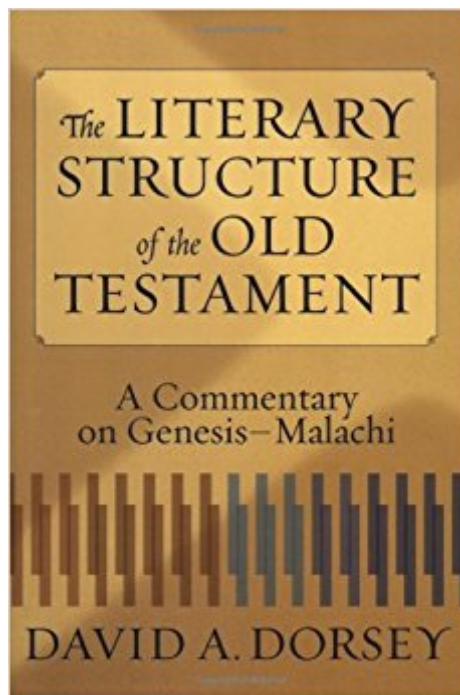




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# The Literary Structure Of The Old Testament: A Commentary On Genesis-Malachi



## Synopsis

Dorsey proceeds book-by-book through the entire Old Testament, identifying the structure and offering commentary as to how it clarifies the text's meaning. He illuminates the "big picture" of each book, providing a framework for further study. "This book will become a standard reference tool for all serious students of the Bible."--Temper Longman III, Westmont College

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This book will become a standard reference tool for all serious students of the Bible."

David A. Dorsey (Ph.D., Dropsie College) is professor of Old Testament at the Evangelical School of Theology in Myerstown, Pennsylvania. He is the author of *The Roads and Highways of Ancient Israel*.

Have you ever wondered why Genesis shows Abraham claiming Sarah is his sister twice? Or why there are two different accounts of David's sparing King Saul in 1 Samuel? This book picks up on literary structures that are lost on a 21st century Western audience. It shows the intentionality behind how sections and books of the Old Testament are organized. This greatly aids in understanding the meaning of the texts. It shows the purpose of why each author includes the material that he does. If you really want to understand the books of the Old Testament, this book is

an invaluable resource.

This is a very fine book and a practical resource for understanding of structural patterns in the Old Testament (OT). It provides a brief but nice overview of structural analysis, which is then followed by Dorsey's analysis and commentary of every OT book. Dorsey begins with the premise that while most OT books may appear to us to be hopelessly disorganized, their authors indeed followed structural and organizational pattern which are however very different from our own. Hence, unless we are familiar with these structural patterns we simply fail to detect them. This implies that proper deciphering of the structure of an OT books leads to proper understanding of its meaning. The other very important premise is that much of the OT material was intended to be heard or listened to, rather than to be read. Thus authors of these text employed oral markers rather than written or textual typesetting as we know it in our printed materials. The introductory unit reviews basic principles of structural analysis and provides some elementary tools for the reader to use in his or her own study. Dorsey first provides basic overview of the fields with its historical roots and evolution of structural analysis up to our day. The next four chapters deal with the following topics; definition of literary units, arrangement of units, understanding the structure and meaning and finally discussing value of structural analysis. These chapters are detailed enough for one to be able to pick up some new tools and skills, yet not too esoteric for a casual reader. Further, Dorsey provides enough references for the interested reader to pursue any given topic in more detail. After this section, Dorsey provides his own structural analysis and interpretation of the structure for each book in the OT. The OT books are grouped in the following manner; the books of the law, historical books, poetic books, major prophets and minor prophets - which is the order of the English Bible. The objective here isn't necessarily to impose Dorsey's structural breakdown or interpretation thereof on the reader. Rather it is to illustrate the principle in action. There can be multiple layers of structure and meaning in each book and it is up to each reader to identify them properly depending on the object of his or her study. This is a great book and without reservations I would recommend it to anyone seeking better understanding of the Old Testament.

This book has been more helpful for understanding what God intended for us to glean from the Bible than any other I've come across. The author is very disciplined in his ability to show the literary structure of a given text and to use that structure to reveal the key points the text is trying to convey. I think we as English readers come to the text with our own questions and preconceived notions... And then we hunt to find answers for them in the text - and go on a grand adventure in missing the

point. This book has been the most helpful tool I've come across in keeping my focus where it was originally supposed to be and revealing what God intended to make the main point of each scripture. I highly recommend it to any serious Bible student.

In addition to what others have said, this book is also an excellent tool for Christian education. I am an administrator in a Christian school, and we have used Dorsey's chiasmic and parallel outlines with our students extensively in our Bible teaching. Literary structures are by design pneumonically-powerful. We believe it is just as pressing to store up the broad movements, arguments, and patterns of God's word in our hearts as it is pressing to memorize isolated verses AWANA-style.

I have not come across a book like this. It takes each book of the OT and lays it out rhetorically and structurally so that the reader gains additional insight not just from the words of the verses, but from the structure of poems, prophecies, narratives, as well as complete structures of the whole book. In this way, insights that were "unseen" for a long time are illuminated since the assumption of the book is that structure is as important as content. This book gives us the "structure" from which the "content" is seen in a very useful and new way.

In reading Genesis 1, one sees symmetry, repetition, and parallelism. The complete meaning of the text is carried not only in the words but also in the structuring of those words. The artistry and structure revealed in the first chapter of the bible is carried forward into the rest of scripture, but more subtly. Dorsey has an ability to discern the subtle textual indicator; giving us an eye into the mind of the author. This book should be placed prominently on the bookshelf of any student of scripture.

An immensely helpful book when looking at literary structures and themes in the Old Testament. It is a must when looking for an outline of a particular book or text. The only drawbacks: sometimes Dorsey's chiasms seem somewhat forced ([...]), the binding does not hold up well for a paperback. Mine is split.

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