

Smith-Christopher also deals with the contrasting relationship between the former Jerusalem that will be plowed under, according to 3:12, and the new “Zion” that will become “an international (and agrarian!) center for peacemaking” (132). He readily challenges “the widely held view that Mic 3:12 is radically incompatible with ‘streaming to Zion’ and beating swords into plowshares in 4:1–5.” He takes a radically different approach to 3:12 when he says that “Jerusalem will be plowed and we want to pound our swords into the very plowshares that will help do the job!” This is based on the author’s view that Micah was “a populist antiwar lowlander, angry at Jerusalem’s militant nationalist Theology” (96). The author points to the figure of eternal ruler from 5:2 that is modeled on “pre-monarchic David who was a shepherd,” rather than a warrior. This ruler is the only person capable of bringing a lasting peace (the name “Solomon” is related to *shalom* “peace”) to our troubled world (166–167).

The author’s conclusion on the topic is best summarized in the radical proposition found on page 92: To critique political, military, or economic policy, “one begins by critiquing the theological foundation that the policy is built upon. This is certainly an enduring message that too often goes unheeded, especially in Western tradition.” He adds that official war reports often omit the horrendous suffering of soldiers and civilians. “Micah denounces the lies of war in his time and in our own” (94). From the very beginning of the commentary, Smith-Christopher stresses that “Biblical scholarship no longer ignores the social contexts of both readers and texts” and is therefore “justifiably suspicious of allegedly ‘objective’ readings of ancient history” (2).

There is little doubt that, in this commentary, the author uses the text from Micah to make the strongest possible case for peace. Looking at our world today, we cannot dispute the fact that peace is still a rare commodity in our societies and in the world at large. This is the reason why Smith-Christopher’s statements about peace should not be dismissed nor ignored by the believers today. Some readers will feel that the author’s approach is, at times, too humanistic at the exclusion of a direct Divine intervention in history. Peace making is not only an ambition owned by peace-loving believers, but it is also a quality grounded in God’s supernatural initiative. A sound balance between the divine and the human elements in salvation history has always been at the heart of the biblical witness. And it should remain as such!

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Williams, Michael. *The Biblical Hebrew Companion for Bible Software Users: Grammatical Terms Explained for Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015. 144 pp. Softcover. USD 18.99.

Bible software has greatly facilitated and enhanced the study of Scripture in the original languages. For new users, however, the software itself and its terminology may be a challenge. In addition, without some basic knowledge of biblical Hebrew, the software remains very limited. Michael Williams,

professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary and a member of the NIV Committee on Bible Translation, has written *The Biblical Hebrew Companion for Bible Software Users* to assist new software users and novice biblical Hebrew students to access the Old Testament in the original language through the three most popular Bible software platforms: Accordance, BibleWorks, and Logos. Williams's goal is to fill the gap between two extreme approaches to learning biblical languages: "the traditional, full-blown academic study of biblical Hebrew on the one hand" and sole focus on Bible software on the other (6).

The Biblical Hebrew Companion covers general grammatical terms (adjective, adverb, common, conjunction, definite article, demonstrative adjective, feminine, interjection, interrogative, masculine, negative particle, noun, number [cardinal and ordinal], particle, person, plural, preposition, pronoun [independent, relative, and suffix], singular, and verb); Hebrew grammatical terms (absolute, apocopated, construct, directional ך ending [locative ך], direct object marker, dual, energetic ך, *ketib-qere*, paragogic ך, paragogic ך, root, stem, and ך consecutive); Hebrew conjugations (Perfect, Imperfect, Cohortative, Imperative, Jussive, Infinitive Construct, Infinitive Absolute, and Participle [active and passive]); and basic Hebrew stems (*qal*, *nifal*, *piel*, *pual*, *hiphil*, *hophal*, *hitpael*), as well as some less common ones (e.g., *hishtaphel*). All these terms are organized alphabetically which enables readers to use the book as a quick reference.

Each term explained in the book takes two pages of exposition so that users can "see all the information for each term at once, without the need to turn a page" (6). On the left side, readers will find the section "What It Looks Like" and "What It Does." The first one shows how the grammatical feature can be recognized in the biblical text, while the latter provides an explanation of its function. On the right side, readers will find "An Exegetical Insight," which gives "an example . . . afforded by an understanding of the grammatical feature that is not available or is not clear in the English translations" (6). All terms used in the main body of the book follow this methodology. The result is a reference book which is easy to access and visually appealing.

