

Renewal Proposal  
Annual Meeting

-----Name and Description of Unit-----

**Name of Unit**

Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew Section

**Tags**

Primary:

Secondary:

Tertiary:

**Synopsis of rationale and aims for public viewing**

The goals of this section include: (1) providing a unique, cross-disciplinary forum for the application of modern linguistic theory and methodology to the study of Biblical Hebrew; (2) encouraging interest in linguistics and its advantages for biblical interpretation; (3) promoting publication of scholarly works which apply linguistics to biblical Hebrew.

**Explain the unit's work and enduring rationale, uniqueness, relationship to existing units and discipline as a whole.**

The section is unique among the existing programme units in applying linguistic theories and methodologies in general to Biblical Hebrew. In focus and breadth, the session is similar to Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics. It differs from Cognitive Linguistics in Biblical Studies, which applies one sub-discipline of linguistics to meaning in language, from Biblical Lexicography, which relates to one linguistic sub-field, and from Applied Linguistics for Biblical Languages, which relates to language pedagogy. (See attached letters of support from seven related sections.)

The section's second goal involves bringing the importance of linguistic research to biblical exegesis and interpretation, especially for biblical scholars without prior training in linguistics. This goal is largely achieved through the thematic sessions, which introduce a linguistic topic to biblical scholars in general and then present research analyzing the topic within the corpus of the Hebrew Bible. In this way, the section provides cross-fertilization to many other sections of SBL and serves to enhance cross-disciplinary approaches to biblical exegesis. (See the next section for additional detail.)

The section's third goal of promoting the publication of scholarly works that apply linguistics to Biblical Hebrew has been realized with numerous presentations that have been published as journal articles, as chapters in books and as portions of monographs. (See the next section for additional detail.) The section also provides the opportunity for young scholars to present their doctoral research (2014 Otte, Park, Naaijer; 2013 Widder, Davis, Kim; 2012 Jones, Jeon; 2011 Wilsen-Wright, Hardy, Perry; 2010 Robar, Benton; 2009 Korchin).

**Assess the ongoing impact on and contribution to the field of the unit's work.**

The LBH section is the most important venue internationally for the presentation of research applying linguistics to the study of ancient Hebrew. The section also examined some of the most critical, current debates (e.g. the nature of the Biblical Hebrew verbal system, language variation and discourse pragmatics, dialogue, historical linguistics). In 2015, three thematic sessions explore “Verb Phrase Argument Structure,” “Syntax of ‘Edge’ Constructions” and “Editing the Hebrew Bible and Historical Linguistics” (joint with NAPH). In 2016 and 2017, three thematic sessions (in addition to a general session) are envisioned; in addition to the sessions described below, the thematic sessions are: “Pragmatics of Address and Politeness” (2016) and “Linguistic Theories and the Study of Biblical Hebrew” (2017). Central components of the thematic sessions include an introduction to the linguistic topic for non-specialists and an open call alongside invited speakers.

Numerous publications have emerged from research originally presented in the section including: papers in 2014 by van der Merwe (JNSL), Park (HS forthcoming), Cook (book chapter), Holmstedt (forthcoming book), 2013 by van der Merwe, 2012 Widder (JSem), Moshavi (VT), Robar (chapter), 2011 Polak, 2010 Robar (JSS), Benton, Miller (JNSL), 2009 Holmstedt (JSS), Naude (HS), Zewi (book chapter). Edited volumes include the forthcoming *Linguistic Approaches to Tense-Aspect-Modality in Biblical Hebrew* (ed. Naudé and Miller-Naudé). In addition, plans are underway for the papers from the 2015 thematic session on “Editing the Hebrew Bible and historical linguistics” will be peer-reviewed and published together as a special section in the *Journal for Semitics* in 2016.

**Are you including written statements of support from related program units?**

Yes

-----Leadership of Unit-----

**Program Unit Chair 1**

Jacobus Naudé, senior professor in the Department of Hebrew at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa (PhD Near Eastern Studies, University of the Free State, thesis supervised by Hagit Borer at University of Massachusetts-Amherst). He is co-editor of the series *Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic* (Eisenbrauns) and the former editor-in-chief of the journal *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, the journal of the Linguistic Society of South Africa. He has published extensively on Biblical Hebrew linguistics, especially diachrony of ancient Hebrew, left dislocation, pronominal syntax and contributed five articles to the *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*. His current research involves negation, quantification and edge constructions in Biblical Hebrew. He is a co-author of the *Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Continuum).

