

Basic Hebrew Grammar

by

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Dedication

To Dr. Frank Swanson
who encouraged the author
in the study of biblical languages

Preface

This basic Hebrew grammar was written out of a sense of frustration. When the author was in seminary he struggled through Hebrew like almost everyone in seminary does. One of the major difficulties was finding organized material that had been taught, without going to an advanced grammar. As the lessons progressed, the amount of material to be memorized was staggering and existing Hebrew grammars were not laid out to find material easily. The grammatical material in the first year grammar¹ used at that seminary, which was otherwise excellent, was not presented systematically, but pedagogically. It was, in fact, difficult to remember where to find inflectional information, and the information once found was difficult to read. Unfortunately, often the writer employed transliteration of the Hebrew aleph-bet, which is not conducive to reading the Hebrew text.

Jack K. Willsey, an excellent language teacher, attempted to simplify the presentation and bring it up to date, but was hindered by traditionalists who insisted in the old “tried and true” methodology. He did present a simplified grammar based on M. Adler’s *First Steps in Hebrew Grammar* (from which the author took the chapter organization for this work) which was brief, but helpful.

When the author eventually became a teacher of Hebrew his frustration grew. While elementary Hebrew textbooks existed, they did not present material in any easily referenced way. Nothing had changed in the ten years since the author’s seminary days. So he wrote out sheets in long hand (no computers in those days) to help with that problem. Over the years of teaching the number of those sheets grew and finally a short grammar emerged, and with the coming of the computer the author thought to make it generally available.

The grammar itself is not an attempt to supplant existing Hebrew textbooks. Indeed, the material is not presented in an easily teachable manner. But after a short time, the student will be able to find information more quickly than in either a large intermediate or advanced grammar.

No attempt has been made to be complete in the presentation of grammatical material. By and large syntactical material has been ignored. The student of Hebrew should use an adequate intermediate grammar, such as that by Waltke and O’Connor,² for syntactical research.

The paradigms in this work are designed to be easily memorized by the beginning student. Grammatical elements are briefly explained and examples are regularly given, many from the Hebrew Bible itself. No attempt at originality has been made. The grammar has been compiled from many sources though the manner of presentation is exclusively the author’s. Any errors in that presentation are his alone.

1. Moshe Greenberg. *Introduction to Hebrew Grammar* (London: Printice-Hall, Inc.), 1965.

2. Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns), 1990.

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Printing

Basic Hebrew Grammar is designed to be printed back to back, with each chapter beginning on an odd numbered page. If you print it single-sided, some blank sheets with page numbers will also print. If you take your print-out to an office copy store, and you want it printed back to back, include the blank pages.

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Chapter One: The Hebrew Alef-bet

Introduction

The written Hebrew Alef-bet has 22 letters, and is written from right to left. It consists of consonants only; originally vowels were understood and not written. Only a native speaker would have been able to easily determine the word meaning from a written text. Eventually, a system of diacritical marks representing vowel sounds came into existence, but this was many years after the alef-bet was in use. Also, the consonants themselves have some peculiar elements, some of which are as follows:

1. Some consonants have two forms, one for the beginning or middle of a word, and one for the end of the word. In the following aleph-bet list, the form to the right is how the letter appears at the beginning or within the word. The second form, to the left, is the form when used at the end of a word. Letters at the end of the word are called סִפּוּת (sofit pronounced sofeet) forms.
2. A *dagesh* is a dot placed within some Hebrew letters. The following six letters regularly receive *dagesh* (called *dagesh lene* or gentle *dagesh*) for the purpose of changing their pronunciation: גּ בּ הּ פּ כּ צּ. These consonants are represented by the acronym b^gad k^fat.¹ In current Hebrew, only three letters actually change sound, פּ כּ גּ. All letters take *dagesh* after the word the (ה) except the letters ה ט ה א, which can never take *dagesh*.²
3. Hebrew writing has a rich history, beginning with paleo-Hebrew (old Hebrew), which was derived from a Phoenician form, used before the later block letters were adopted. The present alef-bet is a stylized form of the ancient Aramaic alphabet and was known by Jewish scholars as *Ashurit* (“Assyrian script”), since its origins were assumed to be derived from the Assyrian alphabet forms. In modern Hebrew Bibles the Aramaic language sections are written in the same letter form as Hebrew.
4. In addition, historically, there were various cursive forms for the Hebrew letters. Modern Hebrew is handwritten with the Ashkenazi cursive script that developed in Europe in the thirteenth century. This grammar will use only the current “block form” of Hebrew lettering.
5. As noted above, it became necessary after many years to develop a method of representing vowel sounds in written form. During the centuries-long use of the alef-bet, scholars devised several systems of indicating vowel sounds by separate diacritical symbols, called vowel points. One system eventually prevailed, the Tiberian system (sometimes called the Palestinian system), developed in the 10th century in Tiberias, a small town beside the Sea of Galilee. Today these points are known in Hebrew as *niqqud*. See below.
6. The consonants וּ י and ה can sometimes function as vowels. This use developed before the vowel points were invented. Consonants used as vowels are called *matres lectionis* (Latin, meaning “mothers of reading”). See the section on Pronunciation below for further discussion of *matres lectionis*.

1 The superscript ^e represents the half vowel *sheva*. See “The Mobile Sheva” section below.

2 The observant student will note that occasionally the guttural ה will appear to have a *dagesh*, הּ. However, the dot is not *dagesh*, but a *mappik*, which occurs in ה only when it is a final letter. It indicates that ה is not a silent letter, but is to be pronounced. In practice, however, English speakers tend to leave final ה unpronounced.

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The Hebrew Consonants

	Sound	Number	Name	Letter
	Silent Letter	1	alef - אָלֶף	א
With dagesh “B” as in boy, without dagesh, “V” as in void		2	bet - בֵּית	ב
“G” as in game		3	gimel - גִּמֵּל	ג
“D” as in door		4	dalet - דָּלֶט	ד
“H” as in hot		5	he - הָא	ה
“V” as in victory		6	vav - וָו	ו
“Z” as in zebra		7	zayin - זַיִן	ז
“CH” as in German Bach		8	chet - חֵיט	ח
“T” as in top		9	tet - טֵיט	ט
“Y” as in yellow		10	yod - יוֹד	י
With dagesh, “K” as in king, without dagesh, “CH” as in Bach		20	kaf - כָּף	כך
“L” as in light		30	lamed - לָמֵד	ל
“M” as in money		40	mem - מֶם	מם
“N” as in now		50	nun - נוּן	נן
“S” as in some		60	samech - סָמֵךְ	ס
Silent letter		70	ayin - עַיִן	ע
With dagesh, “P” as in pay, without dagesh, “F” as in far		80	pe - פּא	פף
“TS” as in hits		90	tsade - צָדֵי	צץ
“Q” as in unique		100	qof - קוֹף	ק
“R” as in rabbit		200	resh - רֵישׁ	ר
“SH” as in shoe		300	shin - שֵׁין	ש
“S” as in some, considered the same letter as שׁ		300	sin - שֵׁין	ש
“T” as in top		400	tav - תָּו	ת

Note that שׁ and שׂ are the same letter. They both have the counting value of 300.

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The Hebrew Vowels

Hebrew word meanings are carried by the consonants. As noted above, the vowels were not originally written, but were added later to help retain the ancient pronunciation. They are usually called “vowel points,” though the specific vowel points we will use are identified as *nikkud*.

The Regular Vowels

As noted, various systems of indicating vowels were developed, but the one which prevailed was the Tiberian system. The following vowels are written beneath, above or after the silent consonant א and the sofit form when appropriate.

English Spelling	Hebrew Spelling	Pronunciation	Vowel
qametz	קָמֶץ	“A” as in father	אָ
patach	פָּתַח	“A” as in father	אָ
segol	סֶגוֹל	“E” as in set	אֶ
tsere	צֵרֵי	“E” as in set or grey	אֵ
hireq	הִרְקָה	“I” as in sit or siesta	אִ
cholem	חֹלֶם	“O” as in hold	אֹ
shureq	שׁוּרְקָה	“U” as in rule	אִי
qibbutz	קִבּוּץ	“U” as in rule	אֻ
sheva	שֵׁוּא	Silent, or short “E” as in return	אֲ

All the vowels except *cholom* and *shureq* are written below the letter with which they are associated. In modern pronunciation the vowel *qamatz* sometimes has a sound like *aw*. *Tsere* ranges in pronunciation from a short e sound to almost a long a sound even though it is considered an e class vowel.

The Half Vowels

Three half vowels are actually shortened forms of three regular vowels from the above list. They indicate only a quick pronunciation of the vowel sound.

Half patach	פְּתַח	אָ
Half qamatz	קְמֶץ	אָ
Half segol	סֶגוֹל	אֶ

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Long and Short Vowels

Some vowels are considered long or short, but not because of the time it takes to pronounce them. Further, most vowels can be lengthened or shortened in duration. However, some principles of vocalization of vowels indicate that certain vowels are considered long forms for other vowels.

The vowels ִ , ֵ , and ֶ are considered long forms of ִ , ֵ , and ֶ respectively.

The Sheva (שְׁוָא)

Sheva שְׁ (sometimes pronounced *shewa*) is sometimes called a half vowel because it represents a very quick vowel sound. It can be combined with other vowels, which are also called half vowels or composite vowels. The Hebrew gutturals, ע ה ה א (also called laryngals), regularly use half vowels. See more on the Hebrew gutturals below.

The Mobile Sheva and the Quiescent Sheva

Sheva indicates a consonant that has no full vowel. It is sometimes pronounced as a very quick vowel sound, but other times it indicates no sound at all. When *sheva* indicates the quick vowel sound, it is called mobile shevah. The mobile *sheva* replaces a full vowel that has become slurred because of a shift of accent.

Example: The masculine גְּדוּל (big) changes to a feminine by the addition of the letter ה which shifts the accent toward the end of the word. Thus it is pointed with a sheva (גְּדוּלָה) rather than qametz, and represents quick a sound, which is virtually indistinguishable from a quick *e* sound.

Example: The plural of the verb שָׁמַר (he guarded) is שָׁמְרוּ (they guarded). The *patach* under the מ has changed to *sheva* because of the addition of the ending represented by ו produces a shift in accent toward the end of the word.

Every *sheva* at the beginning of a word is a mobile sheva. In modern spoken Hebrew, the *sheva* is pronounced so fast as to be unheard, so that שָׁמְרוּ, “they guarded” is pronounced *shamru*, and the feminine גְּדוּלָה, *big*, is pronounced *gdola*.

When it indicates no sound, it is called quiescent *sheva*.

Example: The name Simeon is written שִׁמְעוֹן and is pronounced as two syllables: *Shim + on*. The silent *sheva* beneath the mem (מ) indicates the end of the first syllable.

The Mobile Shevah and the B^gad K^fat Letters

The student will recall that the b^gad k^fat letters are ת פ כ ג ד ב. See the discussion in the introduction. Three of those letters, פ כ ב, change sound when the *dagesh* does not occur. See the alef-bet list for pronunciation.

One result of the mobile *sheva* is that if it precedes a b^gad k^fat letter, that b^gad k^fat letter loses the *dagesh*.

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Example: The letter הּ is attached to a word to represent the preposition *to*. It regularly takes mobile *sheva*, which will cause a *dagesh* to be dropped in a following b^ogad k^efat letter. The word בֵּן, *son*, is pronounced *ben*. But when הּ, is added the result is בֶּן־הּ, *to a son*, and is pronounced *l^even*.

The Hebrew Gutturals (Laryngals)

The Hebrew guttural letters are ע ה ח א. Technically א is a glottal stop, made by closing the glottis (the throat) briefly and then letting out a little breath. In modern Hebrew it is silent.

ח is a glottal fricative, produced by closing the glottis so that only a little air can escape. It sounds a bit like clearing one's throat, but not quite as harsh.

ה sounds like the English *h*, letting out one's breath with the glottis unrestricted.

ע is a voiced fricative. In modern Hebrew it is a glottal stop and is silent. Nonoriental speakers of modern Hebrew generally do not distinguish א and ע, treating them both as silent letters.

For nonoriental speakers, it is difficult to distinguish between ח and כ. As noted, ח is a glottal fricative. כ with the *dagesh* is a voiceless palatal, pronounced like the English *k*. (The voiced palatal in English is the letter *g* in *go*, or the Greek γ [*gamma*]). Without the *dagesh*, כ is a spirantized *k* sound, which is almost indistinguishable from the ח to the western ear.

As noted above, כ with the *dagesh* is a voiceless palatal, pronounced like the English *k*. The letter ק, in modern Hebrew, is also pronounced as the voiceless palatal *k*. Nonoriental speakers make no distinction between the sounds of the two letters.

When א comes at the end of a syllable, it is silent and called quiescent *alef*. It takes no *sheva*.

Example: אֱלֹהִים is the regular word translated *God*, and is pronounced *elohim*. The prefix הּ means *to* when prefixed to the noun. When prefixed to אֱלֹהִים the א becomes quiescent, and loses its vowel. *To God* is written הָאֱלֹהִים and is pronounced *l^elohim*.

The Patach Furtive

When a word ends in ע or ח, a *patach*, called *patach furtive*, is placed under the guttural letter if the word does not end in an *a* class vowel. The *patach* is pronounced **before** the final guttural consonant, rather than the normal process of pronouncing the vowel after the consonant. The *patach* furtive is placed under the final consonant, though in some Hebrew texts the *patach* is moved slightly to the right to show that it is pronounced before the consonant.

Example: רוּחַ meaning *spirit* or *wind*, is pronounced *ruach*, rather than *rucha*.

Example: גְבוּהָ meaning *tall*, is pronounced *gavoah*, rather than *gavoaha*.

Word Meaning

Since the meaning of a Hebrew word is carried with the consonants, originally no vowels were written. For example, the consonant group אכל has the general idea of eating. Various vowels and

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consonants are added to particularize the meaning. Thus, when pronounced with a certain set of vowels and consonants, these letters can mean either *to eat*, *he ate*, *food*, or simply *eating*.

More on the Matres Lectiones

As noted above, the term *matres lectiones* (singular: *mater lectionis*) meaning “mother(s) of reading,” is used of three consonants, ה, י, and ו to represent certain long vowel sounds. When these were included in the spelling as vowels, the writing was said to be full, and when they were not, the writing was said to be defective. *Matres* lose their consonantal sound altogether, and are pronounced as vowels. Of course, this system is very limited. Only certain long vowels were represented, and often the so-called defective spelling occurs.

As the Hebrew language ceased to be commonly spoken, various other systems of writing vowels were developed to aid in the retention of the ancient pronunciation of words. All of these involved some form of diacritical marks. The system which finally prevailed, and which occurs in the Hebrew Bible today, is called the Tiberian (or Palestinian) system of vocalization. The previous vowels represent this system.

However, the later Tiberian vocalization (c. 10th century AD) did not replace the old full vowel letters. *Matres lectiones* continue to be used to this day because they are considered, in some cases at least, to have become fixed in the language. In fact, the original pronunciation of the *matres* is not altogether understood. But in modern times, the sounds have become more or less fixed.

The most common *matres lectiones* with a modern pronunciation are as follows:

The use of י after a letter to represent a vowel. In pointed Hebrew such as in the Bible, there will be a vowel in the letter *before* the י, which helps one to understand the correct pronunciation of this *matres*. Clearly, when speaking fluent Hebrew such vowel points are not necessary.

If *hireq* (ֿ) precedes the *yod*, (יֿ) the combination is pronounced *ee*. The י is silent. If an *e* class vowel precedes *hireq* (ֿ OR ֿ), the combination is pronounced like the long *a* in hay. The use of ו with an overhead dot represents the long vowel *o* (ֹ). With a dot by the side (ֶ), has as the vowel sound a long *u*, pronounced *oo*.

The use of ה, which stands for an *a* class vowel, is pronounced *ah* at the end of a word such as the unpointed ילדה (*yaldah*) meaning *girl* to distinguish it from ילד (*yeled*), meaning *boy* or *child*.

Further Discussion of Dagesh

In the introduction, the name for the *dagesh* was given as *dagesh lene*, or gentle *dagesh*. In Hebrew it is called *dagesh qal* (לְקַלּוֹת שֶׁבְּדָגֶשׁ), that is, *easy dagesh*. This *easy dagesh* is what may occur in the b^egad k^efat letters.

Another use for *dagesh* is to indicate doubled consonants, sometimes called long consonants. This is called *dagesh chazak* (בְּחִזְקוֹת שֶׁבְּדָגֶשׁ), meaning *strong dagesh*. It occurs in three different ways:

1. The word *the* (הַ) never stands alone, but is always attached to the noun which it modifies. When the word הָ (pronounced *ha*) is attached to the noun, a strong *dagesh* occurs in the next

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consonant which is considered long if it can take *dagesh*. The guttural consonants ה ה א and ע cannot take *dagesh*. Although ר can take *dagesh*, it usually does not when ה is attached. All other consonants beginning a noun can take *dagesh*.

Example: מֶלֶךְ - king, becomes הַמֶּלֶךְ - the king. Note the *dagesh* in the מ.

Example: הַיְכָל - palace, becomes הַיְיְכָל - the palace. Note the lack of *dagesh* in the ה.

2. When two identical consonants come together, and the first consonant ends a syllable, the two are combined into one consonant with *strong dagesh*.

Example: נָתַן is translated *he gave* or *he gives*. The suffix נוּ means “we”. Hence, *we give* would be נִתְּנוּ. However, in this case the נוּ cannot stand. So the corrected form is נִתְּנוּ.¹ Note the *dagesh* in נ which indicates that consonant is doubled.

3. When different consonants come together, one can be assimilated into the other, in which case a *dagesh* is placed in the remaining consonant.

Example: מִן means from. זֶה means this. When they come together, the ך (nun sofit) appears to drop off the word מִן, but is actually assimilated into the ז with a *dagesh*. The resultant letters occur as one word: מִזֶּה. Note the *dagesh* in the zayin indicating the assimilation. Grammarians refer to this assimilation as *crasis*.

Accent

Most Hebrew words are stressed on their last syllable.

Example: *teacher*, מוֹרֵה, is pronounced *moré*. It is the masculine form. A woman teacher is מוֹרֵהָ.

There are several exceptions. For example, nouns with *segol* as their second vowel usually are accented on the next to last syllable.

Example: *boy*, יָלֵד, is pronounced *yéled*.

Example: *book*, סֵפֶר, is pronounced *séfer*.

Also, nouns that have two *patachs*, or a *patach* followed by *hireq* are accented on the next to last syllable.

Example: *time*, פְּעַם, is pronounced *páam*.

Example: *house*, בַּיִת, is pronounced *báyit*.

Verbs are usually accented on the second root consonant. However, if the second root consonant has a *sheva* or a half vowel, the accent is on the last syllable.

Example: I wrote, כָּתַבְתִּי, is pronounced *katávtiy*.

Example: she wrote, כָּתְבָהּ, is pronounced *katváh*.

Interestingly, the verbal endings תָּם and תָּן always take the stress. See Chapter Ten for a discussion of these pronominal suffix endings.

¹The vowel points are expressed according to a set of complicated rules. Many first year Hebrew grammars spend an extraordinary amount of time giving these rules. However, the modern vowel points are NOT part of the inspired text of Scripture. Indeed, the student should strive to memorize the sounds of the words and structures, whether the vowel points are written or not. After all, originally people spoke and wrote Hebrew without knowing any of those rules!

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Words to which the pronominal suffixes have been added are accented on the last letter of the original word, unless that letter has a *sheva* beneath it, in which case the suffix is accented.

Example: *to us*, לָנוּ, is pronounced *lánu*.

Example: *your name*, שִׁמְךָ, is pronounced *shimchá*.

The following suffixes are always accented: הֶן, הֵם, לְכֶם, הֵן. Note that the two suffixes on the left have a *segol* (ֿ) on the consonant preceding the ending.

Syllabification

In Hebrew syllables usually begin with a consonant and its vowel. It is common for a syllable to end in a vowel, in which case the syllable is considered *open*. Sometimes, however, a syllable ends with a consonant, either indicated by no vowel, or with a *sheva* beneath it. In either case the syllable is considered *closed*.

A few times, a word will begin with a vowel with no consonant. The form וּ, pronounced as a long *u* sound meaning *and*, will be prefixed to a word. In such cases, it is considered an open syllable.

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Chapter Two: The Hebrew Noun

Introduction

A noun identifies a person, place, object, idea or concept. When a noun names a person, place or object, it is called a concrete noun; when it names an idea, quality or concept it is called an abstract noun. Proper nouns are names of some specific persons, places or things. Common nouns name any one of a class or kind. (In English proper nouns are capitalized, but Hebrew has no such convention.)

