

E-mail exchanges between the Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew steering committee (LBH) and the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting Program committee (SBL AMPC); the exchanges are all between Jacobus Naudé, the LBH steering committee chair and Charles Haws, the Director of Programs for SBL (headers and signatures have been removed).

Exchange 1, following the initial proposal by LBH and initial response by SBL AMPC

2015/10/20
Dear Charles

Thank you for your message. In order to give a proper response, I need clarity on a number of matters in the letter. I would like, therefore, to ask concerning the following.

First, I wonder if you can clarify what is meant by "more discussion of the perceived impact on the unit's work on related scholarship." What is meant by "related scholarship"? Since I submitted a large number of letters from related sections (with their related scholarship), it is not clear to me what kind of further information you are looking for.

Second, the emphasis on the Philology in Hebrew Studies section is surprising, since the focus of the two sections is so far apart. I therefore did not think to approach that section for a letter of support. I was more concerned about sections that have some relationship to linguistics. I will, however, approach them now. I would like to know, in the meantime, if that section is also up for renewal this year?
I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards
jacobus naude

2015/10/22
Dear Prof. Naudé,

Thanks for your response. You indicate that the units are "so far apart," but this is a point that was not clear to the committee, especially since the proposals included overlapping language. The letters you mention spell out relations between LBH and a variety of units that deal more or less with linguistics, but the committee also wants to know how it relates to a unit on Hebrew philology. That unit is also under review and has been asked for its take on its relation to LBH.

To comment a little further on the letters and clarify the committee's request for more information, the letters from Campbell and Eynikel say nothing of impact. The letters from von Thaden and Tigchelaar/Segal make a case for a unit such as this in theory, but the letters have little to do with the impact of the unit's work in practice. There's a brief note from Hayes that contributions are published, but that too makes little claim about the

impact of the unit's work. The first and third paragraphs of Taylor's letter has something to do with impact, noting the unit's role in "facilitating discussion of major issues" and "bringing together a diverse group of scholars." The Reymond/Lam letter describes the unit in relation to other units vis-à-vis the field of linguistics and hints at connections and support; if you could flesh out how your work "connects with and supports multiple other sections" and thus impacts linguistics and broader scholarship in the field of biblical studies, that letter's comments would become more relevant for the committee's particular concern below.

We deeply appreciate your work and hope that you can help us understand these details better.

Best,
Charlie

Exchange 2, following submission of revised proposal by LBH on November 11th

2015/11/18
Dear Charles

A week ago I submitted the letter to the programme committee that they requested concerning the Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew section. I had hoped to have a response by now. The time is very short before we must provide the Call for Papers for 2016 and we have already done a great deal of work on next year's sessions. The annual meeting is the most important opportunity that we have to meet with colleagues, both in the steering committee and with other adjacent sections with whom we want to co-sponsor sessions. But if we do not know the future of the section, it is really not a good use of time to meet.

Can you tell me when I can expect an answer so that we know how to proceed? I would also like to know in the event of a negative answer, when precisely does the section end? Will we still have a session in 2016?

I hope to hear from you very soon.

Kind regards
Jacobus Naude

2015/11/19
Dear Jacobus,

Thanks for checking in with me about this. The committee is deliberating over your revised

proposal and others. We have asked for feedback ahead of the committee's meeting, which falls on Monday this year. I'm sorry if the timing of the decision may complicate things for you.

Best,
Charlie

2015/12/03
Dear Charles

I have not yet received any information from you concerning the committee's decision regarding the renewal of the Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew section. It is possible that an e-mail was lost, so I am writing to find out whether you have sent something or not.

There is now only a week left before the call for papers must go out, so it is quite urgent that I know how to proceed. May I ask for your assistance with this as a matter of urgency?

Kind regards
Jacobus naude

2015/12/07
Dear Jacobus,

I can assure you that the committee is working diligently to get you an answer. The opening of the call for papers should not be a worry. It gets next to no traffic in December.

Best,
Charlie

Exchange 3, following the SBL AMPC's response to the revised proposal on December 21st

2015/12/29
Dear Charles

Thank you for sending the letter of the programme committee dated 21 December 2015. The letter is, however, quite opaque on certain critical points. The steering committee of Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew therefore urgently requests clarification concerning the following:

1. We wish to know what “collaboration” with Philology in Hebrew Studies means in practice. Does it mean collaboration with Philology in Hebrew Studies in order to avoid overlap or conflict with Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew (which were minimal in the past)? Does it mean a co-sponsored session (or sessions) every year? Must the two sections approve of each other’s programme every year?

2. We wish to know what has been told to Philology and Hebrew Studies concerning their relation to Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew. Does Philology in Hebrew Studies also have a prerequisite of collaboration with Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew? In my recent correspondence with Jeremy Hutton, it seems that Philology in Hebrew Studies has attained the status of a section without any prerequisite. Can you please confirm and elaborate?

I hope to hear from you very quickly.

Kind regards
Jacobus Naude

2015/12/30
Dear Jacobus,

Thanks for your reply. Our offices are closed this week. Anselm and I will be in conversation the first week of January and then in touch with you.

Best,
Charlie

2016/01/27
Dear Charles

We are nearly at the end of January and the steering committee of LBH is puzzled that we still have no response to our questions below. Please, can you let us know when we might expect a response.

Kind regards
jacobus

2016/01/28
Dear Jacobus,

Thanks for checking in with me about this, and I’m sorry for the delay. The committee has

been unable to meet to discuss your latest email. It is, however, working in that direction and will be in touch with you again as soon as it can.

Best,
Charlie

Exchange 4, following the SBL AMPC's final response of March 2nd

2016/03/17
Dear Charles

The steering committee of Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew will reply formally to the letter from you and Dr Hagedorn shortly. In the meantime, however, we are busy putting together our sessions for 2016.

We are very concerned that the SBL web-site now lists Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew as a seminar, rather than a section. Since the 2016 Call for Papers went out for LBH as a section (in response to your written request that I do so) and scholars submitted papers to a section, it is critically important that LBH in 2016 be a section and not a seminar. To change LBH to a section on 2 March 2016 after the Call for Papers has closed will be viewed as a “bait and switch” – it will put SBL in a very bad light and might well have legal implications.

Can you please assure the steering committee that in 2016 our sessions will be indicated in the programme book as those of a section, as advertised in the Call for Papers? In our view, it is unethical for SBL to change the status of LBH from a section to a seminar after the Call for Papers has closed.

Kind regards
Jacobus naude

2016/04/12
Dear Professor Naudé,

Thank you for your email. The committee has discussed it amongst itself and brought it to the attention of the SBL Council. Both committees of the Society register their surprise at the tone and content of the communication. We recognize that review of Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew has taken several months and stretched beyond the call for papers period and that participants in the unit's 2016 program might be confused if the unit's type were to change. The unit can remain as a section for 2016 and then will transition to a seminar for the remainder of its current term (2017-2021).

May we kindly reiterate, as stated in the committee's letter of March 2, that you be prepared to submit a brief write-up of plans for collaboration between the units after this year's

Annual Meeting. We will request such a write-up from the philology unit as well. Charlie Haws will follow up with both units about a brief explanation of this collaboration after this year's Annual Meeting.

Sincerely,
Anselm C. Hagedorn, Chair of the AMPC
and
Charles G. Haws
Director of Programs