Chapter 9

Prose Discourse Analysis Summary Chart

The following seeks to distill all the information in the foregoing chapters into one handy summary.

Step 1. Separate the text by clauses	
Rules:	1. Each clause gets its own box. 2. Preserve word order. 3. Indent dependent phrases to show dependence. 4. If the dependence is downward, add an arrow: ↓ 5. Use grey shading for embedded discourse.
Step 2. Analyze each clause	
Step 2.A. For each clause, observe the following factors	
	Form / situation	**Possible discourse functions**
1. Discourse Markers	Conjunctions (e.g., כִּי; פֶּן; אִם; לְמַעַן)	The lexical meaning(s) of the conjunction. For example, possible meanings in the case of כִּי: 1. Cause ("for", "because") 2. Circumstance ("when") 3. Condition ("if") 4. Expansion ("that") (as a complement to a verb of seeing or knowing) 5. Contrast ("but instead")

		Form / situation	**Possible discourse functions**
	1. Discourse Markers (continued)	Relatives (e.g., אֲשֶׁר ;שֶׁ; זוּ)	Often introducing relative clauses. Possible meanings in the case of אֲשֶׁר: 1. Expansion ("which"; etc.) 2. Cause ("because") 3. Result ("such that") 4. Condition ("if")
		Interrogatives (e.g., -הֲ; אֵי; אֵיפֹה)	Introducing a question.
		Adverbs (e.g., אַךְ; רַק)	The lexical meaning(s) of the adverb
		Interjections (e.g., הִנֵּה; אוֹי)	The lexical meaning(s) of the interjection
		וְעַתָּה	1. Inference ("now therefore") 2. Shifts time reference to the present ("and now")
		וְהִנֵּה	1. New point of view 2. Imperative to consider a new topic ("now look") 3. Results of looking 4. Inference ("therefore")

	Form / situation	Possible discourse functions
page 141 **2. Verbal Sequences**	**Narrative Sequences**	
	wayyiqtol	1. Next event ("and then") 2. Contrast ("but") 3. Result ("and so") 4. Simultaneous ("and at the same time") 5. Expansion ("and what's more" or "who" or "which") 6. New episode / initiate foreground ("now") Remember *wayyiqtol*'s tendency to continue whatever semantic ideas (like tense, aspect, mood, background) preceded it.
	וַיְהִי	1. New unit 2. Shift in time (but same unit) 3. Result 4. Standard *wayyiqtol* (when it has the non-discourse meaning of "to be" or "to happen" or "to become")
	waw + x + *qatal* in a *wayyiqtol* sequence	See below under preposing
page 142	*weqatal* in a *wayyiqtol* sequence	1. Marks a foreground event as climactic or final 2. Initiate a background *weqatal* sequence conveying habitual information 3. Indistinguishable from *wayyiqtol*
	וְהָיָה in a *wayyiqtol* sequence	Initiate a background comment about a habitual action ("whenever")

	Form / situation	Possible discourse functions
2. Verbal Sequences (continued)	**Non-narrative Sequences**	
	weqatal	1. Next step ("and then") 2. Contrast ("but") 3. Result or purpose ("and thus"; "so that") 4. Simultaneous step ("and at the same time") 5. Expansion ("and what's more" or "who" or "which") 6. Initiate and continue "if" and "then" clauses in an "if-then" statement 7. Inference ("therefore") Remember *weqatal*'s tendency to continue whatever semantic ideas (like tense, aspect, mood, background) preceded it.
	וְהָיָה	1. New unit ("now") 2. Shift in time 3. Result or purpose 4. Standard *weqatal* (when it has the non-discourse meaning of "to be" or "to happen" or "to become")
	waw + yiqtol after an imperatival form	1. Purpose ("so that") 2. Next step
	Asyndeton (no conjunction on the front) with a leading verb (For asyndetic clauses led by non-verbs, see "pre-posed clauses" under #3)	1. Reason ("for") 2. Inference ("therefore")

		Form / situation	Possible discourse functions
	3. Word Order and Verbless Clauses	Preposed clauses and verbless clauses	1. Contrast 2. Circumstances or Reason 3. Addition ("what is more", "moreover") 4. New topic or new episode 5. Initiate background 6. Expansion (when the preposed clause is asyndetic) 7. Intensification
	4. Special Situations	In background or other embedded discourse, when verbal forms from the foreground reappear. (E.g., background is being conveyed by *weqatal*, but then *wayyiqtol* is used, which was the verbal form from the foreground)	Termination of the embedded discourse, resumption of the foreground
		In background or other embedded discourse, when the last sentence from the foreground is repeated	Termination of the embedded discourse, resumption of the foreground
		Restatement of immediately prior clause	Climax of discourse

Step 2.B. Based on your analysis of this clause, conclude with how it relates to the previous clause	
The key question	Ask: how does this clause relate to the previous ones? Answer using: 1. All that you have observed in step 2.A, 2. Your knowledge of how the elements of BH prose (discourse markers, verbal sequences, word order) convey meaning, 3. Your sense of the text's inner logic, and 4. All kinds of relevant broader contexts (literary, historical, theological) that help establish logical unity.
Practical helps	Ask: what is the speaker doing with this clause? 1. Scan lists of possible relationships. 2. Be prepared for unusual situations. Rule of thumb #1: Look for analogies with the verbal sequences you know already. Rule of thumb #2: Be aware of special constructions, like oaths or curses. Rule of thumb #3: When no element of discourse seems prominent, remember the default meaning of each verbal form provided below.

Default verbal semantics	Form	Default Semantics		
		Tense	*Aspect*	*Mood*
	wayyiqtol	Past	Perfective	Indicative
	qatal	Past	Perfective	Indicative
	weqatal	*Unspecified*	*Unspecified*	Unreal (conditional, imperative, etc.)
	yiqtol	Future	Imperfective	Indicative
	Participle	Present	Imperfective	Indicative
	Imperative	*Unspecified*	*Unspecified*	Imperative
	Verbless clauses (nominal sentences)	Present	Stative	Indicative

Step 3. Reassess your analysis

Two steps of reassessment	1. Revise relationships in light of the whole discourse 2. Determine boundaries of larger sections
Criteria for a compelling discourse relationship	A good proposal for a discourse relationship usually will: 1. Not contravene the typical uses of discourse markers, verbal sequences, or word order. 2. Account for *all* elements of a clause, including the usual meanings of each individual word. 3. Fit sensibly with the surrounding context.

Source: Matthew H. Patton and Frederic Clarke Putnam, *Basics of Hebrew Discourse: A Guide to Working with Biblical Hebrew Prose and Poetry*, ed. Miles V. Van Pelt (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019), 139–44.