Gender

Hebrew nouns have two genders: masculine and feminine. There is no neuter in Hebrew. Therefore, a thing will either be a masculine or feminine thing. Some general principles exist by which gender can be understood.

- a The easiest way to determine the gender of a noun is to look it up in a dictionary or lexicon. If it is an English based work, the letters *m*, for masculine, or *f*, for feminine occur immediately after the word. In Hebrew based works, the letters ז for זָכָר, *masculine*, or נ for נְשִׂי, *feminine*, occur.
- b The masculine nouns, which are the most common, have no specific form in the singular by which they can be identified. The plural of masculine nouns is usually, יִם but this is not universal. Feminine plurals usually end in יוֹת, but again, this is not universal. In some cases, the forms may be switched.
- c Feminine nouns have no specific form if the word is a natural feminine, such as אִם, *mother*, בַּת, *daughter*, etc.
- d Nouns which end in הָ or in ת are feminine.
- e The names of cities and countries are feminine since they are viewed as the mothers of their inhabitants.
- f Most names of parts of the body in man or beast, especially members occurring in pairs, are feminine. So, too, are most names of instruments and utensils used by man.
- g Names of the elements or natural substances are generally feminine, e.g. שֶׁמֶשׁ, sun, אֵשׁ, fire, אֶבֶן, stone.
- h The letters of the Hebrew alef-bet are all feminine.
- i Many words are both genders, though where this is the case, one gender generally predominates.

Examples: סוּס, *horse* (m).

סוּסָה, *mare* (f).

מֶלֶךְ, *king* (m).

מַלְכָּה, *queen* (f).

Number

Hebrew has three numbers, singular, plural, and dual, the latter used for things that are characteristically pairs, such as eyes, ears, legs, etc. The dual occurs with some things in Hebrew that the English reader will find odd, such as the words heaven(s), שָׁמַיִם, and water(s), מַיִם, which are always in the dual form. Note that the *yod* has hireq beneath it in the dual (ים), pronounced *-yim*, but *hireq* precedes the *yod* in the plural (ים), pronounced *-eem*.

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Masculine Nouns with No Change in the Plural

Most masculine nouns will not change their vowel points when adding the plural ending **ים**–

1. The regular masculine plural ending can be seen in the change from horse to horses.

Example: סוס, horse.

סוסים, horses.

2. The addition of the ending **ים**– with *hireq* as the vowel before the *yod* is the regular masculine plural. Many masculine nouns maintain the same vowels beneath their consonants when changing from singular to plural, but there are many instances where the first vowel shortens because of the shift of stress away from the first syllable. Note the examples of regular plural masculines below.

Singular	Plural
horse, סוס	horses, סוסים
song, שיר	songs, שירים

Masculine Nouns with Vowel Changes in the Plural

Singular	Plural
word, דָּבָר	words, דְּבָרִים
prophet, נְבִיא	prophets, נְבִיאִים

1. To the singular form add the letters **ים**. Note the vowel hireq (.) under the last letter of the stem.
2. If the noun of more than two letters begins with the vowel qametz (ם) as with דָּבָר and נְבִיא above, the plural form has a sheva (ם) as its initial vowel.
3. Many masculine nouns change their vowels entirely in forming the plural. The student should memorize these as part of vocabulary study.

Examples: מֶלֶךְ, king, becomes מְלָכִים, kings

סֵפֶר, book, becomes סְפָרִים, books

Feminine Nouns

To form the plural of feminine nouns that end in **ה** drop the **ה** and add **ות**. If the ending of a feminine noun is not **ה**, simply add **ות** to the end.

Singular	Plural
law, תּוֹרָה	laws, תּוֹרוֹת
unleavened cake, מַצָּה	unleavened cakes, מַצּוֹת
girl, בְּתוּלָה	girls, בְּתוּלוֹת

Nouns in the Dual Number

Nouns that describe objects that exist in pairs, especially parts of the body, are in the dual number, and in both genders end in **ים**. Note the patach (ַ) in the final stem letter. However, a peculiarity of the Hebrew language is that some words are dual in their vocabulary form. The word *heaven(s)*,

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שְׁמַיִם, is an example of such a word. Its assumed root is שִׁמַּה, which otherwise does not occur in the Hebrew text. Another example is the word מַיִם, *water(s)*, presumably from מֵי. מַיִם occurs only in the dual form in the Hebrew Bible, which has been maintained in modern Hebrew.

Singular	Dual
hand, יָד	hands, יָדַיִם
foot, רֶגֶל	feet, רַגְלָיִם
shoe, נַעֲל	shoes, נַעְלָיִם

Case

The Nominative, and Accusative

Unlike some languages, such as Greek and German, Hebrew nouns are not fully inflected. When a Hebrew noun is used as a nominative or subject complement (as the subject of a clause or sentence or after a *to be* verb) its spelling is the same as when it is used as the object. In that sense, Hebrew is much like English.

There is no distinct form for the accusative case in Hebrew. There is, however, a sign for the definite direct object which is untranslatable, אֵת, which will precede *definite nouns* in the accusative (objective) case. When the noun is indefinite (no article הַ), the אֵת does not occur. When used with a proper noun, the הַ is not used, but אֵת will precede it. אֵת is also used, with inflections, for form the accusative case pronouns. See Chapter Three for all the regular independent pronouns.

The Other Oblique¹ Cases

Other than the construct state, there is no separate form for other oblique cases. Like English, Hebrew uses prepositions to indicate to, from, in, etc. See Chapter Six.

The Construct State

The term *construct state* refers to the relationship between two nouns, one immediately following the other. Various functions exist in the construct state relationship, the most common meaning *of*. It is generally equivalent to the possessive case in English, or the genitive of possession in Greek. For a discussion of the construct state with pronominal suffixes, see Chapter Four.

The Construct With Masculine Nouns in the Singular

1. The first noun of the phrase is said to be in the construct state. The second noun is said to be in the absolute state. The word *of* is actually connected to the first noun, not the second. Therefore סוּס פָּרְעֹה means “the horse of Pharaoh,” not “the horse of Pharaoh.”

Examples: סוּס פָּרְעֹה, the horse of Pharaoh.

סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה, the book of the law

פְּקִיד הַמֶּלֶךְ, the officer of the king.

¹ Oblique cases are those forms of nouns that differ from the nominative case, which is usually called the subjective case in English. Generally speaking, English has only one oblique case form, that is, a noun or pronoun form where the spelling changes to indicate a change in function, the possessive form. Otherwise, noun functions are indicated by prepositions. The construct noun function in Hebrew is virtually equivalent to the possessive noun in English.

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- The noun in the construct state **never** has article word *the* (ה). Nevertheless, it is translated into English as though it does. This is because in the construct state nouns are automatically considered definite. Notice in the above examples that the words סוס and סֵפֶר are translated *the horse of* and *the book of* even though ה does not occur. See below under “The Article” for other facts about the article.
- The second noun is in the absolute state. It may or may not have the article *the* ה before it.
- Some nouns change their pronunciation when in the construct state. This can be seen by the change in the vowel points beneath the consonants.

Example: דְּבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ, *the word of the king* (דְּבַר is the construct form of דָּבָר, *word*).

Example: מַעֲשֵׂה אִישׁ, *the work of a man* (מַעֲשֵׂה is construct of מַעֲשֶׂה, *work*. Note the ם is the regular form of מַעֲשֶׂה, while ם is the construct form, מַעֲשֵׂה).

The Construct With Feminine Nouns in the Singular

Feminine nouns change their ending into ת־, תּוֹרָה, *law*, changes into תּוֹרַת, *the law of*; תְּפִלָּה, *prayer*, becomes תְּפִלַּת, *the prayer of*.

Examples: תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה, *the law of Moses* (from תּוֹרָה, *law*).

תְּפִלַּת דָּוִד, *the prayer of David* (תְּפִלַּת is from תְּפִלָּה, *prayer*).

The Construct With Masculine Nouns in the Plural

Masculine nouns in the plural change their ending ים־ into י־. The plural of the word שִׁיר, *song*, becomes שִׁירִים, *songs*, which then changes in the construct to שִׁרֵי, *the songs of*; the word גִּבּוֹר, *mighty man*, changes to גִּבּוֹרִים, *mighty men*, which becomes in the construct גִּבּוֹרֵי, *the mighty men of*.

Example: שִׁירֵי הָעָם, *the songs of the people* (from שִׁירִים, *songs*).

גִּבּוֹרֵי חַיִל, *the mighty men of valor* (from גִּבּוֹרִים, *mighty men*).

The Construct With Feminine Nouns in the Plural

There is no change in form for feminine plural nouns in the construct state. With feminine nouns, therefore, it is imperative that the student remember that another noun must follow the feminine plural in order for the construct state to exist. Context is the determining factor. עוֹלָם, *burnt offering*, becomes עוֹלוֹת, *burnt offerings*. This form is also the construct, meaning *the burnt offerings of*.

Example: עוֹלוֹת הַיּוֹם, *the burnt offerings of the day*.

The word *wall*, חוֹלְמוֹת becomes חוֹלְמוֹת, *walls*, as well as *the walls of* in the plural construct.

Example: חוֹמוֹת הָעִיר, *the walls of the city*.

The Article

The word *the* is added to a noun by attaching ה as a prefix. A dot, called a *strong dagesh*, occurs in the next letter, if the letter can take a *dagesh* (see below).

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Examples: הַסּוּס, *the horse*.

הַמֶּלֶךְ, *the king*.

To add the word *the* when the first letter of the noun is ה ע א or ר the *dagesh* is left out, and the ה has the *qametz* (ְ) rather than *patach* (ַ).¹

Examples: הָאִישׁ, *the man*.

הָעֵץ, *the tree*.

הָרֶעַם, *the storm*

הָהָר, *the mountain*

5. Hebrew does not have the indefinite article *a* or *an*. סוּס means either *horse* or *a horse*.

¹ There are complicated rules for these changes. The author memorized them at one point, but no longer teaches them. The fact is, the vowel sounds are what is important, not why they are changed. The meaning is in the consonants, not in the vowels!

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Chapter Three: The Hebrew Pronoun

Introduction

As in English, pronouns in Hebrew replace nouns to avoid monotonous repetition. The noun which the pronoun replaces is called its antecedent.

Many moderately inflected languages, that is, languages that change the spelling of a pronoun when used as the subject or an object within the sentence, must be studied carefully. Like English, Hebrew is moderately inflected, but more complex than English.

For instance, English personal pronouns only change spelling in the third person singular, where *he*, *she*, and *it* occur based on the gender of their antecedent. *I*, *we* and *you* are common to all genders. Hebrew, on the other hand, has masculine and feminine forms for both second and third person pronouns, which change spelling in both the singular and the plural. Only *I* and *we* are common to both genders. It is imperative that the student memorize the Hebrew personal pronouns.

Personal Pronouns

Nominative (Subjective) Case Pronouns

Nominative case pronouns are used to indicate the subject of a clause. They can also be used as a subject complement with an understood to be verb (See Chapter 12, “The Noun Sentence”).

	Plural		Singular		
we	1 st com.	אֲנַחְנוּ [נְהַנּוּ, אָנוּ]	I	1 st com.	אֲנִי [אֲנֹכִי]
you	2 nd masc.	אַתֶּם	you	2 nd masc.	אַתָּה
you	2 nd fem.	אַתְּ [אַתְּנָה, אַתְּנָה]	you	2 nd fem.	אַתְּ
they	3 rd masc.	הֵם [הֵמָּה]	he	3 rd masc.	הוּא
they	3 rd fem.	הֵנָּה [הֵן]	she	3 rd fem.	הִיא

1. 1st com. means 1st person common. Common means that the pronoun is used of both masculine and feminine objects. This is often written simply 1c.
2. In Hebrew, both the 2nd and 3rd person pronouns are either masculine or feminine. Since no neuter exists, nouns in English that are considered neuter and are referred to by the pronoun *it* will use masculine or feminine pronoun. In such cases, those pronouns should be translated *it* rather than *he* or *she*. These will be designated 2m, 2f, 3m, and 3f.
3. The pronouns above in parentheses are alternate forms that are either used occasionally in the Bible or are found only in modern Hebrew.
4. Hebrew has no regular present tense *be* verb. Therefore, the personal pronouns can mean either *I*, *you*, *he*, *she*, etc. or they can mean *I am*, *you are*, *he is*, *she is*, etc. See Chapter 12.
5. In the Hebrew Bible, pronouns do not always stand in the same word order that they do in English. A word literal translation into English may be awkward in such cases. However, the

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careful Hebrew student will note the change in order, even though he must place the words in English order in translation. Usually changes in word order in Hebrew express some change in emphasis.

Examples: אֲנִי אִישׁ, *I am a man*. Normal word order.

אַתְּ הַבְּתוּלָה, *you are the girl*. Normal word order.

Example: הַמְּלָךְ הֵם גְּבוּרֵי, *They are the warriors of the king*. Normally the pronoun הֵם would be first, and the plural construct גְּבוּרֵי would stand before הַמְּלָךְ. The change of word order is for emphasis.

Example: הֵן בְּתוּלוֹת טוֹבוֹת הֵן, *They are good girls*. Normally הֵן would be first. This is an example of a noun sentence. *They*, הֵן, is rightly translated *they are*.

Objective (Accusative) Case Pronouns

These pronouns are used ONLY as the direct objects of action verbs, including infinitives and participles. They cannot be used as objects of prepositions like their English translation equivalents. The table shows each of the objective (accusative) case pronouns that occur in Hebrew. They are based on the sign of the direct object, אֵת. These pronouns are still used today in the modern tongue.

Plural			Singular		
us	1c	אֹתָנוּ	me	1c	אֹתִי
you	2m	אֹתְכֶם	you	2m	אֹתְךָ
you	2f	אֹתְכֶן	you	2f	אֹתְךְ
them	3m	אֹתָם	him	3m	אֹתוֹ
them	3f	אֹתָן	her	3f	אֹתָהּ

Relative Pronouns

The Hebrew relative pronoun is אֲשֶׁר. This pronoun can be translated *who*, *which*, or *that*. It is the only relative pronoun in Hebrew, though it has more than one form. Its consonants remain unchanged in all genders, numbers, and cases.

Occasionally אֲשֶׁר is shortened to שֶׁ or שְׁ. These forms, like the (ה), are attached to the following word. In addition, like ה, these forms cause a *dagesh* to be placed in the next letter if possible. The usage of these shortened forms is not frequent in the Bible, and the forms are found mostly in Ecclesiastes, the late Psalms, The Song of Solomon (Canticles), and Judges, with a few uses scattered throughout other books. In modern Hebrew, the shortened forms are used very often.

A relative pronoun always introduces a relative clause. A clause is a group of words containing a subject and a predicate (verb). Relative clauses are generally adjectival and modify the antecedent of the relative pronoun. It is not unusual to see a nominal clause as a relative, in which a form of the verb *to be* must be supplied in translation.

Example: הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר עָמַד תַּחַת הָעֵץ, *The man who stood under the tree*.

Example: הַבַּיִת שֶׁבָּנָה, *The house which he built*.

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Example: וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־הַכֵּלִים אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַשֻּׁלְחָן, (Exodus 37:16). *And he made the vessels that were on the table.* (Note: In this example the relative clause is a nominal clause, and the word אֲשֶׁר must be translated *that were* or *which were*.)

Interrogative Pronoun

As in English, the Hebrew interrogative pronoun indicates a question. The most common interrogative pronoun is מִי, *who*. *Whose* is indicated by לְמִי literally, *to whom*.

Examples: מִי יֵעָלֶה לָנוּ אֶל הַכְּנַעֲנִי? *Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites?* (Judges 1:1).
לְמִי הַחֹתֶמֶת וְהַמָּטָה וְהָאֵלֶּה? *Whose are these, the signet ring and the cords and the rod?* (Genesis 38:25).

The interrogative meaning *what*, *what is*, or *what are* is מַה, מָה or, occasionally מֶה. Also rarely, in the Bible, the form is shorted to מָ and attached to the following word with *dagesh* in the next letter.

Examples: מַה זֹאת עָשִׂיתָ? *What is this you did?* (Genesis 3:13).
מַה תִּתֶּן לִי? *What will you give me?* (Genesis 15:2).
מַה אֶעֱשֶׂה לְעַם הַזֶּה? *What shall I do to this people?* (Exodus 17:4).

Demonstrative Pronouns

English has two demonstrative pronouns. The word *this* is a near demonstrative, as in *this man*. The word *that* is a far demonstrative, as in *that horse*. In addition, each demonstrative has a plural. The plural of *this* is *these*, and the plural of *that* is *those*.

The Hebrew Near Demonstrative

The Singular Near Demonstrative

Hebrew has two words for *this*: the masculine זֶה and the feminine זֹאת. As with other pronouns, the demonstratives can be translated either *this* or *this is*. Therefore זֶה אִישׁ can mean either *this man* or *this is a man*, depending on context. Likewise, זֹאת אִשָּׁה can mean *this woman* or *this is a woman*.

However, when the near demonstrative follows the noun and both are used with the article the (הַ) attached, the meaning is *this man* or *this woman*, or *this man is/this woman is*.

Examples: הַזֶּה הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה, *this man*, or *this man is*.
הַזֹּאת הָאִשָּׁה הַזֹּאת, *this woman*, or *this woman is*.

The Plural Near Demonstrative

The Hebrew near plural demonstrative pronoun meaning *these* is אֵלֶּה. When it occurs first in a clause without the article (הַ) it means *these are*. When it functions as a descriptive, it has the article, and follows the noun it modifies. The noun and its adjectives will also have the article.

Examples: אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים, *these are the words*.
הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, *these words*.
הַנְּעָרִים הַגְּדוֹלִים הָאֵלֶּה, *these big lads*.

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The Hebrew Far Demonstrative

The Singular Far Demonstrative

Hebrew has two words for *that*: the masculine **הוא** and the feminine **היא** or **היא**. Both feminine forms are pronounced alike. The observant student will note that the far demonstrative is identical to the third person personal pronouns, masculine and feminine. The uses are distinguished by construction and context. The far demonstrative has the same uses as the near demonstrative:

Examples: **הוא אב**, *that is a father*, or, *that one is a father*, or *that man is a father*.

הוא אב, *that father*, or *that father is*. Both noun and pronoun are articular. Note the change in word order.

היא בתולה, *that girl*, or *that girl is*. Again, both noun and pronoun have the article. Again, note the change in word order.

The Plural Far Demonstrative

The Hebrew words for *those* are the masculine **הם** and the feminine **הן**.

Examples: **הם השירים**, *those are the songs*.

הם השירים, *those songs*, or *those songs are*.

הן הבתולות, *those girls*, or *those girls are*.

Possessive Pronouns

The possessive pronouns are based on the word **של**, *of*, plus the various pronominal suffixes.

	Plural		Singular	
our, ours	שלנו	1c	my, mine	שלי 1c
your, yours	שלכם	2m	your, yours	שלך 2m
your, yours	שלכן	2f	your, yours	שלך 2f
their, theirs	שלהם	3m	his	שלו 3m
their, theirs	שלהן	3f	her, hers	שלה 3f

The possessive pronouns generally follow the noun they are describing. The noun will always have the article.

Examples: **הסוס שלי**, *my horse*.

הכסף שלו, *his money*.

הארצות שלהם, *their (m) lands*.

הכתנת שלך, *your (f) coat*. In modern Hebrew **כותנת** (**כתנת**) is the word *shirt*.

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Chapter Four: The Declension of Hebrew Nouns

Introduction

Declension refers to the various forms of a noun. As already discussed, endings on nouns change in Hebrew as they do in English to form plurals. Other aspects of declension occur in a language that has rather more inflection than English. Some peculiar idiomatic functions of the Hebrew noun must be understood to gain a reading knowledge of the text of the Hebrew Bible.

The Pronominal Suffix

Pronominal suffixes are endings that are attached to Hebrew words for various reasons. With nouns (and infinitives) pronominal suffixes show possession. For example, the word *horse* in Hebrew is סוס. To say *my horse*, one may use a pronominal suffix rather than using a possessive pronoun as in English. To write *my horse* one adds the pronominal suffix י- to סוס so that it reads סוסי.

The word *horses* is סוסים. To say *my horses* one must change the plural to the plural construct סוסי. This construction means *the horses of*. To say, *the horses of me (my horses)*, one changes the plural construct by changing the last vowel from *tsere* ם to patach ם: סוסי. In fact, it is not necessary to go through the process each time. One simply memorizes the plural form for *my horses*, סוסי. However, the reason for the change is that pronominal suffixes are actually attached to the construct state form of the noun. The plural construct sometimes has a different spelling than the singular, and this is reflected in the regular forms for the pronominal suffixes.

