



Word-Order Variation in Biblical Hebrew Poetry: Differentiating Pragmatics and Poetics (Paternoster Biblical Monographs)

Nicholas P. Lunn

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This study tackles the neglected subject of word order in biblical Hebrew poetry. The fact that the order of clause constituents frequently differs from that found in prose has often been noted, but no systematic attempt has been offered by way of explanation. Here two separate factors are taken into consideration, that of purely poetic variation (defamiliarisation), and that of pragmatic markedness. The former is common to the poetic genre. In the latter case there is a discernible significance in the positioning of the words that has implications with respect to the matters of topic and focus. Using Lambrecht's theory of information structure and building on the insights of previous studies in biblical Hebrew narrative the present volume shows that marked topic and focus structures in Old Testament poetry are identical to those found in prose and are distinguishable from defamiliarised word order by means of the environment in which the latter is found. Here the common phenomenon of parallelism is seen to be an important factor in providing a secondary line in which defamiliarisation may freely occur. This work offers a new approach to the poetry of the Old Testament that will be an aid towards more accurate translation, exegesis, and discourse analysis of poetic texts.

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