

Layout Guidelines for Learning  
Narrative Syntax and Discourse Constellations

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Gary E. Schnittjer

Hebrew text and English translation layout formats are mirror image, right to left and vice versa. In English translation students should parse verbs in parentheses. The layout should be followed by an interpretative summary.

*The point is not to learn to do layouts.* This model to layout and graphically depict “functional grammar” is a learning step. Once the student is aware of functional structuring in narrative is best not to overstress it, as though writing prose is confined to strict mechanical structures. Simply put, grammatical structure has great variety, and, in any case, is only, at best, an intermediate point of interpretation. At the same time, sensitivity to narrative syntax and discourse verbal constellations can greatly benefit interpretation of narrative contexts with a healthy quantity of embedded speech of characters.

For explanatory details of narrative mainline, offline, discourse verbal constellations, and so on, see Notes at <http://scriptureworkshop.com/bh/x/n/>. Also see example using Jonah 1 below.

ENGLISH

**Mainline** wci clauses flush left

**Indirect speech** in mainline indented ½ inch from left margin

**Offline** clauses indent 1 inch

**Indirect speech** in offline indent 1.5 inches

(**Label** of discourse type centered in parenthesis over direct speech)

**Direct speech** centered

HEBREW

**Mainline** wci clauses flush right

**Indirect speech in mainline** indent ½ inch from right margin

**Offline** clauses indent 1 inch from right

**Indirect speech** in offline indent 1.5 inches from right

(**Label** of discourse constellation type centered in parenthesis of direct speech)

**Direct speech** centered

## EXAMPLE LAYOUT

For explanatory details of narrative mainline, offline, discourse verbal constellations, and so on, see Notes at <http://scriptureworkshop.com/bh/x/n/>.

### Jonah 1

<sup>1</sup> (וַיְהִי) Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, (לֵאמֹר) saying,  
(Hortatory)

<sup>2</sup> Rise up (קוּם Q impv), go (הֵלֶךְ Q impv) to Nineveh, the great city,  
and cry (קרא Q impv) against it;  
(Expository)

(כִּי) for their wickedness has come up (עָלָה Q pf) before me.

<sup>3</sup> But Jonah rose up (קוּם Q wci) to flee (ברח Q infc)

[to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD,

and went down (יָרַד Q wci) to Joppa;

and he found (מָצָא Q wci) a ship going (בֹּא Q ptc) (to) Tarshish:

so he gave (נָתַן Q wci) the fare,

and went down (יָרַד Q wci) into it, to go (בֹּא Q infc) with them

[to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

<sup>4</sup> But the LORD sent (טוֹלַת Hif pf) a great wind to the sea,

(וַיְהִי) and there was a mighty storm on the sea,

so that the ship was thought (חָשַׁב Piel pf) to be broken (שָׁבַר Nif infc)

<sup>5</sup> Then the sailors were afraid (יָרָא Q wci),

so they cried (זָעַק Q wci) every one unto his god,

and they threw (טוֹלַת Hif wci) the supplies that were

[in the ship into the sea, to lighten it (קָלַל Hif infc) of them.

But Jonah had gone down (יָרַד Q pf) into the inner part of the ship;

and he laid (שָׁכַב Q wci),

and was fast asleep (רָדַם Nif wci)

<sup>6</sup> So the captain of the ship came near (קָרַב Q wci) to him,

(וַיֹּאמֶר) and said to him,

(Interrogative)

“What are you doing, sleeper (רָדַם Nif ptc)?

(Hortatory)

Get up (קוּם Q impv), call (קרא Q impv) upon your god,

(Predictive)

maybe God will consider (עָשָׂה Hit impf) us,

so that we do not die (אָבַד Q impf).”

<sup>7</sup> (וַיֹּאמְרוּ) And each one said to his fellow,

(Hortatory)

“Come (הֵלֶךְ Q impv),

(Predictive)

and let us cast (נָפַל Hif coh) lots

that we may know (יָדַע Q coh) on whose account this evil has come on us.”

So they cast (נפל Hif wci) lots,  
and the lot fell (נפל Q wci) on Jonah.