Examples: סוס, *horse*.

סוסי *my horse*.

סוסים, *horses*.

סוסי, *my horses*.

The Construct State with Pronominal Suffixes

In Chapter Two, pg. 11, the idea of the construct state occurs. This discussion expands on the previous, as it directly affects the idea of the pronominal suffix.

The noun in the construct state (the first noun of the two, which some call the governing noun), will not change if masculine. However, if the noun is feminine, changes in the construct state do occur.

A feminine termination ה- will change to ת-.

Example: פרה, *cow*, becomes פרת, *the cows of*, in the construct. *The man's cows* will appear as פרת האי, *the cows of the man*. The noun in the construct always has the word *the* before it in translation, because it is considered definite.

Example: בית, *house*, becomes בית in the construct, *the house of*. The phrase *the man's house* will appear as בית האי, *the house of the man*.

Nouns in the dual ים- (see pg. 10 above) and the plural ים- become י- . The dual ים- occurs with both masculine and feminine nouns. The plural ים- occurs mostly with masculine nouns, though occasionally it appears with feminine nouns as well.

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Example: The word *eyes* is dual, עֵינַיִם. *The woman's eyes* is עֵינַיִ הָאִשָּׁה, *the eyes of the woman*.

Example: The word *brothers* is plural, אָחִים. *A man's brothers* is אָחֵי אִישׁ, *the brothers of a man*.

Pronominal Suffixes Attached to Nouns

The following table indicates all the pronominal suffixes as attached to nouns.

	Plural Suffixes		Singular Suffixes	
	with pl. nouns	with sing. nouns	with pl. nouns	with sing. nouns
1c	יָנוּ	נָנוּ	1c	יְ
2m	יָכֶם	כֶּם	2m	יָךְ
2f	יָכֶן	כֶּן	2f	יְךָ
3m	יָם	מָ	3m	וְ
3f	יָהֶן	הֶן	3f	וְהָ

Declension of the Masculine Nouns Horse and Song

Singular Masculine Noun, Singular Suffixes

singular noun	<i>horse</i>	סוס	<i>song</i>	שיר
construct form	<i>the horse of</i>	סוס	<i>the song of</i>	שיר
	<i>my horse</i>	סוסי	<i>my song</i>	שירי
	<i>your (m) horse</i>	סוסך	<i>your (m) song</i>	שירך
	<i>your (f) horse</i>	סוסך	<i>your (f) song</i>	שירך
	<i>his horse</i>	סוסו	<i>his song</i>	שירו
	<i>her horse</i>	סוסיה	<i>her song</i>	שירה

Singular Masculine Noun, Plural Suffixes

<i>our horse</i>	סוסנו	<i>our song</i>	שירנו
<i>your (m) horse</i>	סוסכם	<i>your (m) song</i>	שירכם
<i>your (f) horse</i>	סוסכן	<i>your (f) song</i>	שירכן
<i>their (m) horse</i>	סוסם	<i>their (m) song</i>	שירם
<i>their (f) horse</i>	סוסן	<i>their (f) song</i>	שירן

Plural Masculine Noun, Singular Suffixes

plural noun	<i>horses</i>	סוסים	<i>songs</i>	שירים
construct form	<i>the horses of</i>	סוסי	<i>the songs of</i>	שירי
	<i>my horses</i>	סוסי	<i>my songs</i>	שירי
	<i>your (m) horses</i>	סוסך	<i>your (m) songs</i>	שירך
	<i>your (f) horses</i>	סוסך	<i>your (f) songs</i>	שירך
	<i>his horses</i>	סוסו	<i>his songs</i>	שירו
	<i>her horses</i>	סוסיה	<i>her songs</i>	שירה

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Plural Noun, Plural Suffixes

<i>our horses</i>	סוּסֵינוּ	<i>our songs</i>	שִׁירֵינוּ
<i>your (m) horses</i>	סוּסֵיכֶם	<i>your (m) songs</i>	שִׁירֵיכֶם
<i>your (f) horses</i>	סוּסֵיכֶן	<i>your (f) songs</i>	שִׁירֵיכֶן
<i>their (m) horses</i>	סוּסֵיהֶם	<i>their (m) songs</i>	שִׁירֵיהֶם
<i>their (f) horses</i>	סוּסֵיהֶן	<i>their (f) songs</i>	שִׁירֵיהֶן

Declension of the Feminine Nouns Mare and Cow

Singular Feminine Noun, Singular Suffixes

singular noun	<i>mare</i>	סוּסָה	<i>cow</i>	פָּרָה
construct form	<i>the mare of</i>	סוּסַת	<i>the cow of</i>	פָּרַת

<i>my mare</i>	סוּסָתִי	<i>my cow</i>	פָּרַתִּי
<i>your (m) mare</i>	סוּסַתְךָ	<i>your (m) cow</i>	פָּרַתְךָ
<i>your (f) mare</i>	סוּסַתְךִי	<i>your (f) cow</i>	פָּרַתְךִי
<i>his mare</i>	סוּסַתּוֹ	<i>his cow</i>	פָּרַתּוֹ
<i>her mare</i>	סוּסַתָּהּ	<i>her cow</i>	פָּרַתָּהּ

Singular Feminine Noun, Plural Suffixes

<i>our mare</i>	סוּסַתֵּנוּ	<i>our cow</i>	פָּרַתֵּנוּ
<i>your (m) mare</i>	סוּסַתֵּיכֶם	<i>your (m) cow</i>	פָּרַתֵּיכֶם
<i>your (f) mare</i>	סוּסַתֵּיכֶן	<i>your (f) cow</i>	פָּרַתֵּיכֶן
<i>their (m) mare</i>	סוּסַתֵּיהֶם	<i>their (m) cow</i>	פָּרַתֵּיהֶם
<i>their (f) mare</i>	סוּסַתֵּיהֶן	<i>their (f) cow</i>	פָּרַתֵּיהֶן

Plural Feminine Noun, Singular Suffixes

plural noun	<i>mares</i>	סוּסוֹת	<i>cows</i>	פָּרוֹת
construct form	<i>the mares of</i>	סוּסוֹת	<i>the cows of</i>	פָּרוֹת

<i>my mares</i>	סוּסוֹתַי	<i>my cows</i>	פָּרוֹתַי
<i>your (m) mares</i>	סוּסוֹתֶיךָ	<i>your (m) cows</i>	פָּרוֹתֶיךָ
<i>your (f) mares</i>	סוּסוֹתֶיךִי	<i>your (f) cows</i>	פָּרוֹתֶיךִי
<i>his mares</i>	סוּסוֹתָיו	<i>his cows</i>	פָּרוֹתָיו
<i>her mares</i>	סוּסוֹתֶיהָ	<i>her cows</i>	פָּרוֹתֶיהָ

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Plural Feminine Noun, Plural Suffixes

<i>our mares</i>	סוסותינו	<i>our cows</i>	פרותינו
<i>your (m) mares</i>	סוסותיכם	<i>your (m) cows</i>	פרותיכם
<i>your (f) mares</i>	סוסותיכן	<i>your (f) cows</i>	פרותיכן
<i>their (m) mares</i>	סוסותיהם	<i>their (m) cows</i>	פרותיהם
<i>their (f) mares</i>	סוסותיהן	<i>their (f) cows</i>	פרותיהן

Changeable Nouns

Some unusual nouns change their pronunciation when going from singulars to plurals. The vowels may not follow the patterns on the previous pages, or the consonants may change from the singular to the plural. Others have unusual plural or dual endings. For instance, some masculine nouns will take feminine endings in the plural. This, of course, affects the construct form and also the declension with pronominal suffixes. Below is a list of common changeable nouns. The nouns are masculine unless otherwise noted by (f) following the noun. They should be memorized.

Table of Changeable Nouns

English	Singular	Plural	English	Singular	Plural
<i>father</i>	אב	אבות	<i>heart</i>	לֵב	לְבָבוֹת
<i>mother (f)</i>	אם	אמות	<i>work</i>	מַעֲשֵׂה	מַעֲשִׂים
<i>man</i>	איש	אֲנָשִׁים	<i>place</i>	מָקוֹם	מְקוֹמוֹת
<i>woman (f)</i>	אשה	נָשִׁים	<i>boy</i>	נֶעָר	נְעָרִים
<i>brother</i>	אח	אָחִים	<i>girl (f)</i>	נַעֲרָה	נְעָרוֹת
<i>sister (f)</i>	אחות	אָחוֹת	<i>soul (f)</i>	נַפֶּשׁ	נַפְשׁוֹת
<i>stone (f)</i>	אבן	אֲבָנִים	<i>book</i>	סֵפֶר	סִפְרִים
<i>land (f)</i>	אָרֶץ	אֲרָצוֹת	<i>slave</i>	עֶבֶד	עֲבָדִים
<i>ear (f)</i>	אָזֶן	(dual) אָזְנַיִם	<i>eye (f)</i>	עַיִן	(dual) עַיִנַיִם
<i>son</i>	בֵּן	בָּנִים	<i>city (f)</i>	עִיר	עָרִים
<i>daughter (f)</i>	בַּת	בָּנוֹת	<i>people</i>	עַם	עַמִּים
<i>house</i>	בַּיִת	בָּתַיִם	<i>door</i>	פֶּתַח	פִּתְחוֹת
<i>way</i>	דֶּרֶךְ	דַּרְכִּים	<i>head</i>	רֹאשׁ	רָאשִׁים
<i>mountain</i>	הַר	הָרִים	<i>foot (f)</i>	רֶגֶל	(dual) רֶגְלַיִם
<i>month</i>	חֹדֶשׁ	חֳדָשִׁים	<i>spirit (f)</i>	רוּחַ	רוּחוֹת
<i>day</i>	יוֹם	יָמִים	<i>field</i>	שָׂדֶה	שָׂדוֹת
<i>hand (f)</i>	יָד	(dual) יָדַיִם	<i>prince</i>	שֵׁר	שָׂרִים
<i>sea</i>	יָם	יָמִים	<i>tribe</i>	שִׁבְט	שִׁבְטִים

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English	Singular	Plural	English	Singular	Plural
<i>child (boy)</i>	יָלֵד	יְלָדִים	<i>judge</i>	שׁוֹפֵט	שׁוֹפְטִים
<i>priest</i>	כֹּהֵן	כֹּהֲנִים	<i>ox</i>	שׂוֹר	שׂוֹרִים
<i>dog</i>	כָּלָב	כָּלָבִים	<i>year</i>	שָׁנָה	שָׁנִים
<i>vessel</i>	כֵּלִי	כֵּלִים	<i>gate</i>	שַׁעַר	שַׁעְרִים
<i>king</i>	מֶלֶךְ	מְלָכִים			

Declension of the Irregular Nouns Son and Brother

Singular Noun, Singular Suffixes

singular noun	<i>son</i>	בֶּן	<i>brother</i>	אָח
construct	<i>the son of</i>	בְּנֵי	<i>the brother of</i>	אָחִי
	<i>my son</i>	בְּנִי	<i>my brother</i>	אָחִי
	<i>your (m) son</i>	בְּנֶיךָ	<i>your (m) brother</i>	אָחִיךָ
	<i>your (f) son</i>	בְּנֶיךָ	<i>your (f) brother</i>	אָחִיךָ
	<i>his son</i>	בְּנוֹ	<i>his brother</i>	אָחִיו
	<i>her son</i>	בְּנֶיהָ	<i>her brother</i>	אָחִיהָ

Singular Noun, Plural Suffixes

<i>our son</i>	בְּנֵינוּ	<i>our brother</i>	אָחֵינוּ
<i>your (m) son</i>	בְּנֵיכֶם	<i>your (m) brother</i>	אָחֵיכֶם
<i>your (f) son</i>	בְּנֵיכֶן	<i>your (f) brother</i>	אָחֵיכֶן
<i>their (m) son</i>	בְּנֵיהֶם	<i>their (m) brother</i>	אָחֵיהֶם
<i>their (f) son</i>	בְּנֵיהֶן	<i>their (f) brother</i>	אָחֵיהֶן

Plural Noun, Singular Suffixes

plural noun	<i>sons</i>	בְּנֵים	<i>brothers</i>	אָחִים
construct	<i>the sons of</i>	בְּנֵי	<i>the brothers of</i>	אָחִי
	<i>my sons</i>	בְּנֵי	<i>my brothers</i>	אָחִי
	<i>your (m) sons</i>	בְּנֵיךָ	<i>your (m) brothers</i>	אָחִיךָ
	<i>your (f) sons</i>	בְּנֵיךָ	<i>your (f) brothers</i>	אָחִיךָ
	<i>his sons</i>	בְּנָיו	<i>his brothers</i>	אָחָיו
	<i>her sons</i>	בְּנֵיהָ	<i>her brothers</i>	אָחֵיהָ

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Plural Noun, Plural Suffixes

<i>our sons</i>	בְּנֵינוּ	<i>our brothers</i>	אֶחָיוֹנוּ
<i>your (m) sons</i>	בְּנֵיכֶם	<i>your (m) brothers</i>	אֶחָיְכֶם
<i>your (f) sons</i>	בְּנֵיכֶן	<i>your (f) brothers</i>	אֶחָיְכֶן
<i>their (m) sons</i>	בְּנֵיהֶם	<i>their (m) brothers</i>	אֶחָיהֶם
<i>their (f) sons</i>	בְּנֵיהֶן	<i>their (f) brothers</i>	אֶחָיהֶן

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Chapter Five: The Hebrew Adjective

Introduction

An adjective is a word that modifies a noun or pronoun. The word *the* is considered an adjective, but is called by the name *article*.

The adjective has three basic uses, the attributive use, the predicate use, and the substantive use. The attributive use is the most common. In Hebrew the attributive adjective commonly follows the noun which it modifies.

The predicate use is almost as common as the attributive use, since there is no written be verb in simple declarative sentences. The subject of the clause precedes the adjective in these cases, and a form of *to be* must be supplied in translation.

The substantive use, where the adjective stands for the noun, is common, with regular adjectives, as well as with participles (verbal adjectives) which stand for a noun.

Some Common Adjectives

good	טוֹב	bad	רָע	black	שָׁחוֹר
big	גָּדוֹל	small	קָטָן	white	לָבָן
much	רַב	guilty	אָשָׁם	handsome	יָפֵה
many	רַבִּים	all	כָּל	beautiful	יָפֵה
old (people)	זָקֵן	young	צָעִיר	near	קָרוֹב
old (things)	יָשָׁן	holy	קָדוֹשׁ	far	רְחוֹק
heavy	כָּבֵד	hungry	רָעֵב	full	מָלֵא
straight	יָשָׁר	strong	חָזָק	wise	חָכָם

Adjective Agreement

Adjectives agree with the noun they modify in two ways: gender and number. Since there are two genders, every adjective has both a masculine and a feminine form. Since there are two numbers, singular and plural (dual is considered plural for adjectives), both masculine and feminine adjectives have a singular and a plural form.

It is best to memorize adjectives in all four forms. Below is a convenient table with several adjectives to help begin the process:

	Masc. Sing.	Fem. Sing.	Masc. Pl.	Fem. Pl.
good	טוֹב	טוֹבָה	טוֹבִים	טוֹבוֹת
big, strong	גָּדוֹל	גָּדוּלָה	גָּדוּלִים	גָּדוּלוֹת
holy	קָדוֹשׁ	קָדוּשָׁה	קָדוֹשִׁים	קָדוּשׁוֹת
near	קָרוֹב	קָרוֹבָה	קָרוֹבִים	קָרוֹבוֹת

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	Masc. Sing.	Fem. Sing.	Masc. Pl.	Fem. Pl.
far	רְחוֹק	רְחוֹקָה	רְחוֹקִים	רְחוֹקוֹת
old	זָקֵן	זָקֵנָה	זָקֵנִים	זָקֵנוֹת
heavy	כָּבֵד	כָּבֵדָה	כָּבֵדִים	כָּבֵדוֹת
hungry	רָעֵב	רָעֵבָה	רָעֵבִים	רָעֵבוֹת
full	מָלֵא	מָלְאָה	מָלְאִים	מָלְאוֹת
straight	יָשָׁר	יָשָׁרָה	יָשָׁרִים	יָשָׁרוֹת
strong	חָזָק	חָזָקָה	חָזָקִים	חָזָקוֹת
wise	חָכָם	חָכְמָה	חָכְמִים	חָכְמוֹת
new	חָדָשׁ	חָדָשָׁה	חָדָשִׁים	חָדָשִׁית

The Attributive Adjective

Adjectives attribute a quality to a noun. The normal order is to place the adjective just before the noun. The statement, *That was a good breakfast*, attributes a quality of goodness to one's breakfast. In Hebrew, however, the attributive adjective normally follows immediately after the noun that it modifies. If the noun has the article, the attributive adjective or adjectives must also have the article.

The Anarthrous Attributive Adjective

In the following examples, we find the adjective phrase used *without* the article ׀־ on either the noun or the adjective.

Examples: מִשְׁתֵּה גָדוֹל, *a great feast* (Genesis 21:8).

טוֹב אִישׁ, *a good man*.

טוֹבָה אִשָּׁה, *a good woman*.

טוֹבִים אַנְשֵׁים, *good men*.

טוֹבוֹת נְשִׁים, *good women*.

Note: The plural of *woman* appears to have a masculine form. However, the adjective has the feminine form. A number of feminine nouns appear to take masculine plurals, which is an idiom of the language that must be learned as part of one's vocabulary study. In the Hebrew text, the best way to determine a masculine or feminine noun is the form of the adjectives used with it.

The Articular Attributive Adjective

In the following examples, both the nouns and the attributive adjectives have the article. This is the normal practice, though at times the adjective will have the article when the noun does not. In such cases, however, the noun is considered definite even though it does not have the article.

Examples: הַטוֹב הָאִישׁ, *the good man*.

הַטוֹבִים הָאֲנָשִׁים, *the good men*.

הַטוֹבָה הָאִשָּׁה, *the good woman*.

הַטוֹבוֹת הַנְּשִׁים, *the good women*.

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Sometimes the attributive adjective will have the article when the noun that it modifies does not. In such cases, the noun is considered definite even though it does not have the article.

Example: פָּרֹת הַטֹּבֹת, *the good cows*, (Genesis 41:26) Note the defective spelling of הַטֹּבֹת.
יּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי, *the seventh day* (Exodus 20:10).

The Demonstrative Pronoun with the Articular Adjective

If a demonstrative pronoun is used with the adjective, it also has the article and is usually last in the adjective list.

Example: הַמִּשְׁפָּחָה הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת, *this evil family* (tribe, clan, Jeremiah 8:3).

Some adjectives regularly precede their nouns. This is true of numbers and the adjectives רַבִּים (*many*), and כָּל (*all*).

Example: שְׁלֹשָׁה בָּנִים, *three sons*, (Genesis 6:10). **Note:** The *lamed* (ל) in שְׁלֹשָׁה appears to have no vowel. The dot over the following *shin* (ש) operates as the vowel *cholem* (ױ).

Examples: רַבִּים צִידִים, *many hunters* (Jeremiah 16:16).
כָּל הַצָּבָא, *all the host*.

If the noun that the adjective modifies is connected with a noun in the construct state, both nouns precede the adjective.

Example: וַעֲטֹרֶת זָהָב גְּדוֹלָה, *and a large crown of gold* (Esther 8:15). Lit. *and a crown of gold large*.

When attributive adjectives occur with inflected nouns (nouns with pronominal suffixes), the inflected noun is considered definite without the article.

Examples: סוּסֵי הַטוֹב, *my good horse*. Lit. *the horse of me the good*.
תּוֹרַתוֹ הַקְּדוֹשָׁה, *His righteous law*. Lit. *the law of Him the righteous*.
חוֹמוֹתַיִךְ הַגְּבוּהוֹת, *your high walls*. Lit. *the walls of you the high*.

The Nominal (noun) Sentence and the Predicate Adjective

Hebrew does not use the state-of-being verb to be in regular nominal sentence construction with predicate nouns or adjectives. The predicate adjective has specific requirements in such a construction.

1. A nominal sentence or clause occurs when an adjective without the article הַ either follows or precedes a noun with the article, or a pronoun.
2. The nominal sentence or clause has no written verb, so the verb *is* (or *are* with plural subjects) is understood. Therefore, the adjective is considered to be a predicate adjective, and in translation it follows the understood verb.
3. When a question word occurs (such as מִי, *who?*), the predicate adjective is often without the article.

