semantic non-compositionality of the output, where the meaning of the output cannot be derived from the meaning of its parts. The process of grammaticalization is used as an example to illustrate the situation where lexical items lose their semantic content and develop grammatical functions. 7) Adaptability. This refers to the process by which complex systems adjust themselves in response to changes in the environment. This property is evident in the written transmission of sacred texts, where editors would adjust their translations to accommodate various editorial considerations.

In conclusion, this volume provides a concise overview of different linguistic theories and their historical evolution. By analyzing Hebrew and Greek biblical texts, it illustrates the significant impact of these theories on enhancing comprehension of biblical writings and the spread of the Bible. The book underscores the necessity for students and scholars to become proficient in the various linguistic theories available. The editor highlights a significant gap in the academic community of biblical text research: a general lack of understanding of linguistic theoretical frameworks. This issue is crucial in the field of biblical studies today. This book addresses that gap effectively. Furthermore, each paper features key works on different linguistic theories, adding considerable value. At the end of the book, readers will also find a glossary of linguistic terms and various indexes, including a biblical text index, author index, and subject index. This collection equips students and scholars with essential tools and resources in the fields of linguistics and biblical studies, significantly enhancing their ability to identify the theoretical frameworks that best align with their research. It serves as a practical and valuable academic resource, setting a unique precedent for applying linguistic theories to the analysis of biblical texts across various languages worldwide. Currently, it stands out as a rare and important contribution to both linguistic and biblical text research. As highlighted in the volume, the potential for utilizing linguistic research findings to interpret biblical texts and scriptures – grounded in a solid understanding of linguistic theory – is virtually limitless. The insights offered in this work provide clear guidance for future researchers and hold substantial academic significance.

Következő számunk tartalma meglepetés
– Kettős ünnepi számmal készülünk