After the fifty-four terms are explained in the main body, *The Biblical Hebrew Companion* provides eight convenient appendices to explain the Hebrew consonants (printed form, name, sound, and transliteration), Hebrew vowels (category, length, form, name, sound, and transliteration), guttural consonants (descriptions, rules, and illustrations), syllables (open, closed, and examples), *shevas* (vocal, silent, and compound), *dageshes* (*forte*, *lene*, and rules), the effect of the accent on vowels, and how to pronounce Hebrew words. These are followed by a "Scripture Index" and a "Select Bibliography for Further Study" (beginning Hebrew grammars, grammatical helps, Hebrew text resources, and leading Bible software resources).

Williams's new volume is helpful in several ways. Besides the ease of access, the book also stands out for the simple and straightforward language it uses in its explanations. For instance, in explaining apocopation, Williams states, "[a]n apocopated *verb* looks like an *Imperfect* verb that has been

shortened. . . . The only kind of verb that is susceptible to this shortening is one whose third *root consonant* is a ה” (16). In addition, the book tends to group several words or features which are usually taught separately. For instance, Williams gives several negative particles (אֵל, בֵּל, בְּלִתִּי, לֹא [68–69]) at once, which is very advantageous. Other features that are shown at once include: feminine endings (40), noun endings (72), independent pronouns (98), and suffix pronouns (102). Moreover, the book clarifies issues that are usually confusing for beginners, such as the ו consecutive. Williams deals with that upfront, “[t]here are two kinds of Waw Consecutives in Hebrew, one for the *Perfect Conjugation* and one for the *Imperfect conjugation*.” Then he goes on to demonstrate each one of them (116). Though contemporary Hebraists may dispute this differentiation, Williams’s explanation of the traditional position is useful and clear. Interestingly, in a few instances, such as when describing Hitpael, Williams’s volume is more thorough than some standard biblical Hebrew textbooks which describe the stem as mainly reflexive. Williams gives three nuances for it: reflexive, reciprocal, and iterative (46–47). These characteristics make Williams’s book more inviting to new students than most Hebrew textbooks.

As far as suggestions for a future revised or expanded edition, I would like to mention the following issues. First, show not only the masculine plural forms, but all the absolute and construct forms (10). Second, be more specific in explaining the definite article variations (*pataq* and no *dagesh* before ה and ו; *qamets* before א, ע, and ר; *segol* before ה, ו, and ו followed by *qamets*) (28). Third, include “Yiqtol,” which may be more common than “YQTL” (52). Fourth, add other sounds that are affected by *dagesh lene* (133)—at least, the two other most significant ones (כ/כּ and פ/פּ); perhaps a small chart also could be included. Fifth, rephrase the statement, “There is no way to recognize the true grammatical gender of these nouns apart from the lexical assistance available in Bible software programs or other Hebrew language resources” (72). Such affirmation may be true for nouns that stand by themselves. However, when modified by adjectives, the reader can predict the actual gender of the noun because the gender and number of adjectives match those of the nouns they modify (adjectives never lie). For instance, notice “the large stones” in Deut 27:2 (אֲבָנִים גְּדֹלוֹת). The adjective “large” is feminine plural in Hebrew. Thus, the reader can predict that “stones” is also feminine plural in spite of being written with a masculine plural ending. The same pattern can be observed elsewhere (cf. good figs [תְּאֵנִים טְבוֹת] and bad figs [תְּאֵנִים רְעוֹת] in Jer 24:2).

The Biblical Hebrew Companion for Bible Software Users is a helpful volume to address the basic needs of new software users and beginning students of biblical Hebrew. It fills a void in the literature as it attempts to bring together language and software-related terms and concepts. Even though the book does not claim to be a grammar book, it provides useful grammatical tips to first- and second-semester Hebrew students. Teachers can assign it as part of their required books as a quick reference to their students. Instructors will also find it beneficial as it provides exegetical insights and good examples to illustrate the grammar they present. In addition, the book is intended for

individuals who do not know the basics of the original language, “but would still like to benefit from the deeper insights into the biblical text that biblical Hebrew can provide” (7). It will also be valuable to pastors, church leaders, and seminary students in general. I commend Williams for his contribution.

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