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4. Adjectives agree with the nouns they modify in both gender and number. For the purpose of agreement, dual nouns take plural adjectives (dual adjectives do not occur in Hebrew).
5. Adjectives form the feminine singular by adding הַּ to the masculine singular form.
6. If the first vowel of the adjective is וְ, when the feminine ending is added it is shortened to וֹ. Thus in the example *His righteous law* above, the masculine adjective *righteous*, קְדוֹשׁ, becomes קְדוֹשָׁה since the word *law* (תּוֹרָה) is feminine.

Examples: טוֹב הָאִישׁ, *the man is good*. Lit. *Good is the man*.

צְדִיק אַתָּה, *you (masc. sing.) are righteous*, (Jeremiah 12:1). Lit. *Righteous you are*.

מִי חָכָם? *who is wise?* (Hosea 14:10).

בָּנִים אַתֶּם, *you are sons* (Deuteronomy 14:1). Lit. *sons are you*.

The Substantival Adjective

Occasionally in Hebrew an adjective will stand for the noun it is modifying. This construction is much rarer than in English or Greek.

Examples: רַבִּים קָמִים עָלַי, *many (רַבִּים) are rising against me* (Psalm 3:2, referring to many people).

וְעַל קַל נִרְכָּב, *and on a swift one (קַל) we will ride* (Isaiah 30:16, referring to a horse).

לִכְדּוֹת הַחֲכָמִים, *He captures the wise one (הַחֲכָמִים)*, (Job 5:13, referring to wise people)

Comparison of Adjectives

The three degrees of the adjective are the positive, the comparative and the superlative. The positive degree is the simple use of the adjective as in the above examples.

The Comparative Degree

There is no specific word in Hebrew meaning *than*, as in *love is better than money*. To indicate comparison, a special use of the preposition מִן, *from* or *of*, attaches to the noun which follows the adjective, using a shortened form of מִן, which drops the ך. The adjective is translated as a comparative (*good* becomes *better*, *big* becomes *bigger*, etc.). The prefixed מִ is translated *than*. As with the attached article, *dagesh* is placed in the first letter of the noun if possible. (Remember that the laryngals cannot take *dagesh*. See Chapter One.)

Examples: טוֹב מִזָּהָב, *better than gold*.

מִתּוֹק מִדְּבַשׁ, *sweeter than honey* (Judges 14:18)

חֲזָק מִמֶּנִּי, *stronger than I*.

If an adjective precedes the noun, the מִ will be attached to the adjective.

Example: עָרוֹם מִכָּל חַיִּת, *more subtle than any (מִכָּל) living thing* (Genesis 3:1).

The Superlative Degree

To indicate the superlative degree Hebrew places the article הֶ before the adjective. The noun may have בֶּ before it, but this is not required.

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Examples: הטוב בסוסים *the best horses*. Lit. *the good one among the horses*.

בנו הקטן *his smallest (youngest) son*. Lit. *his son the small one*.

A special use of מן occurs when an implied comparison is beyond possibility. In English, the adverb *too* is used to express this condition.

Example: קשה מהעם *too hard (difficult) for the people*. In this case the מן is not directly translatable.

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Chapter Six: The Hebrew Preposition

Introduction

A preposition is a word that shows a relationship between its object and some other word in a sentence or clause. English is rich in prepositions, but Hebrew is not. The most common English prepositions are in the table below:

about	besides	inside	since
above	between	into	through
across	beyond	like	throughout
after	but (except)	near	till
against	by	of	to
along	concerning	off	toward
among	despite	on	under
around	down	onto	underneath
at	during	out	until
before	except	outside	up
behind	excepting	over	upon
below	for	past	with
beneath	from	regarding	within
beside	in	round	without

In addition to the common prepositions above, English also has two, three and four word phrasal prepositions. Below is a table of the most common.

according to	by way of	in spite of
along with	due to	instead of
apart from	except for	on account of
as for	in addition to	out of
as regards	in case of	up to
as to	in front of	with reference to
because of	in lieu of	with regard to
by means of	in place of	with respect to
by reason of	in regard to	with the exception of

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Some Common Hebrew Prepositions

Most Hebrew prepositions, like the article, attach directly to their objects. However, the prepositions meaning *with* (את, אַת, and עם) stand unattached as do several others. In addition, the Hebrew prepositions *from*, מן, and *to*, אֶל have two forms, one that stands unattached, and one that is attached. The attached form of *from* (מִ) also adds a *dagesh* to the next letter if possible. One preposition, *like* or *as*, has three forms, one attached, and two unattached. Note the table below.

	Unattached	Attached
from	מִן	מִ
to	אֶל	לְ
like, as	כְּאִשׁוּר, כְּמוֹ	כְּ

Some Preposition Forms with Nouns

<i>in a city</i>	בְּעִיר	<i>in, at, by, with</i>	בְּ
<i>to a king</i>	לְמֶלֶךְ	<i>to, at, for, towards</i>	לְ
<i>like a man</i>	כְּאִישׁ	<i>as, like, according to</i>	כְּ
<i>from Soloman</i>	מִן שְׁלֹמֹה	<i>from, out of</i>	מִן
<i>from Solomon</i>	מִשְׁלֹמֹה	<i>from, out of</i>	מִ
<i>with my cow</i>	אֶת פָּרְתִי	<i>with</i>	אֶת
<i>with your (masc. sing.) cow</i>	עִם פָּרְתְּךָ	<i>with</i>	עִם

Remember that in the construct state the noun is considered definite even without the article הַ. Therefore the phrase לְמֶלֶךְ may mean *to a king*. In the construct state, that is, when followed by a noun, it means *to the king of*. Only context can determine which is correct.

With attached prepositions, the article is dropped and the preposition takes the vowel of the article. Thus, to express the statement *to the king* one does **not** say לְהַמֶּלֶךְ but rather לְמֶלֶךְ.

Examples: *in the city*, בְּהָעִיר becomes בְּעִיר. Note that הַ becomes הֶ before ע.
like the man, כְּהָאִישׁ becomes כְּאִישׁ. Note that הַ becomes הֶ before א.

Several Preposition Forms Unattached

The following list of prepositions stand unattached to their objects.

Translation	Preposition
<i>behind, after</i>	אַחֵר, אַחֲרַי
<i>to, at, for, towards</i>	אֶל
<i>near, close by</i>	אֶצֶל

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Translation	Preposition
<i>with</i>	אֶת
<i>between</i>	בֵּין
<i>within, in the middle</i>	בְּתוֹךְ
<i>beneath, under, instead of</i>	תַּחַת
<i>as, like, according to</i>	כְּאֲשֶׁר, כְּמוֹ
<i>in front of, before</i>	לְפָנַי
<i>from, out of</i>	מִן
<i>during, until</i>	עַד
<i>on, upon, by</i>	עַל
<i>with</i>	עִם

Prepositions with Pronominal Suffixes

If the object of the preposition is a pronoun, the preposition takes a pronominal suffix instead of being attached to the pronoun itself. To say *to me* one says לִי, the yod (י) being the first person pronominal suffix meaning *me*. To say *with me*, one says either עִמִּי or אִתִּי. In the charts below you will find several examples of prepositions with pronominal suffixes, including the preposition *as*, כְּ, which uses a longer form that includes מ. This form is derived from the unattached form.

Some Common Prepositions with Pronominal Suffixes

Singular					
<i>like</i>	כְּ	<i>to</i>	לְ	<i>in</i>	בְּ
<i>like me</i>	כְּמִנִּי	<i>to me</i>	לִי	<i>in me</i>	בִּי
<i>like you (m)</i>	כְּמִךָ	<i>to you (m)</i>	לְךָ	<i>in you (m)</i>	בְּךָ
<i>like you (f)</i>	כְּמִיךָ	<i>to you (f)</i>	לְךָ	<i>in you (f)</i>	בְּךָ
<i>like him</i>	כְּמִהוּ	<i>to him</i>	לוֹ	<i>in him</i>	בוֹ
<i>like her</i>	כְּמִהָ	<i>to her</i>	לָהּ	<i>in her</i>	בָּהּ

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Plural

<i>like us</i>	כָּמֹנֵנוּ	<i>to us</i>	לָנוּ	<i>in us</i>	בְּנוּ
<i>like you (m)</i>	כְּכֶם	<i>to you (m)</i>	לְכֶם	<i>in you (m)</i>	בְּכֶם
<i>like you (f)</i>	כְּכֶן	<i>to you (f)</i>	לְכֶן	<i>in you (f)</i>	בְּכֶן
<i>like them (m)</i>	כְּמֹהֵם, כְּהֵם	<i>to them (m)</i>	לְהֵם	<i>in them (m)</i>	בְּהֵם, בָּם
<i>like them (f)</i>	כְּהֵן	<i>to them (f)</i>	לְהֵן	<i>in them (f)</i>	בְּהֵן

The unusual Hebrew idiom כָּמֹנִי כְּמֹהוּ means *I am like him*. Literally it says, *Like me like him*.

Below you will find two different words that mean *with*. One, אֵת, looks similar to the sign of the direct object. Also, the personal pronouns in the objective case provided in “Chapter Three, The Hebrew Pronoun” are actually the sign of the direct object with the pronominal suffixes attached. Do not confuse this direct object indicator with the preposition *with*, which also takes the pronominal suffixes. Study by saying each aloud, and note the differences in pronunciation by comparing the vocalization of the two tables.

Singular

<i>with</i>	אֵת, אֶת	<i>with</i>	עִם
<i>with me</i>	אֵתִי	<i>with me</i>	עִמִּי
<i>with you (m)</i>	אֵתְךָ	<i>with you (m)</i>	עִמְךָ
<i>with you (f)</i>	אֵתְךָ	<i>with you (f)</i>	עִמְךָ
<i>with him</i>	אֵתּוֹ	<i>with him</i>	עִמּוֹ
<i>with her</i>	אֵתָּהּ	<i>with her</i>	עִמָּהּ

Plural

<i>with us</i>	אֵתָּנוּ	<i>with us</i>	עִמָּנוּ
<i>with you (m)</i>	אֵתְכֶם	<i>with you (m)</i>	עִמְכֶם
<i>with you (f)</i>	אֵתְכֶן	<i>with you (f)</i>	עִמְכֶן
<i>with them (m)</i>	אֵתְהֵם	<i>with them (m)</i>	עִמְהֵם
<i>with then (f)</i>	אֵתְהֵן	<i>with then (f)</i>	עִמְהֵן

Some Irregular Prepositions with Pronominal Suffixes

The prepositions, מִן *from*, עַל *on, upon, or by*, and אֶל *to or unto*, should be observed closely. All are somewhat irregular when they take pronominal suffixes. See the table below.

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Singular

<i>to</i>	אֶל	<i>on, upon, by</i>	עַל	<i>from</i>	מִ
<i>to me</i>	אֵלַי	<i>on me</i>	עָלַי	<i>from me</i>	מִמֶּנִּי
<i>to you (m)</i>	אֵלֶיךָ	<i>on you (m)</i>	עָלֶיךָ	<i>from you (m)</i>	מִמְּךָ
<i>to you (f)</i>	אֵלֶיךָ	<i>on you (f)</i>	עָלֶיךָ	<i>from you (f)</i>	מִמְּךָ
<i>to him</i>	אֵלָיו	<i>on him</i>	עָלָיו	<i>from him</i>	מִמֶּנּוּ
<i>to her</i>	אֵלֶיהָ	<i>on her</i>	עָלֶיהָ	<i>from her</i>	מִמֶּנָּה

Plural

<i>to us</i>	אֵלֵינוּ	<i>on us</i>	עָלֵינוּ	<i>from us</i>	מִמֶּנּוּ
<i>to you (m)</i>	אֵלֵיכֶם	<i>on you (m)</i>	עָלֵיכֶם	<i>from you (m)</i>	מִמְּכֶם
<i>to you (f)</i>	אֵלֵיכֶן	<i>on you (f)</i>	עָלֵיכֶן	<i>from you (f)</i>	מִמְּכֶן
<i>to them (m)</i>	אֵלֵיהֶם	<i>on them (m)</i>	עָלֵיהֶם	<i>from them (m)</i>	מִמֶּהֶם
<i>to them (f)</i>	אֵלֵיהֶן	<i>on them (f)</i>	עָלֵיהֶן	<i>from them (f)</i>	מִמֶּהֶן

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Chapter Seven: The Hebrew Negative and the Inflected Adverb

The Hebrew Negatives

The Common Hebrew Negative

The most common Hebrew negative is, לֹא sometimes (rarely) written as לוֹא. It is an adverb and should be translated *no* or *not*. When used with כֹּל or כָּל meaning *any* or *all*, לֹא expresses emphatic negation. Therefore, לֹא כֹּל should be translated *not any* or *none whatever*.

Example: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים, לֹא-טוֹב הָיְתָה הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ. *And Yahweh Elohim said, It is not good for the man to be (הָיְתָה) alone.* (לֹא-טוֹב)

Negative Commands, Conditions, Desires, etc.

Another negative used in negative commands is אַל, *no* or *not*. Often it occurs with verbs in the jussive to introduce prohibitions, warnings, negative desires and requests. For more on the Hebrew verb and its various uses, including negative commands and the jussive, see “Chapter Nine, The Hebrew Verbal System.”

Example: ...וַיֹּמַר אֶל-יְשַׁעְיָהוּ יְהוָה... *And he said, if Yahweh will not help you...* (2 Kings 6:27). In this case the negative אַל, combined with the jussive verb יְשַׁעְיָהוּ, indicates condition.

Example: ...וְגַם-אִישׁ אַל-יֵרָא... *And also do not let a man be seen...* (Exodus 34:3). In this case, the combination of אַל with the *nifal* jussive verb indicates a negative command.

The Negation of Nouns and Participles

A third important negative is אֵין. It is used with nouns, infinitives, and participles, as well as being used as an inflected adverb (see below). Note the example below where אֵין negates a participle rather than a verb.

Example: אֵין דָּוִד שׁוֹמֵר אֶת הַתּוֹרָה. *David is not keeping the law.* The word שׁוֹמֵר, *is keeping*, is a participle from שָׁמַר, *keep* or *guard*, rather than a finite verb.

Example: וְאָדָם אֵין לְאָבֹד אֶת הָאֲדָמָה (Genesis 2:5). *There was no man to work the ground.* This is a nominal clause, with the understood verb *was*. Technically the negative אֵין modifies the infinitive לְאָבֹד, *to work*. Literally it means “There was not to work the ground a man.”

The Interrogative Negative

The negative לֹא is used with the article to form an interrogative negative הֲלֹא, meaning *is not?* or *are not?* It is often used when the questioner asks a question expecting an affirmative answer.

Example: הֲלֹא כָל-הָאָרֶץ לְפָנַיךָ? *Is not the whole land before you?* (Genesis 13:9). The question is rhetorical, assuming the correct answer, *Yes, the whole land is before me.*

The English equivalent makes a statement into a negative question. For example, *The whole land is before you, isn't it?*

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The Inflected Adverbial Negative

This construction, completely foreign to English speakers, allows the Hebrew speaker or writer to formulate a negative assertion by inflecting the negative adverb **אֵינְ**. Note the translations below.

Plural	Singular
<i>we are not</i> אֵינָנוּ	<i>I am not</i> אֵינֶנִּי
<i>you are not (m)</i> אֵינְכֶם	<i>you are not (m)</i> אֵינְךָ
<i>you are not (f)</i> אֵינְכֶן	<i>you are not (f)</i> אֵינְךָ
<i>they are not (m)</i> אֵינָם	<i>he is not</i> אֵינָנוּ
<i>they are not (f)</i> אֵינָן	<i>she is not</i> אֵינָנָהּ

Note that the third masculine singular, *he is not*, is identical to the first common plural, *we are not*. Only context will determine the difference.

Examples: אֵינֶנִּי עוֹבֵר אֶת הַהַרְדֵּן. *I am not passing over Jordan.*
אֵינְךָ אוֹכֵל לֶחֶם. *You (m,s) are not eating bread.*
אֵינָהּ הוֹלְכוֹת. *They (f) are not going.*

Each of the verbal ideas in the above **example** are actually participles. The inflected adverb **אֵינְ** is not used with perfect or imperfect verbs.

The Inflection of the Adverb “Still”

Another adverb that can be inflected is **עוֹד**, meaning still.

Plural	Singular
<i>we are still</i> עוֹדְנוּ	<i>I am still</i> עוֹדְנִי, עוֹדִי
<i>you are still (m)</i> עוֹדְכֶם	<i>you are still (m)</i> עוֹדְךָ
<i>you are still (f)</i> עוֹדְכֶן	<i>you are still (f)</i> עוֹדְךָ
<i>they are still (m)</i> עוֹדָם	<i>he is still</i> עוֹדְנוּ
<i>they are still (f)</i> עוֹדָן	<i>she is still</i> עוֹדְנָהּ

Again note that the third person masculine singular and the first person plural are the same form. Context will determine the meaning.

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Chapter Eight: The Hebrew Numbers

General Rules for Hebrew Numbers

Since numbers are adjectives, they follow the same rules as other adjectives. Because Hebrew has both masculine and feminine nouns, numbers must agree with the nouns they modify in both gender and number.

Example: אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה, *four hundred years*. Since the word *years*, שָׁנָה, is feminine, the compound number *four hundred*, אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת, is feminine. Note that while the first number, *four*, (אַרְבַּע) is feminine singular construct, the second number, *hundred* (מֵאוֹת), which directly modifies its noun, is the absolute feminine plural. This is because the noun being modified, שָׁנָה, *years*, is feminine and viewed as a plural. While שָׁנָה is a singular noun, it is considered a plural, and is correctly translated *years*.

Example: שִׁבְעִים שֶׁקֶל, *seventy shekels*. Since the noun *shekels* is masculine, the number seventy is in masculine plural. Again, שֶׁקֶל (*shekels*) is an absolute noun in the singular form, used as a plural.

Like all adjectives, numbers can be used as nouns (substantives). They are used in construct in the same way that nouns are, and function in an identical way in construct situations.

Special Rules for Hebrew Numbers

1. The number one, used as a normal attributive adjective, always follows the noun it modifies.

Examples: אִישׁ אֶחָד, *one man*.
אִשָּׁה אַחַת, *one woman*.

2. The other numbers are usually placed before the noun, and can be in construct form, used as substantives, though the construct form does not always occur. See the first example below.

Examples: שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים or שֵׁשֶׁה יָמִים, *six days*. The first is absolute, the second is construct.
שֵׁשׁ נָשִׁים, *six women*.

3. To express the age of a person use בֶּן, *son*, for a male and בַּת, *daughter*, for a female. The masculine בֶּן is the singular construct for בֵּן. The feminine construct noun בַּת, like all feminine singular nouns, has no change in spelling for the construct.

Examples: הוּא בֶּן שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים¹, *he is three years old*, (Lit. *he is a son of three years*).
הִיא בַּת תְּשַׁע שָׁנִים², *she is nine years old*, (Lit. *she is a daughter of nine years*).

4. Strangely, the number one אֶחָד has a plural form! The plural אֶחָדִים means literally *ones*, an English absurdity, but in Hebrew means *a few*:

Examples: סְפָרִים אֶחָדִים, *a few books*.
דְּבָרִים אֶחָדִים, *a few things*.

1 The Hebrew number *three* in the first example is pronounced *shalosh*. The dot over the second *shin* acts as a *cholem* for the letter *lamed*.

2 The Hebrew pronoun for *she* is pronounced *he*. The *vav* is a silent place holder for the vowel in unpointed Hebrew. Like the *yod*, it causes the preceding vowel point be pronounced with a long *e* sound.

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5. The number *two* is naturally dual: שְׁנַיִם (m) and שְׁתַּיִם (f). It is rarely used in this form, however. Usually it comes before its noun and has a construct form: שְׁנַיִ (m) and שְׁתַּיִ (f).

Example: Usually יְלָדִים שְׁנַיִ יְלָדִים *two boys or children*, but rarely as an attributive adjective, יְלָדִים שְׁנַיִם.

6. The number *two* when inflected with pronominal suffixes means *both of*.

Examples: שְׁנַיִנוּ (m), שְׁתַּיִנוּ (f) *both of us*.

שְׁנַיִכֶם (m), שְׁנַיִכֶן (f), *both of you*.

שְׁנַיִהֶם (m), שְׁנַיִהֶן (f) *both of them*.