<sup>8</sup> (ויאמרו) Then said they to him,

(Hortatory)

“Please tell (נגד Hif impv) us on whose account this evil is upon us;

(Interrogative)

What is your job? Where are you from (בוא Q impf)?

What is your country? And of what people are you?”

<sup>9</sup> (ויאמר) And he said to them,

(Expository)

“I am an Hebrew; and I fear (ירא Q ptc) the LORD,  
the God of heaven,

who has made (עשה Q pf) the sea and the dry land.”

<sup>10</sup> Then the sailors were terrified (ירא Q wci),

(ויאמרו) and they said to him,

(Interrogative)

“What did you do (עשה Q pf)?,”

for the sailors knew (ידע Q pf) that he was fleeing (ברח Q ptc) from the presence  
of the LORD, because he had told (נגד [Hif pf) them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>11</sup> (ויאמרו) Then said they to him,

(Interrogative)

“What should we do (עשה Q impf) with you,

so that the sea may be calm (שתק Q impf) for us?,”

for the sea was raging (הלך Q ptc), and storming (סער Q ptc).

<sup>12</sup> (ויאמר) And he said unto them,

(Hortatory)

“Pick me up (נשא Q impv, -1cs), and throw me (טול Hif impv) into the sea;

(Predictive)

and then the sea should be calm (שתק Q impf) for you;

(Expository)

(כי) for I know (ידע Q ptc) that on my account  
this great storm has come on you.”

<sup>13</sup> But the sailors rowed anyway (חתרו Q wci)

[to return (שוב Hif infc) to dry land;

but they could not (יכל Q pf) because the sea was raging (הלך Q ptc), and  
storming (סער Q ptc) against them.

<sup>14</sup> Thus they called out (קרא Q wci) to the LORD,

(ויאמרו Q wci) and said,

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<sup>1</sup> This background clause contains indirect speech, as the content of the sailors thoughts. It would be acceptable to layout as indirect speech in the background “that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD because he had told them.” Indirect speech normally begins with the verb of saying followed by כי (or some other marker as noted above) whereas here the verb of saying is in the כי clause.

(Predictive)

“Please O LORD do not let us be lost (אָבֵד Q coh) for this man’s life,  
and do not put (נָתַן Q impf) on us innocent blood,

(Expository)

(פִּי) for you, O LORD, will do (עָשָׂה Q pf) as you please (חָפֵץ Q pf).”

<sup>15</sup> And they lifted (נָשָׂא Q wci) Jonah  
and threw him (טָרַל Hif wci) into the sea,  
and the sea stopped (עָמַד Q wci) its raging.

<sup>16</sup> Then the men feared (יָרָא Q wci) the LORD with a great fear,  
and they sacrificed (זָבַח Q wci) a sacrifice to the LORD,  
and they vowed (נָדַר Q wci) vows.

### Summary

The action or storyline of Jonah chap 1 is both pushed forward and explained by many of the direct speeches. The word from Jonah’s God initiates the prophet’s travels. The speeches of the ship’s captain and Jonah layout the significance of the storyline.

God operates in the background or offline. It is the prophet’s speeches which is the vehicle for the sailors to understand the meaning of the storm. Moreover, the sailors reason out the purpose of the storm based on a speech act of Jonah not in the narration (the quasi-indirect speech of 1:10). Both of these factors, God’s actions in the background and Jonah’s disobedient motives, look forward to the last chapter of the book. In Jonah chap 4 God’s actions are on the mainline, and Jonah explains further his motives for disobeying.

The speech of Jonah in 1:12 of his responsibility bringing judgment upon the sailors contrasts the sailors seeking to save Jonah against God’s judgment. The sailors’ efforts for Jonah in spite of his disregard, even sleeping, model the sort of vision Jonah is supposed to have for the people of Nineveh.

One of the significant changes in Jonah chap 1 is the transformation of the sailors’ regard for Jonah’s God. The sailors paid no mind to Jonah’s God when they helped the prophet run away (1:10). Then, they feared the wrath of Jonah’s God when they learned who he is (1:9, 10), but yet they strove to overcome his fierce wrath against the prophet. After the sailors appeased the wrath of Jonah’s God by throwing the prophet to his death (or so they thought), they feared him anew and offered him sacrifices and vows.