This second edition of *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (BHRG; first edition, Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) is a welcome revision. At the same time, the character of the grammar has altered in some unhelpful ways. True to the first edition, this grammar continues to aim at the intermediate level for employment by exegetes and translators of the Hebrew Bible. In terms of content as well, this edition follows the first, though with a helpfully expanded table of contents. The 48 sections are divided into seven chapters corresponding to the first edition (other than some chapter title changes): introduction, writing system, key terms and concepts, verbs, nouns, the other word classes, and word order. As with the first edition, the end-matter contains a glossary, bibliography, and indices of references, authors, and subjects.

Notable changes apparent from the table of contents include the following. The section on prepositions has been expanded to include מִדָּרֶשׁ (“opposite”) and מֵעָה (“around”). The treatment of conjunctions, adverbs, and discourse markers have been combined in a single section (§40; cf. §§40–41 and 44 in the first edition), seemingly and wisely motivated by a degree of fluidity among these categories. The grammar now includes a dedicated section on oath clauses, based largely on Blane Conklin’s research (*Oath Formulas in Biblical Hebrew* [Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 5; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011]; §45; cf. the first edition, which only briefly mentions the oath formulation in its treatment of וָא, “if” [p. 296], and an additional section on left-dislocation, §48).

In terms of design and typesetting, the second edition represents a drastic improvement on the previous in the following ways: the page format is slightly larger, and the Hebrew typeface is larger and darker than the first edition; the section headings are in boldface now, instead of italic type, and the section numbers are given along with the page number in the running header; and the many typos I have marked in my first edition have been corrected.

Despite these welcome changes, the character of this second edition is altered for the worse by its departure from two stated aims in the first edition. In the preface of the earlier edition (included in this edition) the authors note that the grammar “avoids discussing problems regarding the description of BH” (p. xxvii) and that “no attempt has been made to be...
linguistically innovative" (p. xxix). Those sections that were most substan-
tially revised, according to the authors (i.e., the semantics and pragmatics of
the verbal system, negatives, use of pronouns, quantifiers, prepositions, dis-
course particles, and word order and left dislocation), depart from the design
of the first edition in precisely these two ways: they engage in debates over
how to analyze the given construction, albeit often in the form of footnotes,
and they present innovative ideas, ideas very frequently derived from MA
theses or Ph.D. dissertations supervised at Stellenbosch University by van der
Merwe (see bibliography).

Some of these revisions, as such, are not unwelcome, such as the revi-
sion of the pronoun treatment based on more recent work done by Naudé,
the change of terminology from relative pronoun to relative complemen-
tizer, the greatly expanded treatment of הָאוּ based on works by Naudé and
Miller-Naudé, and the extensive treatment of נֶפֶל on the basis of work by
Miller-Naudé and van der Merwe. However, on the whole, the result is an
uneven second edition that in large part continues in the vein of its prede-
cessor (an intermediate presentation of the long-assured results of Biblical
Hebrew grammar) but that in various sections departs radically in order
to engage in the latest debates in the field of Biblical Hebrew linguistics
or promote a particular recent theory. For exegetes and translators with an
intermediate grasp of the language and uninitiated into the field of Biblical
Hebrew linguistics, this volume can only provide an uneven and inaccu-
rate view of the state of Biblical Hebrew grammar. On the one hand, they
are being offered long-established analyses and descriptions, not because
they are necessarily correct, but because they are established by the standard
grammars, and time and chance have not yet allowed the authors or their
students to study these facets of grammar. On the other hand, innovative
but sometimes questionable analyses are included, sometimes seemingly
because they are research conducted by proxy (by his students) for the lead
author. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the authors note their disagreement
on certain analyses in the preface to this addition (p. xxxi), stating their
“consultation” on such matters produced a description that “superseded”
their differing points of view.

Two extensively rewritten sections illustrate this unfortunate change.
The Hebrew verb is a perennial problem of Hebrew grammar. In contrast
to the first edition, ch. 4 on the verb in this edition is wholly different, from
vocabulary to basic conceptualization of how to study the Hebrew verbal
system. It is informed by recent ideas from diachronic typology, such as
panchrony and path theory of development for grammatical structures, and
it is altered to conform with the specific views of a former post-doc student
of van der Merwe’s, Alex Andrason, who reduced his 2011 dissertation to
a series of articles over the succeeding years. On the whole, the treatment is an improvement over the previous edition, notwithstanding the specific weaknesses of Andrason’s theory. Notably, because his extreme form of panchronic path analysis has few controls, it can incorporate virtually any and all marginal and/or questionable meanings for the verb forms found in the standard reference grammars. The intermediate student employing this grammar will find precious little help whittling away the centuries-long amalgamation of possible meanings to determine which is most likely in a given context. A more serious problem, however, is that authors only dip their toe into the vast debate over the Hebrew verb, and then present one particular approach with an implication that it is on par with other portions of the grammar—an assured and wide-spread result.

The other section that illustrates this problem is the last, on left dislocation. The revision is based largely on a dissertation by Joshua Westbury under van der Merwe. However, the authors are unable to avoid presenting the opposing view by Robert Holmstedt in their presentation. Here, because the debate consists of fewer opposing points of view, both sides can be presented in the body of the grammar. However, what is left unstated is that the understanding of left dislocation promoted by Westbury is an outlier that has virtually no support in linguistic literature.

In conclusion, this volume has much to commend to intermediate students, because of its former strengths—particularly the morphological summaries and paradigms of the verbal system—and improved readability. However, the intent of the first edition to present the assured and well-established views on Hebrew grammar in an intermediate form has been lost to an uneven recasting of select sections to present a “nuanced description of the state of the art of Biblical Hebrew” (p. xxxii).

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Paul S. Evans. 1–2 Samuel.

Stating the purpose of the Story of God Bible Commentary (SGBC), a July, 2018, Zondervan press release explains that the SGBC “explains and illuminates each passage of Scripture in light of the Bible’s grand story” and that it “offers a clear and compelling exposition of biblical texts, guiding everyday
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