שְׁנַיִהֶן הֵלְכוּ אֶל הַבַּיִת. *Both of them (f) went to the house.*

שְׁנַיִהֶם הֵלְכוּ אֶל הַבַּיִת. *Both of them (m) went to the house.*

The Cardinal Numbers

The Numbers from One to Ten

The numbers from 1-10 have four forms, masculine and feminine absolute and construct. The masculine absolute is the dictionary form. In modern Hebrew, the digits (numbers) are represented by the letters of the alef-bet.

Feminine		Masculine			
Construct	Absolute	Construct	Absolute		
אַחַת	אַחַת	אַחַד	אַחַד	א	1
שְׁתַּיִ	שְׁתַּיִם	שְׁנַיִ	שְׁנַיִם	ב	2
שְׁלֹשָׁת	שְׁלֹשָׁה	שְׁלֹשׁ	שְׁלֹשׁ	ג	3
אַרְבַּעַת	אַרְבַּעָה	אַרְבַּע	אַרְבַּע	ד	4
חֲמִשָּׁת	חֲמִשָּׁה	חֲמִשׁ	חֲמִשׁ	ה	5
שֵׁשֶׁת	שֵׁשָׁה	שֵׁשׁ	שֵׁשׁ	ו	6
שִׁבְעַת	שִׁבְעָה	שִׁבַּע	שִׁבַּע	ז	7
שְׁמֹנַת	שְׁמֹנָה	שְׁמֹנֶה	שְׁמֹנֶה	ח	8
תְּשַׁעַת	תְּשַׁעָה	תְּשַׁע	תְּשַׁע	ט	9
עֶשְׂרַת	עֶשְׂרָה	עֶשְׂרֵה	עֶשְׂרֵה	י	10

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The Compound Numbers from Eleven to Nineteen¹

Feminine	Masculine	
אַחַת עָשָׂרָה	אַחַד עָשָׂר	11
or	or	
עֲשָׂרֵי עָשָׂרָה	עֲשָׂרֵי עָשָׂר	
שְׁתֵּים עָשָׂרָה	שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר	12
or	or	
שְׁתֵּי עָשָׂרָה	שְׁנֵי עָשָׂר	
שְׁלֹשׁ עָשָׂרָה	שְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר	13
אַרְבַּע עָשָׂרָה	אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר	14
חֲמֵשׁ עָשָׂרָה	חֲמֵשָׁה עָשָׂר	15
שֵׁשׁ עָשָׂרָה	שֵׁשָׁה עָשָׂר	16
שִׁבְעַת עָשָׂרָה	שִׁבְעָה עָשָׂר	17
שְׁמוֹנֶה עָשָׂרָה	שְׁמוֹנֶה עָשָׂר	18
תְּשֵׁעַת עָשָׂרָה	תְּשֵׁעָה עָשָׂר	19

The Numbers from Twenty to Ninety²

Feminine	Masculine	
	עָשָׂרִים	20
עָשָׂרִים וְאַחַת	עָשָׂרִים וְאַחַד	21
עָשָׂרִים וְשְׁתֵּים	עָשָׂרִים וְשְׁנַיִם	22
	שְׁלֹשִׁים	30
	אַרְבָּעִים	40
	חֲמֵשִׁים	50
	שִׁשִּׁים	60
	שִׁבְעִים	70
	שְׁמוֹנִים	80
	תְּשַׁעִים	90

¹ With compound numbers variations occur. I have included variations only for the numbers 11 and 12.

² I have included the patterns for the numbers 21-22. The rest of the numbers are formed similarly through 99.

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The Numbers from One Hundred to Nine Hundred

מֵאָה	100
מֵאָתַיִם	200
שְׁלֹשׁ	300
אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת	400
חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת	500
שֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת	600
שִׁבְעַת מֵאוֹת	700
שְׁמוֹנֶה מֵאוֹת	800
תִּשְׁעַת מֵאוֹת	900

The Numbers from One Thousand to Ten Thousand

אַלְפַיִם	1000
אַלְפַיִם	2000
שְׁלֹשַׁת אֲלָפִים	3000
אַרְבַּעַת אֲלָפִים	4000
חֲמֵשַׁת אֲלָפִים	5000
שֵׁשַׁת אֲלָפִים	6000
שִׁבְעַת אֲלָפִים	7000
שְׁמוֹנֶת אֲלָפִים	8000
תִּשְׁעַת אֲלָפִים	9000
רִבְבָּה	10000

1. Strangely, though translated as plurals, the following Hebrew nouns remain singular after all numbers above ten: אִישׁ, *man*; יוֹם, *day*; שָׁנָה, *year*; נַפְשׁ, *soul*; שֵׁבֶט, *tribe*; אַמָּה, *cubit*; שֶׁקֶל, *shekel*.

Examples: אֶחָד עָשָׂר אִישׁ, *eleven men*.

שִׁבְעַת עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה, *seventeen years*.

שְׁלֹשִׁים אַמָּה, *thirty cubits*.

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2. To combine numbers use the word *and* between the elements.

Examples: מֵאָד וְעֶשְׂרִים וְשֵׁשׁ, *one hundred and twenty and six.*

שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת וְשִׁשִּׁים וְשִׁמְנָה, *three hundred and sixty and eight.*

אֶלֶף וְתֵשַׁע מֵאוֹת וְשָׁלֹשׁ, *one thousand and nine hundred and three.*

The Ordinal Numbers

Feminine	Masculine
רִאשׁוֹנָה	רִאשׁוֹן <i>first</i>
שְׁנִית	שְׁנִי <i>second</i>
שְׁלִישִׁית	שְׁלִישִׁי <i>third</i>
רְבִיעִית	רְבִיעִי <i>fourth</i>
חֲמִישִׁית	חֲמִישִׁי <i>fifth</i>
שִׁשִּׁית	שִׁשִּׁי <i>sixth</i>
שְׁבִיעִית	דְּבִיעִי <i>seventh</i>
שְׁמִינִית	שְׁמִינִי <i>eighth</i>
תְּשִׁיעִית	תְּשִׁיעִי <i>ninth</i>
עֲשִׂירִית	עֲשִׂירִי <i>tenth</i>

1. Ordinals are considered adjectives. Therefore, they follow their noun and often have the article.

Examples: הַיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן, *the first day.*

הַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁלִישִׁית, *the third year.*

2. The ordinals above ten are identical to their corresponding cardinals.

Example: הַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁים, *the thirtieth day.*

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Chapter Nine: The Hebrew Verbal System

The Trilateral Root

1. The term *trilateral root* refers to the fact that the great majority of verbal stems are formed from three letters. *Bilateral roots* (roots with only two letters) are few in number. Biliteral roots are sometimes called “hollow verbs” because they are missing the middle letter. These are covered in “Chapter Eleven, Changes in Pronunciation in Weak and Hollow Verbs.”
2. When looking up a verb in a Hebrew dictionary or lexicon, one must look up the word according to its root. Verbs are alphabetized according to the three letters of their roots, which is best seen in the *qal* (easy) conjugation, third person masculine form of the perfect tense. If a verb has a biliteral root, a *vav* pointed as *cholem* (י) occurs between the letters for lexical purposes.
3. However, Hebrew analytical lexicons allow the student to look up a word form to find the root. Today, with the advent of the computer, such analytical devices are available in computer form.

Tenses

1. The Hebrew verb has only two “tense” forms: the perfect, which expresses completed action, and the imperfect, which expresses action not yet complete.
2. What are called tenses in classical Hebrew have nothing to do with time, per se. In fact, time in the Hebrew verb is not inherent in the verb tense itself, and to a great extent, classical Hebrew was a timeless language. However, since the perfect shows complete action (not “completed” as though it had already happened) it most naturally will be translated by the past tense in English. But there are occasions in which the action of the perfect is viewed as complete in present or even future times, and must be translated by the corresponding English tense. Only context can tell.
3. Likewise the imperfect “tense” most naturally expresses that which would be considered future in English, but it can also be used of past or present events as well. The action or state is viewed as incomplete. As can be seen then, the emphasis of the classical Hebrew tense system is on the nature of the action (called aspect by some) rather than on the time that it takes place.
4. Since the classical Hebrew verb is actually timeless, no true present tense exists in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Hebrew participle, which is actually a verbal adjective, is often used to express action that would be expressed in the English present and is so translated. However, technically, the participle in such cases is actually describing the *actor* rather than making an affirmation of the *action*. As such, even participles can represent times such as past or future. In fact, the present tense (participle) state-of-being verb *be, become* (הָיָה) is never written as a finite verb, but understood in clauses where English would use *am, is, are*, and sometimes the past tense *was* or *were*.¹

¹ In modern Hebrew, where past, present, and futures do truly exist, the participle has taken over as the present tense of the verb, while the perfect indicates past time and the imperfect indicates future time.

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Voice

Like English, Hebrew has active and passive voices. In addition, Hebrew, like Greek, has a reflexive form. Voice in Hebrew verbs is formed by changing the actual spelling of the verb. See below under “Conjugation” for more information. Also see the appendix titled “Factors to Observe in the Hebrew Verb.”

Mood

1. Like English, Hebrew has indicative and imperative moods. It also has two moods that correspond to the English subjunctive mood, called the *cohortative* and the *jussive*.
2. Unlike English, or western languages in general, mood is formed by modifying the *imperfect form*. Because the imperfect indicates incomplete action, it provides a basis to express non-indicative mood actions, since they also look at the action as incomplete. See below under “The Cohortative and Jussive” and “The Imperative and Negative Commands” for more information on mood.

Conjugations

1. A conjugation is a set of inflected forms for a verb. A root is inflected by prefixes, called preformatives, and suffixes, called affirmatives. Pronunciation changes are represented by changes in the vowels beneath, within, and above, the letters of the verb. In the God-breathed text, no vowels were written, therefore, sometimes there is disagreement as to which vowels should have been supplied. However, remember that the meaning is carried in the consonants!
2. Hebrew has seven different conjugations (בְּנִינִים, buildings, the plural of בְּנִיךָ, a building, related to the trilateral root בָּנָה, *he built*), verbal patterns which are very systematic. The changes in pronunciation are indicated by the vowel points. We must emphasize that since the Hebrew Bible originally had no written vowels, the meaning of the verbs and verbals is carried by the consonants. As noted, the primary purpose for vowel points is to aid in vocalization.
3. The Hebrew word *verb* is פְּעַל. Note that this word has three letters, פ ע ל. Each letter of the word verb stands for a position in the verb pattern. The first letter is said to be in the *pe* (פ) position, the second letter in the *ayin* (ע) position and the third letter in the *lamed* (ל) position.
4. Each of the seven conjugations derives its name by changing the vowels under the trilateral root פֿעַל and sometimes by adding a preformative such as nun (נ), he (ה), or hit (הת).
5. The names and functions of the seven conjugations are as follows:
 - a. The *pa'al* (פְּעַל) often designated the *qal* (קָל), meaning *easy*, because it contains the simplest patterns. It is translated by the English active voice and has no distinguishing features. The third person masculine form of the *qal perfect* is the vocabulary (dictionary) form of the word because it most simply represents the trilateral root.

Example: קָצַר, *he cut, or reaped*.¹

¹ The perfect tense, third person, masculine gender of the verb is used in all the examples on this page. Occasional reference is also made to the imperfect.

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- b. The *nif'al* (נִפְעַל), is the passive (or sometimes reflexive) of the *qal* and is distinguished by preformative *nun* (נ). In the imperfect the preformative *nun* drops, and a *dagesh* is placed in the first root letter.

Example: נִקְצַר *he, it, was cut (was reaped).*

- c. The *pi'el* (פִּיעַל) is considered to be intensive of the *qal* and is active voice. When possible, the *pi'el* has a *dagesh* in the middle root letter.

Example: קִצַּר, *he shortened.*

- d. The *pu'al* (פּוּעַל) is the passive form of the *pi'el*, and as such is also considered intensive. In practical terms, it means that verbs in the *pu'al* carry the same meaning as those in the *pi'el*, except that they are in the passive voice.

Example: קִצַּר, *he, it was shortened.*

- e. The *hif'il* (הִפְעִיל) is considered causitive. It is formed by placing a *he* (ה) before the trilateral stem, and a *yod* (י) between the second and third letters of the stem. In the imperfect tense the ה is dropped but the י is retained. The vowel before the י is a *hiriq* (ִ).

Example: הִקְצִיר *he shortened (he caused to be short).*

- f. The *hof'al* (הִפְעַל) is considered to be the passive of the *hif'il*, and is therefore also causitive. The *hof'al* also has a prefixed *he* (ה). The vowel *qametz* (ֻ) occurs beneath the ה, but is pronounced like the English short “o”. This use of *qametz* is called *qametz qatan* (small *qametz*). Occasionally ֻ (*patach*) is replaced by ֻ (qibbutz).

Example: הִקְצַר, *he, it was shortened (was caused to be shorter).*

- g. The *hitpa'el* (הִתְפַּעַל) is reflexive, though in some situations it is considered a passive. Only context can tell. This form is distinguished by the letters הִתְ prefixed to the *pi'el* stem, with *dagesh* in the middle letter.

Example: הִתְקַצַּר, *he, (it) shortened himself (itself), or was shortened.* (Must have been painful.)

The Cohortative and Jussive

1. The term *cohortative* indicates a wish or desire in the first person. Therefore, it is usually translated by the subjunctive *Let me* in the singular and *Let us* (or, more commonly, *Let's*) in the plural. The cohortative is based on the imperfect tense (see Chapter Ten). To form the cohortative, the first person imperfect, singular and plural, has the letter *he* (ה) added to it as a suffix. This is called *paragogic he*. (*Paragogic* means *to extend*, and occurs in grammar to indicate letters added to extend a word for some reason.) Sometimes the particle אֵנִי is further added strengthen the cohortative idea. You will find אֵנִי translated in the KJV “*I pray thee.*” Modern translations often translate it “please.”¹ In other idiomatic uses, it is untranslatable. The particle אֵנִי is an enclitic, meaning it has no accent of its own, but is accented with the previous word.

¹ *The New Bantam-Megiddo Hebrew and English Dictionary* translates it as *please*, as does *Ben-Yehuda's Pocket Hebrew-English Dictionary*.

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Example: אֵלְכָה נָא, *Let me go, please* (Jeremiah 40:15. The verb אֵלְכָה is the *qal* imperfect first person singular of הָלַךְ, *he went*. The imperfect means *I will go*. The addition of the preformative א of the imperfect causes the first root letter ה to drop. However, the paragogic ה added changes the verb to a cohortative, *Let me go*. Here the word *please* again translates the enclitic נָא.

Example: אָעֲבֹרָה, *Let me pass through* (Deuteronomy 2:27. The verb עָבַר, *he passed through* in the *qal* perfect third masculine singular, changes to the *qal* imperfect first person singular with the addition of the א to the stem, meaning *I will pass through*. The paragogic ה changes the force to the cohortative, *Let me pass through*. Here the נָא is omitted, making the request somewhat less polite.)

2. The word *jussive* refers to a desire or command in the second or third persons. It has generally the same function in the second and third persons as does the cohortative in the first person, except that the jussive sometimes expresses positive commands, and regularly expresses negative commands. Like the cohortative, the jussive can be strengthened by the addition of נָא following the verb.

Except in the *hif il*, the jussive of regular verbs is the same form as the second and third persons of the imperfect form. Thus only context can tell if a verb in these forms should be considered imperfect or jussive. In the second person the jussive is usually translated *you may* in both the singular and the plural. However, in the third person it can mean either *he* or *she may*, or *let him* or *her* in the singular, and *they may*, or *let them* in the plural. In addition, a number of other “subjunctive mood” auxiliary verbs, such as *would*, *should*, *might*, or *could*, can translate the jussive.

Example: יִשְׁפֹּט יְהוָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶיךָ, *Let Yahweh judge between you and me* (Genesis 16:5. The verb שָׁפַט means either *he judged*, or *he governed* in the *qal* perfect third masculine singular. The addition of the preformative י to the stem, plus the change of פּ to פֹּ, makes it a *qal* imperfect third masculine singular. It could mean *Yahweh will judge*, or *Let Yahweh judge*. The jussive translation *Let Yahweh judge* is clearly intended in the context.)

Example: יְהִי אֹר, *let there be light* (Genesis 1:3. The *qal* perfect הָיָה, *he* or *it was*, becomes יְהִי in the imperfect, *he* or *it will be*, but in this context is jussive, *let be*. Hence, the translation *let light be*, or, more commonly, *let there be light*.)

Example: יִשְׁבוּ־נָא עַבְדֶּיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן, *Please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen* (Genesis 47:4. The verb שָׁב, meaning *he dwelt* in the *qal* perfect, becomes יִשְׁבוּ in the *qal* imperfect, *you will dwell*. With the addition of נָא, the verb becomes a polite jussive request *Let dwell*.) Note: the prepositional phrase בְּאֶרֶץ is a construct, to be translated *in the land of*. Its following noun in the absolute is גֹּשֶׁן, *Goshen*.

The Imperative and Negative Commands

1. Positive commands are expressed in the imperative mood. The imperative is identical with the second person of the imperfect except that the prefixed letter is dropped. See “Inflection” below for further discussion of the prefixes on the imperfect. The particle נָא is frequently added to the imperative, like the jussive. With the imperative אֵן is used to soften the command, or even turn it

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into a request in a more polite form. However, it can also be added to strengthen an exhortation uttered as a rebuke or a threat, or in a statement of ridicule.

Example: לְךָ־לְךָ־מֵאַרְצְךָ, *Go you from your land!* (Genesis 12:1, a command. לְךָ is the *qal* imperfect second masculine singular of הָלַךְ, where the initial ה of the root is dropped, and the preformative ת (indicating *you*) is also dropped to indicate the imperative.)

Example: תְּנֵה־נָא לָהֶם כֶּכָר־כֶּסֶף, *Please give to them a talent of silver* (2 Kings 5:22, a request. The *qal* imperative second masculine singular verb תְּנֵה, *give*, is from נָתַן, *he gave*. The trilateral root נָתַן is one of the weakest in Hebrew. Both the first and third letters נ tend to drop off with only the ת remaining. In this case, for the imperfect form the initial נ dropped, and the preformative ת indicating second person was added to the remaining ת. The Masoretes, recognizing this, placed a doubling dagesh thusly, תְּ, indicating *you* masculine singular. The final נ remained, but the paragogic ה was added, originally to indicate emphasis or urgency, with the result we see in this example. In classical (biblical) Hebrew, the emphasis or urgency seems to have lessened. Added to the ה was the softener נָא, indicating a request rather than a command.)

Example: עֲמְדִי־נָא בְּחַבְרֵיךָ *Stand with your magical charms* (Isaiah 47:12; the prophet is indicating sarcasm, ridicule. The verb עֲמְדִי is a form of עָמַד, *he stood*. It is from the *qal* imperfect second person singular form, תַּעֲמְדִי, *you will stand*. In the imperative, the prefixed consonant ת is dropped and the pronunciation changed from עַ to עָ, to form the imperative. In this case, unlike the previous example, the נָא is added to reinforce the command rather than to soften it.)

2. While positive commands are expressed in the imperative, negative commands are formed by אַל (or sometimes אַל־נָא) with the jussive. The imperative use of the jussive should be translated *do not* plus the meaning of the verb and in the third person it is translated *do not let him (her, it, them, or there be)* plus the meaning of the verb.

Example: אַל־נָא תְּהִי מְרִיבָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶיךָ *Do not let there be strife between you and me*, (Genesis 13:8. Here the verb form תְּהִי is a third person jussive of הָיָה, *he was*. תְּהִי is best translated *let be*. It is negated by אַל־נָא, meaning *let there not be*, where the נָא seems to be emphatic (as also in the next example). Its subject is the word *strife*, מְרִיבָה, lit. *let there not be strife*. Since it is an imperative, it can also be translated *Do not let there be strife*.)

Example: אַל־נָא, אָחֵי, תַּרְעוּ *Do not, my brothers, do evil* (Genesis 19:7, the verb תַּרְעוּ is the *hif il* imperfect second masculine plural from רָעַע, *be bad, evil*. It is used as a jussive imperative, which אַל־נָא negates.)

Inflection Patterns of the Perfect and Imperfect

The following reference table shows the prefixes and suffixes of the Hebrew verb. The verb root is represented by the consonant א as a place-holder. This shows the original non-pointed roots of consonants. Points are included for the prefixes (preformatives) and suffixes (afformatives). See the next chapter for verbs with these patterns that include the complete set of vowel points for each

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conjugation. Note that the perfect has only suffixes, while the imperfect has both suffixes and prefixes.