Jacobus A. Naudé

University of the Free State

## **Program Unit Chair 2**

### **Steering Committee Member 1**

John A. Cook, Associate Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore KY (PhD Hebrew and Semitic Languages, University of Wisconsin–Madison). He is the author of *Time and the Biblical Hebrew Verb: the Expression of Tense, Aspect, and Modality in Biblical Hebrew* (Eisenbrauns 2012), *Beginning Biblical Hebrew: A Grammar and Illustrated Reader* (Baker 2013) and numerous articles including three contributions to the *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Brill). He has been an active member since 2009 of the team that is developing a syntactic database of the Hebrew Bible for Accordance Bible software.

John A. Cook  
Asbury Theological Seminary

### **Steering Committee Member 2**

Adina Moshavi, senior lecturer, Department of Semitic Languages and Literature, Bar-Ilan University, Israel (Ph.D. Yeshiva University, Semitic Languages and Literatures). She is the author of *Word Order in the Biblical Hebrew Finite Clause: A Syntactic and Pragmatic Analysis of Preposing* (Eisenbrauns 2010) and more than 15 articles and chapters in books. Her current research focuses on conversational interaction and politeness in the Hebrew Bible. With Tania Notarius, she convened an important session on the linguistics of Biblical Hebrew at the World Congress of Jewish Studies in 2013 and they are the editors of a forthcoming volume of the conference papers.

Adina Moshavi  
Bar-Ilan University

### **Steering Committee Member 3**

Tania Notarius, lecturer, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel (Ph.D. Hebrew University, Department of Hebrew and Jewish Languages). She is the author of *The Verb in Archaic Biblical Poetry* (Brill 2013) and numerous articles on Biblical Hebrew and the related Northwest Semitic languages. She is the co-author (with M. Morgenstern) of the *Zarazta d-Hibil Ziua* (the synoptic edition of the Mandaic text) forthcoming from Harrassowitz, 2015.

Tania Notarius  
Hebrew University of Jerusalem

### **Steering Committee Member 4**

-----Projected Topics for First Two Years of Unit's New Term-----

**Session 1 Details**

Includes unsolicited presentations (from an open call for papers), Includes solicited presentations

“Linguistic Features of Biblical Hebrew Poetry” (co-sponsored with the Biblical Hebrew Poetry section).

This session will examine the question of whether poetry and prose in the Hebrew Bible have different linguistic features, what those features are and how they should be described. At one end of the spectrum are scholars who believe that prose and poetry are distinct linguistic systems; at the other end of the spectrum are scholars who believe that prose and poetry comprise one linguistic system.

Invited Participant:

Wido van Peursen, Free University of Amsterdam – He is working on a syntactic database to explore whether Biblical Hebrew prose and poetry are linguistically similar or diverse.

**Session 2 Details**

Includes unsolicited presentations (from an open call for papers), Includes solicited presentations

“Syntax and Semantics of the Relative Clause.”

This session will explore currently disputed features of the relative clause, including the history and comparative identification of the relative markers, the relationship of the relative clause to the construct phrase, the semantics and pragmatics of relative clauses.

Invited Participants:

Robert D. Holmstedt, University of Toronto – author of a forthcoming book on the relative clause  
Na’ama Pat-El, University of Texas-Austin

**Session 3 Details**

Includes unsolicited presentations (from an open call for papers), Includes solicited presentations

“Linguistics and Qumran Hebrew” (co-sponsored with the Qumran section).

This session will explore the question of the Hebrew language as found at the Dead Sea scrolls, including the disputed questions of diglossia, dialect, diachronic change and variation and sociolinguistic varieties (“anti-language”).

Invited Participants:

William Schniedewind, UCLA – proponent of the view that Qumran Hebrew is an  
“anti-language”  
Eibert Tigchelaar, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

**Session 4 Details**

Includes unsolicited presentations (from an open call for papers), Includes solicited  
presentations

“Interrupted Syntactic Structures.”

This session will explore various syntactic phenomena that “interrupt” the sentence syntax  
including vocatives and terms of address, parenthetical remarks, sentence fragments,  
“scrambling” and ellipsis.

Invited Participant:

Tamar Zewi, Haifa University – author of book entitled Parenthesis in Biblical Hebrew