The Perfect		
Plural		Singular
גַּאֲאֲאֲ	1c	אֲאֲאֲי
אֲאֲאֲאֲ	2m	אֲאֲאֲ
אֲאֲאֲאֲ	2f	אֲאֲאֲ
אֲאֲאֲ	3c, m	אֲאֲאֲ
	3f	אֲאֲאֲה
The Imperfect		
Plural		Singular
אֲאֲאֲגַ	1c	אֲאֲאֲאֲ
אֲאֲאֲאֲ	2m	אֲאֲאֲאֲ
אֲאֲאֲאֲאֲ	2f	אֲאֲאֲאֲ
אֲאֲאֲאֲ	3m	אֲאֲאֲאֲ
אֲאֲאֲאֲאֲ	3f	אֲאֲאֲאֲ

The *qal* perfect third masculine singular has no prefixes or suffixes. It is considered the dictionary (vocabulary) form of the verb. In some grammars this is called the *groundform*, because it forms the ground or basis for the addition of all inflections.

These prefixes and suffixes occur in all inflections of the verb. However, they can appear to drop out if a triliteral root begins or ends with one of them such as a *nun* or *alef*. Actually, the prefixes and suffixes become combined with the root letter, rather than actually dropping out.

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Chapter Ten: The Strong Verb

Introduction

The Hebrew verb is built up from either a trilateral or biliteral root. The more common, the trilateral root, occurs in the *qal* perfect third person masculine singular. For instance, the root יִשָּׁב carries the idea of *sitting*. The *qal* third masculine singular is יָשַׁב, *he sat*. Likewise, אָהַב means *he loved*, and שָׁמַר means *he kept* or *he guarded*. To these trilateral roots, Hebrew adds preformatives and affirmatives. Along with changes in vowel points, they indicate the three persons and two the numbers.

The above examples indicate active verbs. Hebrew also has verbs derived from adjectives that are called *stative* rather than *active*. For instance, the trilateral root זָקַן indicates *age*. As an adjective, it is translated *old*. But it also can be, and is, inflected as a verb. זָקַן means *he was* or *became old*, *became aged*. Many stative verbs have the vowel pointing with *tsere* rather than *patach* as the second vowel. כָּבֵד, from the adjective for *heavy*, means *he was* or *became heavy*. It has the same vowel pattern as זָקַן.

Another form of the stative verb pattern is represented by the verb derived from קָטַן, a root meaning *small* or *little*. The stative verb form is קָטַל. Here, the second vowel is *cholem*.

Like all languages, Hebrew has both regular and irregular verbs. Regular verbs are called *strong verbs* and irregular verbs are called *weak verbs*. The term *weak* comes from letters (called “radicals” by many scholars) that are weak because they either cannot be doubled (they cannot take dagesh) or they tend to drop. Thus the laryngal (gutteral) consonants (alef א, ayin ע, he ה, and het ח) are considered weak as are yod י (yud), and nun נ. In addition, biliteral roots, often called hollow verbs, exist which are irregular and should be considered weak verbs.

Strong verbs have no weak radicals and have consistent vowel patterns. It is better to become thoroughly familiar with the strong verb before attempting to learn weak verb patterns. Because they are totally consistent in their patterns, we will use the strong verbs שָׁמַר (*he guarded*), סִפֵּר (*he recounted*), הִשְׁלִיךְ (*he threw*), and הִתְאַפֵּק (*he restrained himself*) in the various conjugation paradigms.

The Hebrew Infinitive

In the paradigms the student will find six forms: the perfect, the imperfect, the cohortative, the imperative, the infinitive, and the participle. All except the infinitive and participle are discussed in the previous chapter.

Hebrew has two infinitives, the *infinitive absolute*, and the *infinitive construct*. The infinitive absolute is actually a verbal noun often used as an adverbial modifier, which cannot usually be translated into English directly. While it has several uses, it most commonly intensifies a finite verb of the same stem which it precedes. It names, and therefore intensifies, the act or state affirmed by the finite verb.

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Not all conjugations have a separate infinitive form. That does not mean there are no infinitives for that conjugation, but that there is no regular form. They must be observed individually, often following a *qal* form.

There are times, however, when the infinitive absolute can be used much like a present participle in English, or a Greek genitive construction. It can be used as a subject, or an object. It can take an object, like a finite verb, with the sign of the definite direct object אֵת. It can even substitute for a finite verb sometimes. A thorough discussion of its uses can be found in intermediate or advanced grammars.

The Infinitive Absolute

The infinitive absolute takes either the form שָׁמֹר or שָׁמֵר, and is usually used to add an emphasis of some kind to its finite verb which it immediately precedes. For instance תִּשְׁמֹר means *you will guard*. The phrase שָׁמֹר תִּשְׁמֹר means *you will really guard* (lit. *to guard you will guard*). To change this to a question the interrogative הֲ occurs as a preformative to the infinitive absolute. The הֲ is usually pointed with a *patach hatuf*. הֲשָׁמֵר תִּשְׁמֹר means *will you really guard?*

Example: הֲמִלְךָ תִּמְלֹךְ עָלֵנוּ? *Will you really be king over us?* (Genesis 37:8. Both the infinitive and the finite verb are from the verb מָלַךְ, *be* or *become king*. The subject *you* is occurs the second masculine singular imperfect of the finite verb תִּמְלֹךְ *you will be king*.)

Example: שָׁאֵל-הָאִישׁ שְׂאוֹל *the man really asked* (Genesis 43:7. The man asked in detail or repeatedly. Here the subject (הָאִישׁ) of the infinitive construction follows the finite verb (שָׁאֵל, *he asked*), the normal pattern.)

Example: טָרַף טָרַף יוֹסֵף *Joseph must have been torn to pieces* (Genesis 37:33. The emphasis of the infinitive absolute adds certainty to the main verb. It could be translated, *Joseph was certainly torn*. The main verb, טָרַף is a *qal* perfect passive, *was torn*.)

Example: יִסְקַל סָקוּל *he will certainly be stoned* (Exodus 19:13. The finite *nif'al* verb יִסְקַל is an imperfect third masculine singular, a passive form, *he will be stoned*, It is preceded by the infinitive absolute סָקוּל, indicating certainty).

The Infinitive Construct

The infinitive construct, on the other hand, functions much like an English infinitive. It appears to be more flexible than the infinitive absolute, acting as an verbal noun with various functions. It can be a subject, object, genitive, or object of a preposition (similar to the Greek infinitive). Frequently, the infinitive construct attaches the preposition to (לְ) to the front of the verbal stem, though this is not universal as it is in English. An infinitive construct often indicates *purpose*. It can also indicate permission, or, with a negative, prohibition. Many more uses could be cited, but like the infinitive absolute, a complete discussion must wait on a intermediate or advanced grammar.

The infinitive construct is regularly translated either as an English infinitive, with the word *to* (לְ) attached, or as a gerund, with or without the prefixed לְ. Both forms indicate a verbal noun.

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In the *qal* of strong verbs, the infinitive construct takes the form שָׁמַר (guarding, to guard, to keep, from (שָׁמַר, he guarded, kept). In hollow verbs it is written בּוֹא (coming, to come, from the biliteral root בָּא,¹ he came). When translated with the English *-ing* ending, *guarding* or *coming*, the form names the act like an English gerund.

Since the infinitive construct is a noun, it may govern another noun (hence, infinitive construct) such as שָׁמַר הָאִישׁ (to guard the man, the guarding of the man, the man's guarding) or בּוֹא יוֹסֵף (the coming of Joseph, Joseph's coming) Also the infinitive construct can take pronominal suffixes such as שָׁמְרוֹ (his guarding), or בּוֹאֵי (my coming), both of which are gerundives.

Example: עֵת לְבִכּוֹת וְעֵת לְשִׂחּוֹק, עֵת סְפוֹד וְעֵת רְקוֹד, *There is a time to weep, and a time to laugh; there is a time to lament, and a time to dance.* (Ecclesiastes 3:4. Here we have two forms of the infinitive construct. The forms לְבִכּוֹת and לְשִׂחּוֹק, *to weep* and *to laugh* respectively, have the prefixed ל, *to*. The forms סְפוֹד and רְקוֹד, *to lament* and *to dance*, omit the ל, yet are also translated as though it occurred. Note also that these are nominal clauses, with the verbal phrase *there is* attached to both sets. See Chapter Twelve for more on the nominal clause.)

Example: בְּהִיּוֹתָם בְּמִצְרַיִם, *when (while) they were in Egypt* (1 Sam 2:27. This infinitive construction shows some common peculiarities. The infinitive itself is from הָיָה, *he was*. It has a prefixed preposition ב, which is used with infinitive constructs to indicate time, in this case, the meaning of ב is *when*, or *while*. The infinitive itself is represented by the letters הָיָה. It is not uncommon in Hebrew for infinitive constructs to act as though they were the main verb of a clause, as here. But as a noun, this infinitive has a pronominal suffix, תָּם, meaning them. So, technically, the infinitive structure literally means, *while to be them*, but is used in the sense of *while they were*. בְּמִצְרַיִם is in (בְּ) *Egypt*, (מִצְרַיִם). Note that מִצְרַיִם is a dual form, perhaps a hold-over from when there were two Egypts, Upper, the southern highlands, and Lower, the northern delta.)

The infinitive construct can take pronominal suffixes which show possession. When such is the case, the infinitive construct is translated like an English gerund, which uses the *-ing* form of the verb.

Examples: The following examples are with *qal* strong verbs.

אָכַל, עָמַד, שָׁמַר			
<i>to guard, to stand, to eat</i>			
שָׁמְרֶךָ	your keeping	שָׁמְרֵי	my keeping
עָמְדֶךָ	your standing	עָמְדֵי	my standing
אָכַלְךָ	your eating	אָכַלֵי	my eating

Examples: The following examples are with strong verbs that end in a laryngal.

¹ As noted, biliteral verbs are often called “hollow verbs” because they have no middle letter. The vocabulary form for such verbs is not the third masculine singular, as is true of normal trilateral verbs, but written with a ה as the middle letter.

For instance, the *qal* perfect verb for *he came*, בָּא, has the vocabulary form בּוֹא.

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שָׁלַח, שָׁמַע

to hear, to send

שָׁמַעְךָ *your hearing* שָׁמַעִי *my hearing*
שָׁלַחְךָ *your sending* שָׁלַחִי *my sending*

Each of the conjugations below contain the forms for both infinitives.

Another use of the *-ing* form of the verb in English is to designate a present participle. One might say, *the running man*, where *running* is a verbal adjective, describing the man. Which brings us to the Hebrew participle.

The Hebrew Participle

The Regular Pattern for the Qal Participle

The participle, a verbal adjective, has four forms, masculine singular and plural, feminine singular and plural. The following table shows the regular forms of the *qal* participle. Included are possible translations for the participles, though they are far from exhaustive. Each of the following conjugations include the participle forms.

The Qal Participle of שָׁמַר

he kept, guarded

	Plural	Singular
Masculine	שׁוֹמְרִים <i>guarding or keeping, ones who guard or keep, they who guard or keep</i>	שׁוֹמֵר <i>guarding or keeping, one who guards or keeps, he who guards or keeps</i>
Feminine	שׁוֹמְרוֹת <i>guarding or keeping; ones who guard or keep, they who guard or keep</i>	שׁוֹמֶרֶת <i>guarding or keeping, one who guards or keeps, she who guards or keeps</i>

Participles have a variety of uses because, as a verbal adjective, they can function as both verb and adjective. As adjectives they can act as nouns (substantival adjectives). When used as a verb, a participle often indicates on-going action.

Examples: אָדוֹנָי יֹשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא, *the lord sitting on a throne* (Isaiah 6:1).

מַלְאָכֵי אֱלֹהִים עֹלִים וְדֹרְדִים, *angels of God ascending and descending* (Genesis 28:12).

Since a participle is a verbal adjective, it can function as an attributive.

Example: הָאִישׁ הַעֹמֵד, *the standing man* (Note that both the noun הָאִישׁ and the participle הַעֹמֵד have the article ה, the regular form for an attributive adjective with the noun).

A better translation might be the idiomatic phrase, *the man who stands*, or *the man who stood*. This translation works for both articular and anarthrous participle phrases.

Examples: מֶלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב, *a king who sits* (Proverbs 20:8. No article is present).

הַמֶּלֶךְ הַיּוֹשֵׁב, *the king who sits* (Jeremiah 29:16. Each have an article.)

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Like an adjective, a participle can be used as a noun, called a substantival adjective.

Examples: שָׁמֵר, *guarding, one who guards or keeps*, may be equivalent to a *guard, a keeper*.
 אוֹהֵב, *loving, one who loves*, may be equivalent to a *lover or a friend*.

Since the idea of time is not inherent in Hebrew verbs and verbals, time is determined by context. Like verbs, participles can indicate time as either past, present, or future.

Example: וַתֹּאמֶר אִישׁ זָקֵן עָלָהּ (1 Sam 28:15, *And she said, an old man is coming up*). The participle עָלָהּ functions as a predicate adjective. The statement is a nominal clause, with the verb *is* supplied.

Example: וַיִּבֶן עֲלָיָא כִּי יְהוּהוּ קָרָא לְנָעַר (1 Sam 3:8, *And Eli discerned that Yahweh was calling to the lad*). The participle קָרָא (*was calling*) is used of something that Eli (עֲלָיָא) discerned (וַיִּבֶן) had already happened.

Example: אֲנֹכִי עֹשֶׂה דָבָר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל (1 Sam 3:11, *I will do a thing in Israel*). This is a prediction by Yahweh. The participle *will do* (עֹשֶׂה) refers to His doing something in the future.

The Conjugations of the Strong Verb

The following conjugations are arranged in columns, with the singular on the right, and the plural on the left. The persons begin with the first person singular. Many conjugation tables begin with the third person masculine singular, which is not the intuitive way one studies person and number, so this grammar follows the normal 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person order throughout.¹

Translations in the following tables use traditional past forms for the perfect and future forms for the imperfect. This is for convenience only, as there is no time inherent in these forms.

The Qal Conjugation

The *qal* conjugation contains the basic forms for the Hebrew verb. As noted, the vocabulary (dictionary) form of the trilateral stem is presented in the *qal* masculine third person singular. Hollow verbs, however, present the vocabulary form as the *qal* infinitive.

Not every verb has the *qal* third masculine singular use in the Hebrew Bible. In such cases, an Old Testament Hebrew lexicon will provide the groundform without any vowel points.

The Qal Perfect

		Plural	Singular	
1c	<i>we guarded</i>	שָׁמְרָנוּ	<i>I guarded</i>	שָׁמַרְתִּי
2m	<i>you guarded</i>	שָׁמַרְתֶּם	<i>you guarded</i>	שָׁמַרְתָּ
2f	<i>you guarded</i>	שָׁמַרְתְּ	<i>you guarded</i>	שָׁמַרְתְּ
3m, c	<i>they guarded</i>	שָׁמְרוּ	<i>he, it guarded</i>	שָׁמַר
3f, s			<i>she, it guarded</i>	שָׁמְרָה

The Qal Imperfect

¹ Many grammars provide paradigms of verbs that, for the English student, are very confusing. They begin on the left with the singular, which is counter to the way one reads Hebrew. As noted, they begin with the 3rd masculine singular in the first position, which jumbles the order in both singular and plural.

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	Plural		Singular	
1c	<i>we will guard</i>	נִשְׁמֵר	<i>I will guard</i>	אֶשְׁמֵר
2m	<i>you will guard</i>	תִּשְׁמְרוּ	<i>you will guard</i>	תִּשְׁמֹר
2f	<i>you will guard</i>	תִּשְׁמֲרִי	<i>you will guard</i>	תִּשְׁמְרִי
3m	<i>they will guard</i>	יִשְׁמְרוּ	<i>he, it will guard</i>	יִשְׁמֹר
3f	<i>they will guard</i>	תִּשְׁמֲרֶנָּה	<i>she, it will guard</i>	תִּשְׁמֹר

The Qal Cohortative

	Plural		Singular	
	<i>Let's guard, Let us guard</i>	נִשְׁמְרָה	<i>Let me guard, I would guard</i>	אֶשְׁמְרָה

The Qal Imperative

	Plural		Singular	
2m	<i>guard!</i>	שְׁמְרוּ	<i>guard!</i>	שְׁמֹר
2f	<i>guard!</i>	שְׁמֲרִי	<i>guard!</i>	שְׁמְרִי

The Qal Infinitive

The Infinitive Absolute	The Infinitive Construct
שְׁמֹר	(ל) שְׁמֹר

The Qal Active Participles

	Plural	Singular
m	שׁוֹמְרִים	שׁוֹמֵר
f	שׁוֹמְרוֹת	שׁוֹמֶרֶת

The qal conjugation has a separate passive participle.

The Qal Passive Participle

	Plural	Singular
m	שְׁמוֹרִים	שְׁמוֹר
f	שְׁמוֹרוֹת	שְׁמוֹרָה

The Nif 'al Conjugation

The nif 'al is considered to be either the passive or reflexive of the qal, depending on context. Its main characteristic is a prefixed נ in the perfect. In the imperfect the נ combines with the first root consonant which cause a dagesh in the first letter of the stem.

The Nif 'al Perfect

	Plural		Singular	
1c	<i>we were guarded, we guarded ourselves</i>	נִשְׁמַרְנוּ	<i>I was guarded, I guarded myself</i>	נִשְׁמַרְתִּי
2m	<i>you were guarded, etc.</i>	נִשְׁמַרְתֶּם	<i>you were guarded, etc.</i>	נִשְׁמַרְתָּ
2f	<i>you were guarded, etc.</i>	נִשְׁמַרְתֶּן	<i>you were guarded, etc.</i>	נִשְׁמַרְתְּ
3m, c	<i>they were guarded, etc.</i>	נִשְׁמְרוּ	<i>he, it was guarded, etc.</i>	נִשְׁמַר
3f, s			<i>she, it was guarded, etc.</i>	נִשְׁמְרָה

The Nif 'al Imperfect

Basic Hebrew Grammar

	Plural		Singular
1c	<i>we will guard ourselves, we will be guarded</i>	נִשְׁמְרוּ	<i>I will guard myself, I will be guarded</i>
2m	<i>you will be guarded, etc.</i>	תִּשְׁמְרוּ	<i>you will be guarded, etc.</i>
2f	<i>you will be guarded, etc.</i>	תִּשְׁמְרִי	<i>you will be guarded, etc.</i>
3m	<i>they will be guarded, etc.</i>	יִשְׁמְרוּ	<i>he will be guarded, etc.</i>
3f	<i>they will be guarded, etc.</i>	תִּשְׁמְרֶנָּה	<i>she will be guarded, etc.</i>

The Nif 'al Cohortative

	Plural		Singular
<i>Let us guard ourselves</i>	נִשְׁמְרָה	<i>Let me guard myself</i>	אֶשְׁמְרָה

The Nif 'al Imperative

	Plural		Singular
2m <i>guard yourselves!</i>	הִשְׁמְרוּ	<i>guard yourself!</i>	הִשְׁמֵר
2f <i>guard yourselves!</i>	הִשְׁמְרִי	<i>guard yourself!</i>	הִשְׁמְרִי

The Nif 'al Infinitive

Infinitive Construct	Infinitive Absolute
(לְ)הִשְׁמֵר	נִשְׁמֹר, הִשְׁמֵר

The Nif 'al Participle

	Plural	Singular
m	נִשְׁמְרִים	נִשְׁמֵר
f	נִשְׁמְרוֹת	נִשְׁמֶרֶת

The Pi'el Conjugation

The *pi'el* is characterized by the doubling (has a *dagesh*) of its middle consonant through all its inflections. It is often identified as the intensive of the *qal*, and is often causitive.

Example: *qal* סָפַר, *he counted*, *pi'el* סִפַּת *he recounted, he narrated*.

The *pi'el* is, however, more complex than the word *intensive* implies. Sometimes it is causitive, especially with roots derived from adjectives (stative roots).

Example: *qal* מָלֵא,¹ *he was full*, *pi'el* מִלֵּא, *he filled, (caused to be full)*. Both are statives from the adjective מָלֵא, *full*.

Likewise, with roots derived from nouns (denominative roots), the *pi'el* simply makes a verb out of a noun.

Example: From the noun אֶלְמָה, *sheaf (bundle of grain)*, אֶלַם, *he sheafed, that is, made (caused to be) a sheaf*. Some verbs in the *pi'el* have no *qals*. Their vocabulary form is the perfect third masculine singular of *pi'el*.

Examples: בִּקַּשׁ, *he sought*; צִוָּה, *he ordered*.

¹ While the groundform of the *qal* מָלֵא is identical to the vowel pointing of the adjective, unlike the adjective, it can be inflected in all the persons, singular and plural, in both the perfect and imperfect, etc.

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The Pi'el Perfect

		Plural	Singular	
1c	<i>we recounted</i>	סִפְּרָנוּ	<i>I recounted</i>	סִפַּרְתִּי
2m	<i>you recounted</i>	סִפַּרְתֶּם	<i>you recounted</i>	סִפַּרְתָּ
2f	<i>you recounted</i>	סִפַּרְתְּךָ	<i>you recounted</i>	סִפַּרְתְּ
3m, c	<i>they recounted</i>	סִפְּרֵיו	<i>he recounted</i>	סִפַּר
3f, s			<i>she recounted</i>	סִפְּרָה

The Pi'el Imperfect

		Plural	Singular	
1c	<i>we will recount</i>	נִסְפֵּר	<i>I will recount</i>	אֲסַפֵּר
2m	<i>you will recount</i>	תִּסְפְּרוּ	<i>you will recount</i>	תִּסְפֵּר
2f	<i>you will recount</i>	תִּסְפְּרִי	<i>you will recount</i>	תִּסְפְּרִי
3m	<i>they will recount</i>	יִסְפְּרוּ	<i>he will recount</i>	יִסְפֵּר
3f	<i>they will recount</i>	תִּסְפְּרֶנָּה	<i>she will recount</i>	תִּסְפֵּר

The Pi'el Cohortative

		Plural	Singular	
<i>Let us recount</i>		נִסְפְּרָה	<i>Let me recount</i>	אֲסַפְּרָה

The Pi'el Imperative

		Plural	Singular	
2m	<i>Recount!</i>	סִפְּרוּ	<i>Recount!</i>	סִפֵּר
2f	<i>Recount!</i>	סִפְּרִי	<i>Recount!</i>	סִפְּרִי

The Pi 'el Infinitive

Infinitive Construct	(לְ)סִפֵּר	Infinitive Absolute	סִפֵּר, סִפֵּר
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The Pi'el Participle

		Plural	Singular
m		מְסַפְּרִים	מְסַפֵּר
f		מְסַפֵּרוֹת	מְסַפֵּרָה

The Pu'al Conjugation

The Pu'al is the passive voice of the pi'el, and therefore, takes the same causitive characteristics.

The Pu'al Perfect

		Plural	Singular	
1c	<i>we were recounted</i>	סִפְּרָנוּ	<i>I was recounted</i>	סִפַּרְתִּי
2m	<i>you were recounted</i>	סִפַּרְתֶּם	<i>you were recounted</i>	סִפַּרְתָּ
2f	<i>you were recounted</i>	סִפַּרְתְּךָ	<i>you were recounted</i>	סִפַּרְתְּ
3m, c	<i>they were recounted</i>	סִפְּרוּ	<i>he was recounted</i>	סִפַּר
3f, s			<i>she was recounted</i>	סִפְּרָה

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The Pu'al Imperfect

		Plural			Singular
1c	<i>we will be recounted</i>	נִסְפָּר	<i>I will be recounted</i>		אֲסַפֵּר
2m	<i>you will be recounted</i>	תִּסְפָּרוּ	<i>you will be recounted</i>		תִּסְפָּר
2f	<i>you will be recounted</i>	תִּסְפַּרְנָה	<i>you will be recounted</i>		תִּסְפַּרְי
3m	<i>they will be recounted</i>	יִסְפְּרוּ	<i>he will be recounted</i>		יִסְפֹּר
3f	<i>they will be recounted</i>	תִּסְפַּרְנָה	<i>she will be recounted</i>		תִּסְפֹּר

The Pu'al Cohortative

There is no separate form for the pu'al cohortative.

The Pu'al Imperative

There is no separate form for the pu'al imperative.

The Pu'al Infinitive

There is no separate form for the pu'al infinitive construct or absolute.

The Pu'al Participle

		Plural	Singular
m		מְסַפְּרִים	מְסַפֵּר
f		מְסַפְּרוֹת	מְסַפֶּרֶת

The Hif'il Conjugation

The *hif'il* is distinguished by the ה prefixed to the stem, and the letter י between the second and third letters of the stem. It is causitive, similar to the *pi'el*. Many make little distinction between them.¹ In recent years, some have expressed the idea that the *hif'il* has to do with causing an event, while the *pi'el* has to do with bringing about a state or condition.² That both are causitive there is little dispute. The causitive force of the *hif'il* is clear in the following examples.

Example: וְאַבְדֵּתִי אֶת־הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַזֹּאת (Leviticus 23:30. אַבְדֵּתִי is *hif'il* perfect first person singular from the verb אָבַד, perish.) הַזֹּאת is the feminine far demonstrative, *that*.

Example: מְלֹאֲרָתָא, the luminaries, in Genesis 1:15, were provided עַל־הָאָרֶץ לְהַאֲרִיךְ, *to cause light on the earth*. The *hif'il* infinitive construct לְהַאֲרִיךְ, is a denominative verb (derived from the noun אֹר, light), meaning *to cause light, עַל־הָאָרֶץ, on the earth*.

The Hif'il Perfect

		Plural			Singular
1c	<i>we threw</i>	הִשְׁלַכְנוּ	<i>I threw</i>		הִשְׁלַכְתִּי
2m	<i>you threw</i>	הִשְׁלַכְתֶּם	<i>you threw</i>		הִשְׁלַכְתָּ
2f	<i>you threw</i>	הִשְׁלַכְתֶּן	<i>you threw</i>		הִשְׁלַכְתְּ
3m, c	<i>they threw</i>	הִשְׁלִיכוּ	<i>he threw</i>		הִשְׁלִיךְ
3f, s			<i>she threw</i>		הִשְׁלִיכָה

¹ See E. Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, §53c, pg. 144. "In some verbs the *pi'el* and *hif'il* occur side by side in the same sense."

² See Bruce Waltke and M. O'Conner, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, "The Hifil Stem," pg. 434.

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The Hif 'il Imperfect

		Plural			Singular
1c	<i>we will throw</i>	נִשְׁלִיךְ	<i>I will throw</i>		אֶשְׁלִיךְ
2m	<i>you will throw</i>	תִּשְׁלִיכוּ	<i>you will throw</i>		תִּשְׁלִיךְ
2f	<i>you will throw</i>	תִּשְׁלַכְנָה	<i>you will throw</i>		תִּשְׁלִיכִי
3m	<i>they will throw</i>	יִשְׁלִיכוּ	<i>he will throw</i>		יִשְׁלִיךְ
3f	<i>they will throw</i>	תִּשְׁלַכְנָה	<i>she will throw</i>		תִּשְׁלִיךְ

The Hif 'il Cohortative

		Plural			Singular
<i>Let us throw</i>		נִשְׁלִיכֵהוּ	<i>Let me throw</i>		אֶשְׁלִיכֵהוּ

The Hif 'il Imperative

		Plural			Singular
2m	<i>Throw!</i>	הִשְׁלִיכוּ	<i>Throw!</i>		הִשְׁלֵךְ
2f	<i>Throw!</i>	הִשְׁלַכְנָה	<i>Throw!</i>		הִשְׁלִיכִי

The Hif 'il Infinitive

Infinitive Construct	Infinitive Absolute
(ל)הִשְׁלִיךְ	הִשְׁלֵךְ

The Hif 'il Participle

	Plural	Singular
m	מִשְׁלִיכִים	מִשְׁלִיךְ
f	מִשְׁלִיכוֹת	מִשְׁלִיכָה, (מִשְׁלִיכֵהָ)

The Hof 'al Conjugation

The *hof 'al* is the rarest of the stems in Hebrew. It is the passive of the *hif 'il*, much as the *pu 'al* is the passive of the *pi 'el*. Sometimes, passives in Hebrew are translated as actives because of the differences of expression in the two languages.

Example: וַיּוֹלֵד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת, *and he begot (caused to be born) sons and daughters* (Genesis 5:4)

The Hof 'al Perfect

		Plural			Singular
1c	<i>we were thrown</i>	הִשְׁלַכְנוּ	<i>I was thrown</i>		הִדְלַכְתִּי
2m	<i>you were thrown</i>	הִשְׁלַכְתֶּם	<i>you were thrown</i>		הִשְׁלַכְתָּ
2f	<i>you were thrown</i>	הִשְׁלַכְתֶּן	<i>you were thrown</i>		הִשְׁלַכְתְּ
3m, c	<i>they were thrown</i>	הִשְׁלָכוּ	<i>he was thrown</i>		הִשְׁלָךְ
3f			<i>she was thrown</i>		הִשְׁלָכָה

The Hof 'al Imperfect

		Plural			Singular
1c	<i>we will be thrown</i>	נִשְׁלָךְ	<i>I will be thrown</i>		אֶשְׁלָךְ
2m	<i>you will be thrown</i>	תִּשְׁלָכוּ	<i>you will be thrown</i>		תִּשְׁלָךְ
2f	<i>you will be thrown</i>	תִּשְׁלַכְנָה	<i>you will be thrown</i>		תִּרְלָכִי
3m	<i>they will be thrown</i>	יִשְׁלָכוּ	<i>he will be thrown</i>		יִשְׁלָךְ
3f	<i>they will be thrown</i>	תִּשְׁלַכְנָה	<i>she will be thrown</i>		תִּשְׁלָךְ

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The Hof 'al Cohortative

There is no separate form for the hof 'al cohortative.

The Hof 'al Imperative

There is no separate form for the hof 'al imperative.

The Hof 'al Infinitive

There is no separate form for the hof'al infinitive construct or absolute.

The Hof 'al Participle

	Plural	Singular
m	מְשַׁלְכִים	מְשַׁלֵּךְ
f	מְשַׁלְכוֹת	מְשַׁלֶּכֶת

The Hitpa'el Conjugation

The Hitpa'el is reflexive or occasionally passive of *pi'el*. It is characterized by the affirmative הִתְּ-, and *dagesh* in the second root letter.

The Hitpa'el Perfect

	Plural		Singular	
1c	<i>we restrained ourselves</i>	הִתְאַפְּקֵנוּ	<i>I restrained myself</i>	הִתְאַפְּקֵתִי
2m	<i>you restrained yourselves</i>	הִתְאַפְּקֶתֶם	<i>you restrained yourself</i>	הִתְאַפְּקֶתָּ
2f	<i>you restrained yourselves</i>	הִתְאַפְּקֶתְנָן	<i>you restrained yourself</i>	הִתְאַפְּקֶתְךָ
3m, c	<i>they restrained themselves</i>	הִתְאַפְּקוּ	<i>he restrained himself</i>	הִתְאַפְּקָה
3f			<i>she restrained herself</i>	הִתְאַפְּקָהּ

The Hitpa'el Imperfect

	Plural		Singular	
1c	<i>we will restrain ourselves</i>	נִתְאַפֵּק	<i>I will restrain myself</i>	אֶתְאַפֵּק
2m	<i>you will restrain yourselves</i>	תִּתְאַפְּקוּ	<i>you will restrain yourself</i>	תִּתְאַפֵּק
2f	<i>you will restrain yourselves</i>	תִּתְאַפְּקֵנָה	<i>you will restrain yourself</i>	תִּתְאַפְּקִי
3m	<i>they will restrain themselves</i>	יִתְאַפְּקוּ	<i>he will restrain himself</i>	יִתְאַפֵּק
3f	<i>they will restrain themselves</i>	תִּתְאַפְּקֵנָה	<i>she will restrain herself</i>	תִּתְאַפֵּק

The Hitpa'el Cohortative

	Plural		Singular	
	<i>Let us restrain ourselves</i>	נִתְאַפְּקֵה	<i>Let me restrain myself</i>	אֶתְאַפְּקֵה

The Hitpa'el Imperative

	Plural		Singular	
2m	<i>Restrain yourselves!</i>	הִתְאַפְּקוּ	<i>Restrain yourself!</i>	הִתְאַפֵּק
2f	<i>Restrain yourselves!</i>	הִתְאַפְּקֵנָה	<i>Restrain yourself!</i>	הִתְאַפְּקִי

The Hitpa'el Infinitive

Infinitive Construct	Infinitive Absolute
הִתְאַפֵּק(לְ)	הִתְאַפֵּק

The Hitpa'el Participle

m	מִתְאַפְּקִים	מִתְאַפֵּק
f	מִתְאַפְּקוֹת	מִתְאַפֶּקֶת

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Chapter Eleven: The Weak and Hollow Verbs

The Weak Verb

Classification of Weaknesses

A weakness in Hebrew means that a consonant appears in the trilateral root of the verb stem which somehow changes the pronunciation of the word throughout its conjugation. The following consonants are considered weak: ו, י, ר, ה, ה, ע, א. In addition, verbs that begin with an initial נ tend to show variations in conjugation.

These changes in pronunciation vowel patterns and sometimes consonants will appear to drop or be added. The meaning of the word is not changed because of a weakness in the stem.

As the student studies the verbal system of the Hebrew language, he will gain insight as to the importance of knowing the trilateral root of each verb as it occurs in the text of the Old Testament. When memorizing the root, the student should note the presence of a weak consonant and realize that a change may occur.

Changes in vowel patterns are best learned as the weak verbs occur in the biblical text. For a complete (and highly technical) discussion of these weaknesses, the student may wish to consult *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* edited by E. Kautzsch. To help the student recognize the weaknesses, we provide a short summary of each.¹

Identification of Weakness

Final ה Verbs

When a verb ends in ה, such as the verb בָּכָה, *he wept*, that verb originally had י in place of the ה. This י still appears in some forms. For example, *I wept* is בָּכִיתִי. Other vowel changes occur as well.

Initial י or ו Verbs

When a verb begins with either of these consonants, that consonant will often drop when one adds the prefixes of the imperfect. Some verbs will retain the י or ו, causing changes in the vowel points.

Initial and Final א Verbs

When א is either the first or last letter of the root it affects the vowel pointing. Often the only change is that the second vowel becomes a *qametz* rather than a *patach*.

Initial נ Verbs

The letter נ has the tendency to assimilate (combine) with another consonant when it is at the end of a syllable. In practical terms this means that it appears to drop. For example, the verb *he gave* נָתַן, in the first person imperfect is written נָתַנְתִּי, where the א prefix causes the initial נ to become the final letter in the syllable, and therefore combine with the ת. This combining causes the *dagesh* to occur in the ת. The student needn't remember all that. Just memorize the form with translation. It's easier.

Initial Laryngal Verbs

¹ The author ceased trying to discern weaknesses through this information, and decided to study the verbal system as it occurred in the Hebrew text. Ultimately, why a weakness occurs is not as important as recognizing one, and knowing how to express the verbal meaning in translation.

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The laryngals (ע, ה, ה, א) cannot take a *dagesh*.¹ Therefore the vowels beneath them are generally shortened. It is common to see a half *patach* (ֿ), half *qametz* (ֿֿ), or a half *segol* (ֿֿֿ) beneath them.

Middle and Final Laryngal Verbs

Middle and final laryngal verbs show a variety of changes which are best learned by observation.

Hollow Verbs

Hollow verbs are verbs that originally had a two letter root (biliteral) instead of the normal three letter root (triliteral). The original root can be seen in the third person masculine singular of the *qal*. However, to make them conform to the normal triliteral system either the letter י or ו is placed between the two consonants. This letter usually only shows up in the imperfect and infinitive construct forms of the verb. When the student desires to consult a lexical entry for one of these verbs he must use the infinitive construct form rather than the actual biliteral root.

Example: The infinitive construct of the verb שׁוּב, return, is derived from the biliteral root שׁב. In the *qal* perfect, the first person singular is שָׁבֹתִי, I returned. The student will note that the ו does not show up in the perfect verb form. However, the imperfect first person singular is אָשׁוּב, we will return. Throughout the imperfect the ו is retained. Other changes take place in the *hifb 'il* and the *hof 'al* which should be observed.

¹ The *dagesh* is beginning to be dropped in Modern Sephardic Hebrew, even in pointed forms. In recent years, the vowel system has been simplified. For instance, the *dagesh* following the artical ׀ֿ is often dropped. Three *b^egad k^ephat* letters have lost the need for a *dagesh*. Only, כ, פ, ב use *dagesh* because they are still aspirated. The letters ג, ה, ד, are no longer aspirated, so a *dagesh* with them has become meaningless.

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Chapter Twelve: Hebrew Sentence Structure

Basic Sentence Structure

A sentence is a group of words that have at least one subject and predicate and that stands as a complete grammatical entity. As such a sentence may have one or more than one clause.

A clause is also a group of words with a subject and predicate. Two general types of clauses exist: those that can stand alone or independent clauses and those that are dependent on other clauses. Every sentence must have at least one independent clause, which defines it as a sentence. It may have one or more dependent clauses.

The Simple Sentence

A simple sentence has only one clause.

Example: *The man washed his car.*

The Compound Sentence

A compound sentence has two or more clauses, but the clauses are considered independent because each could stand as its own sentence. In English a coordinate conjunction will usually connect two independent clauses in a compound sentence.

The most common coordinate conjunctions in English are *and*, *or*, and *but*. These conjunctions can also be used to introduce a sentence, but this should not be overused in English. However, coordinate conjunctions often occur as introductory words in both Hebrew and Greek.

In addition to the above coordinate conjunctions, the following are also used regularly: *for*, *nor*, *yet*, *both...and*, *not only...but also*, *either...or*, and *neither...nor*. English has connectives called transitionals or conjunctive adverbs. These words are coordinate conjunctions no matter what they are called: *however*, *therefore*, *nevertheless*, *hence*, *according*.

Examples: *The man washed his car and cleaned his house.*

The man neither washed his car nor cleaned his house.

The man cleaned his house; however, he did not have time to wash his car.

The Complex Sentence

A complex sentence has at least one independent clause and at least one dependent clause. Dependent clauses use both relative pronouns and subordinate conjunctions as connectors to main clauses. Subordinate clauses act as a single part of speech, a noun, an adjective, or an adverb.

The Relative Clause

A relative clause contains a relative pronoun. Such clauses are most often adjectives, referring back to the antecedent of the relative. However, sometimes the relative pronoun is independent, and introduces a noun clause. A relative noun clause acts like a noun rather than an adjective; it can be a subject, or an object.

The relative pronouns in English are as follows: *who*, *which*, *what*, *that*, *whomever*, *whatever*, *whichever*. In the examples below the relative clause is underlined. Note that most of these can

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function as interrogative pronouns, as well. One of them, the word *that*, also functions as a subordinate function indicating a noun clause.

Examples: *The man who washed his car also cleaned his house.* The relative clause is an adjective referring back to *man*, since the antecedent of the relative pronoun *who* is *man*.

Give the gift to whomever you wish. The relative clause is a noun, the object of the preposition *to*. Only nouns can be the object of prepositions.

Adverbial and Noun Clauses

The English subordinate conjunctions are the following: *if, although, though, that, because, since, so that, in order that, as, unless, before, than, where, when*. In addition English uses some adverbs as subordinate conjunctions and become such in various contexts: *how, why, where, while, before, after*. In the following examples the subordinate conjunction and its clause is underlined. Each of these are adverbial, as they describe in some way the verb action of the main clause.

Examples: *Because he washed his car, the man had no time to clean his house.* An adverbial clause indicating why he had no time.

If it had not rained, we would have gone to the beach. An adverbial clause indicating the negative condition as to why *we* did not go.

A subordinate clause can act as a noun. Such clauses can be subjects, objects, objects of prepositions, or even stand in apposition.

Examples: *I think that it is in my desk.* The subordinate clause is the direct object of the verb *think*.

That it will rain is not certain. The subordinate clause is the subject of the verb *is*.

Hebrew Sentence Structure

The Hebrew Nominal Clause

In Hebrew, a *nominal clause*, often unfortunately called a noun clause¹, is one where no verb occurs. In such a clause, some form of the verb *to be* must occur in the English translation. Some grammars call this a *noun sentence*, another unfortunate designation. A nominal clause may be either a sentence, or a dependent clause of one of the types indicated later in this chapter.

Examples: אֲנִי יוֹסֵף, *I am Joseph* (Genesis 45:3. The verb *am* is understood. The pronoun אֲנִי, I, includes the verb: *I am*.)

וְהַבּוֹר רֵק, *And the pit was empty*, (Genesis 37:24. The verb *was* is understood to follow the subject noun הַבּוֹר, *the pit: the pit was*)

In the examples above, the normal word order is subject/predicate. Sometimes, however, the predicate will be first. When this happens, the predicate is being emphasized.

Examples: מְרַגְלִים אַתֶּם, *Spies you are*, (Genesis 42:9. The verb *are* is understood. The pronoun אַתֶּם, *you* (masc. pl.) includes the verb: *you are*.)

אָבָל אֲשָׁמִים אַנְחֵנוּ, *But guilty we are*, (Genesis 42:21. The pronoun אַנְחֵנוּ, *we*, includes the verb: *we are*)

¹ The term noun clause refers to a clause *used as a noun*. The preferred terminology for a clause that has an understood verb is *nominal clause*, so as not to confuse it with the phrase *noun clause*.

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In the first example above, the tone is accusatory. One can almost hear Joseph shouting at his brothers. Therefore, the word order is reversed. The second example shows an emotional response. It might be rendered *We are really guilty*.

After the words **אם** (*if*) and **כי** (*for, because*) the emphasis is usually on the predicate. Thus the word order is again reversed.

Examples: **כִּי־אָחִינוּ בְּשָׂרֵנוּ הוּא**, *Because our brother, our flesh, he is*, (Genesis 37:27. The pronoun **הוּא**, *he is* (a nominal clause, which includes the verb *is*), occurs last, since the relationship is being emphasized. English does not allow this word order, so it is correctly translated, *Because he is our brother, our flesh.*)

אִם־כֹּה־נְהַיִתְּכֶם, *If honest men you are*, (Genesis 42:19. The pronoun, **אַתֶּם**, *you are* (nominal clause), follows **אִם־כֹּה־נְהַיִתְּכֶם**, *if honest ones*. Since **כֹּה־נְהַיִתְּכֶם** is masculine plural, the clause can be translated *If you are honest men.*)

However, if the emphasis is on the subject, the normal word order is retained.

Example: **כִּי־אָחִיו מֵת**, *because his brother is dead*. (Genesis 42:38)

In questions the normal order is generally reversed.

Example: **הֲכִתְּנָת בְּנֵךְ הוּא?** *The coat of your son is it? = Is it your son's coat?* (Genesis 37:32)

The Verbal Clause

When the clause contains a verb it is called a verbal clause as distinguished from a nominal clause. The order of the subject and the predicate varies. It is common for the subject to either precede or follow the verb. With verbs of action, in English translation the subject must precede the verb no matter what the Hebrew order is.

Examples: **בָּרָא שְׁלֵהִים**, *God created*. (Genesis 1:1, lit. *created God*).

אֲדַנִּי שְׂאֵל אֶת־עַבְדֵּי, *My lord asked his servants*, (Genesis 44:19. The normal subject-verb word order.)

After **כי**, **כֹּה**, **אם**, **לֹא**, **אָשֶׁר**, and **כִּי־אָשֶׁר**, the subject normally follows the verb. The translation should reflect the rule of English order.

Examples: **כֹּה אָמַר בְּנֵךְ יוֹסֵף**, *thus said your son Joseph = thus your son Joseph said*. (Genesis 45:9)

כִּי־אָשֶׁר־בָּא יוֹסֵף, *when came Joseph = When Joseph came*. (Genesis 37:23)

However, when the subject is being emphasized, the regular subject/predicate order is retained after **כי**, **כֹּה**, **אם**, **לֹא**, **אָשֶׁר**, and **כִּי־אָשֶׁר**.

Example: **לֹא־אַתָּם שְׁלַחְתֶּם אֵתִי**, *Not you did send me = You did not send me*. (Genesis 45:8)

In the above example, we see that the adverb **לֹא** is connected to the pronoun **אַתָּם**, *you*, with the line called the makkeph (־). Makkeph is used to show that the two words are pronounced as one, with the accent on the last syllable. It was not part of the original text, being added by the Massoretes. Also, it does not indicate that the first word is connected grammatically to the second word. **לֹא** is an adverb, a modifier of the verb **שְׁלַחְתֶּם**, *you sent*.

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The Position of the Direct Object

Normally the direct object follows the verb of action as it does in English. The untranslatable sign of the definite direct object, **את**, will precede the direct object if it has the article (**ה**) or if the direct object is a proper noun, such as *Joseph*. Sometimes **את** will precede a direct object without the article, but this is much less common.

In the case of two definite direct objects connected by **ו** (*and*), each object can have the **את** with the **ו** as an preformative to the second **את**.

Example: **בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ** *God created the heavens and the earth*, (Genesis 1:1. Each direct object is preceded by **את**.)

Example: **וַיִּמְכְּרוּ אֶת-יֹסֵף** *and they sold Joseph*. (Genesis 37:28.) *Joseph* is a proper noun, hence **את** precedes it.

If, on the other hand, the direct object precedes the verb, it is emphatic.

Example: **לִרְוֹת אֶת-עֲרוֹת הָאָרֶץ בָּאתֶם**, *to see the secrets of the land you came* (with emphasis on the secrets of the land) = *you came to see the secrets of the land*. (Genesis 42:9. Here the entire infinitive phrase **לִרְוֹת אֶת-עֲרוֹת הָאָרֶץ** *to see the secrets of the land* is the direct object of **בָּאתֶם**, *you* (pl) *came*.)

The Position of the Indirect Object

Usually, though not always, the direct object will precede the indirect object. The indirect object normally will be indicated by the preposition **ל**, *to*, or **לְ**, *to the*. (In English we normally drop *to* or *for* before an indirect object. Not so in Hebrew.)

Example: **וַיִּמְכְּרוּ אֶת-יֹסֵף לְיִשְׁמָעֵאלִים**, *And they sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites*. (Genesis 37:28). **יֹסֵף** is the direct object, **לְיִשְׁמָעֵאלִים** indicates the indirect object.

If either the *indirect object* or the *direct object* is a pronoun and the other is a noun, the pronoun regularly comes first.

Example: **וַעֲשָׂה לוֹ כִּתְנֹת פָּסִים** *and he made for him a long coat*. (Genesis 37:3) The indirect object **לוֹ** (*for him*) precedes the direct object **כִּתְנֹת פָּסִים**, (*long coat*, not *a coat of many colors*). The word **פָּסִים** comes from a word that means *the flat of the hand*, or perhaps *of the foot*. Keil and Delitzsch say that the garment was, “an upper coat reaching to the wrists and ankles, such as noblemen and kings’ daughters wore, not ‘a coat of many colours’”).

Example: **וַיְסַפֵּר אֵתוֹ לְאָחָיו** *and he recounted it to his brothers*. (Genesis 37:9) The direct object **אֵתוֹ** (*it*)¹ comes before the indirect object **לְאָחָיו**, (*to his brothers*).

Types of Dependent or Subordinate Clauses

Independent clauses are also called *main clauses* because dependent clauses are attached to them in some manner. Clauses that are dependent on a main clause are also called *subordinate clauses*. Like

1 **אֵתוֹ** is the normal masculine objective (accusative) case pronoun *him* used as the direct object. However, the English idiom requires that the word *it* be used rather than *him*.

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most languages, Hebrew has three types of dependent or subordinate clauses. *Noun clauses* function as subjects or objects. *Adjective clauses* modify nouns or pronouns. *Adverbial clauses* modify verbs.

Functionally, subordinate clauses act as a single part of speech. For instance, a *noun clause* in its entirety can be the subject of a sentence.

Example: *That Disneyland was called “Disney’s Folly” is a fact.* The entire subordinate clause introduced by the subordinate conjunction *that* is the subject of the verb *is*.

Noun Clauses

A dependent noun clause may function in any way that a regular noun functions. The most common uses are as subjects, predicate nominatives, and direct objects.

Example: וּלְשֹׂאֵל הַגִּדּוּר בֵּי־נִמְלֹט דָּוִד מִקַּעִילָה *That David had departed Keilah was told to Saul,* (1 Samuel 23:13 (Lit. *And to Saul (וּלְשֹׂאֵל) was told that had departed David from Keilah.*) The noun clause is the subject of the passive verb הַגִּדּוּר (*was told*).

Example: וְזֶה אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה אֵתָהּ, *And this is how you will make it,* (Genesis 6:15) Here we have a noun clause that is also a nominal clause, where the verb *is* must be supplied in the translation of וְזֶה *and this is*. The underlined clause is the predicate complement of the understood verb *is*.

Example: וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי רָבָה רָעַת הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ *And Yahweh saw that great was the evil of man on the earth,* (Genesis 6:5) The underlined clause is the direct object of the verb יֵרָא, *saw*. Note also that the verb precedes the subject, יְהוָה, *Yahweh*.

Relative clauses can sometimes stand as noun clauses. As such, the relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר is translated *he who, he whom, etc. or that which*. This use is sometimes called the independent relative.

Example: אֲשֶׁר־תְּבָרֵךְ מְבָרֵךְ, וְאֲשֶׁר תָּאֵר יוֹאֵר יוֹאֵר *He whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed,* (Numbers 22:6.)

Adjective Clauses

The most common adjective clauses are relative clauses, which are introduced by the relative pronoun, אֲשֶׁר, which is to be translated *who, whose, what, that* or *which*, depending on the context.

Example: וַעֲשֵׂה אֶת־הַכֵּלִים אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַשֻּׁלְחָן *and he made the vessels which were on the table,* (Exodus 37:16)

Example: גּוֹי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִשְׁמַע לְשׁוֹנוֹ *a nation whose tongue you do not understand,* (Deuteronomy 28:49)

Adverbial Clauses

Conditional Clauses

T. O. Lambdin states, “Any two clauses, the first of which states a real or hypothetical condition, and the second of which states a real or hypothetical consequence thereof, may be taken as a conditional sentence.”¹ In English these two clauses are often called the “if” clause and the “then” clause. The technical grammatical terms for the “if” clause is *protasis* and for the “then” clause is *apodosis*.

¹ T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 276.

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The words **אם** and **כי** are primarily used to introduce the *protasis*, and both are then translated *if*. In addition **הן** can sometimes introduce a *protasis* and is also translated *if*.

Examples: **אם-חכמתָ, חכמתָ לךְ** *If you are wise, you are wise to yourself*, (Proverbs 9:12).
כי-שלךְ בגיא צלמות, לא-אירא רע *If I walk through the valley of death, I fear no evil*, (Psalm 23:4. Technically, **צלמות** is *shadow*, or *deep darkness*, derived from the root **צלל** *to be* or *to grow dark*. Some hold that **צלמות** refers to deep darkness, though others hold that letters **מות**- refer to death; hence the translation *shadow of death*. **מות**- may be a superlative to indicate *deep shadow*, or *darkness*, rather than *death*. Either way, it is clear that the word **צלמות** evokes the idea of great fear, or even terror.)
הן ישלח איש את-אשתו...הישוב אליה עוד? *If a man should put away his wife...shall he return to her again?* (Jeremiah 3:1.)

Contrary to fact conditions or conditions incapable of fulfillment can be introduced by the word **לו** (or **לוא**, *if*, introducing positive contrary to fact conditions), or **אלו** (from **אם לו**, **לולא** (or **לוֹלִי**, *if not*, introducing negative contrary to fact conditions).

Example: **לו חכמו ישבילו זאת** *If they were wise, they would understand this*, (Deut. 32:29).

As a positive contrary to fact condition, the correct understanding of the above statement is, *If they were wise [but they were not], they would understand this [but they did not]*.

Example: **לוֹלִי תורתךְ שעשעי אז אבדתי** *If your law were not my delight, then I would have perished* (Psalm 119:92).

As a negative contrary to fact condition, the correct understanding of the above statement is, *If your law were not my delight [but it is], then (אז) I would have perished [but I did not.]*

Occasionally a *protasis* may have no word meaning *if* to introduce it. In such cases both *protasis* and *apodosis* may be introduced by **ו**.

Example: **וְעָזַב אֶת-אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ** *If he leaves his father, then he will die*, (Genesis 44:22. The *if* clause is introduced by **וְעָזַב**, to be translated *if he leaves*. The *then* clause consists of **וְנָמַת**, to be translated *then he will die*.)

Causal Clauses

The most common introductory word for causal clauses is **כי**, or **כי יען** translated *because*. Also common is **אשר**, or **יען אשר**, also meaning *because*. Sometimes **יען** stands alone at the head of causal clauses. Also the conjunction **ו** has a causal use, as does **על**.

Example: **כי-עירם**, *because I was naked*, (Genesis 3:10. This is a noun clause. *I was* must be supplied in translation).

אשר שמעת בקולי, *because you obeyed my voice*, (Genesis 22:18).

Example: **יען אשר מלֵה אַחֲרֵי יְהוָה** *because he fully followed Yahweh*, (Deuteronomy 1:36). See also Joshua 14:14.

Example: **יען לא-האמנתם בי** *because you did not believe in Me* (Numbers 20:12).

Example: **והוא בעלת בעל**, *because she is a man's wife*, (Genesis 20:3).

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עֲקָב, can introduce causal clauses, sometimes with כִּי or אֲשֶׁר.

Example: תֹּאבְרוֹן עֲקָב לֹא תִשְׁמָעוּן בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, *you shall perish because you did not obey the voice of Yahweh, your God*, (Deuteronomy 8:20).

Example: עֲקָב אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה, *because he did this thing* (2 Samuel 12:6).

Purpose and Consequence Clauses

Purpose (final) clauses and result clauses are determined contextually. The infinitive with ל is often used to indicate a result clause. The relative אֲשֶׁר sometimes introduces both final and result clauses, as does לְמַעַן (*because of, in order to, in order that, etc.*). Sometimes בְּעֵבֶר, with or without אֲשֶׁר, as well as the simple ו connective can also introduce a purpose clause.

Example: לְמַעַן יֵאֱמִינוּ, *that they might believe*, (Exodus 4:5).

Example: בְּעֵבֶר אֲשֶׁר יְבָרְכֶךָ, *that he may bless you*, (Genesis 27:10).

Example: וְאֶעֱשֶׂה עִמּוֹ חֶסֶד, *that I may perform for him a kindness*, (2 Samuel 9:1)

Temporal Clauses

Temporal clauses indicate the time of the verbal action of the main clause. They are generally related grammatically to the predicate of the main clause, and act as adverbial modifiers.

The most common way to express a temporal clause is with an infinitive preceded by a preposition.

Example: בֶּן־שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה דָּוִד בְּמָלְכוֹ David was thirty years old when he began reigning, (2 Samuel 5:4) בְּמָלְכוֹ is the infinitive construct with the preformative preposition ב attached and the pronominal suffix ו added. The literal translation is as follows: A son of thirty years was David when began (ב) the reigning of him (ו).

If the subordinate clause expresses simultaneous action with the main clause, the subordinate conjunction is generally either כְּאֲשֶׁר or כִּי.

Example: כִּי תַעֲבֹד אֶת־הָאָדָמָה, *When you till (lit. work) the ground*, (Genesis 4:12)

If the subordinate clause expresses subsequent action, the conjunction עַד כִּי generally occurs. טָרָם also occurs.

Example: וַיִּגְדַּל הָאִישׁ...עַד כִּי־גִדַּל מְאֹד, *And the man grew strong...until he was very strong*, (Genesis 26:13)

Example: טָרָם יִשְׁכְּבוּ...אֲנָשֵׁי סְדֹם נָסַם עַל־הַבַּיִת, *Before they lay down,...the men of Sodom surrounded the house*, (Genesis 19:4).

If the subordinate clause expresses previous action with the main clause, the conjunction אַחֵר or אַחֲרַי (*after*) generally occurs.

Example: וַיְהִי־שֵׁת אַחֲרַי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת־אֲנוֹשׁ שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים וּשְׁמֹנֶה שָׁנָה, *And Seth lived after he begot (lit. his begetting of) Enosh eight hundred seven years* (Genesis 5:7).

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Chapter Thirteen: Special Elements

The Uses of the Hebrew Word “And”

Changes in Pronunciation

The Hebrew conjunction *and* (וְ), like the word *the* (הַ), is attached to the word that follows it. It is usually pronounced like the simple “V” sound, but under certain conditions it changes its pronunciation to וּ (oo).

When וְ is attached to a word whose first letter has a sheva (ְ) beneath it, the וְ becomes וּ.

Examples: וְרֵאֵבֶן וְלֵאָה, *Reuben and Leah*,
but
וְרֵאֵבֶן וְלֵאָה, *Leah and Reuben*.

When the word to which וְ is attached begins with the letters, פ, מ, ו, ב, it changes to וּ. If a dagesh occurred in the ב or פ, it is dropped before וּ. These letters are sometimes called the *bumaf* as a help in remembering them.

Examples: בְּנֵימִין וְיוֹסֵף קְטָנִים, *Benjamin and Joseph are small*,
but
וְיוֹסֵף וְבְנֵימִין קְטָנִים, *Joseph and Benjamin are small*.

The Vav Connective (Conjunctive) and the Vav Consecutive

Usually the וְ acts in Hebrew as in English. It connects two things of equal grammatical weight. Such a use is called *Vav Connective* or *Conjunctive*. However, there is a specialized use of the *vav* in Hebrew called *Vav Consecutive* or *Consecutive*.

In a narrative, a series of events will begin with a verb in a particular form, either perfect or imperfect. Verbs subsequent to the initial verb are in the opposite form and each begin their sentence using a verb with a *vav* attached. For example, if a narrative begins with a perfect tense verb, subsequent verbs in the narrative might very well be imperfects with *vav* attached. This *vav* is called *Vav Consecutive* or *Consecutive*. Its purpose is to cause the reader to view each subsequent verb as connected to and continuing the narrative. In some sense, then, an imperfect can function as though it were a perfect. Sometimes, if the first verb is perfect and the following verb or verbs are imperfect, this construction is called the *Imperfect Consecutive*.

Likewise, when a narrative begins with an imperfect, a series of perfect tense verbs can follow, each beginning its sentence, and each preceded by *vav*. This construction is sometimes called the *Perfect Consecutive*. The Perfect Consecutive is much rarer than the Imperfect Consecutive. A good illustration of the Perfect Consecutive can be found in Genesis 45:9-11.

Scholars are disagreed over the full meaning of this Hebrew idiom. At one time it was believed that the Imperfect Consecutive changed the imperfect from future to past tense, and the Perfect Consecutive changed the perfect from past to future tense. However, today scholars are generally agreed that the change has nothing to do with the time (past, future) of the verb, but with changing the aspect (complete vs. incomplete) of the verb in some way.

The first chapter of Genesis, starting in verse three, employs a series of Imperfect Consecutives to indicate that the sequence is viewed as related to the perfect tense verb *was* in verse 2. Since

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Imperfect Consecutives are associated with a perfect tense (complete) verb, these imperfect verbs are then considered complete.

The Terminative ה

Sometimes the letter ה is attached to the end of a noun of place to indicate movement. For example, the Hebrew word for *Egypt*, מִצְרַיִם, sometimes will have a ה attached, מִצְרַיִמָּה, meaning *to Egypt*. Note that the vowel before the ה is qametz (ֿ).

Examples: חֶבְרֹנָה, *to Hebron*,
הַבַּיְתָּה, *to the house*,
אֶרֶץ, *to earth*.

The Interrogative ה

As in English, in Hebrew words like *who*, or *where*, can introduce a question. However, when a question word is not used, Hebrew has a sign that a question is coming; the letter ה is attached to the first word in a sentence. Think of it as a kind of vocalized question mark. Together with a rising inflection of the voice, it is a very effective way to indicate that a question follows. To indicate a negative question הֲלֹא, meaning *is not*, is often employed.

Examples: הֲשֹׁמֵר אָחִי אֲנִי, *Am I my brother's jailer?* (Genesis 4:9, lit. *The jailer of my brother am I?*)
הֲלֹא־זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְנוּ אֵלֶיךָ בְּמִצְרַיִם *Is not this the word which we told to you in Egypt?* (Exodus 14:12).

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Appendix

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Person, Number, and Gender

- A. In the perfect tense, these factors are indicated primarily by suffixes.
- B. In the imperative they are also indicated primarily by suffixes.
- C. In the imperfect both prefixes and suffixes are used.
- D. The participles use suffixes to indicate number and gender. Person is indicated by the context or the use of a pronoun.
- E. The two infinitive forms, absolute and construct, do not indicate person, number or gender.

Voice

- A. Translating the active voice.
 - 1. Qal (simple) - He killed.
 - 2. Piel (intensive) - He slaughtered.
 - 3. Hifil (causitive) - He caused to kill.
- B. Translating the passive voice.
 - 1. Nifal (simple) - He was killed.
 - 2. Pual (intensive) - He was slaughtered.
 - 3. Hofal (causative) - He was caused to kill.
 - 4. Hitpael (simple or reflexive) - He was killed or He killed himself (or committed suicide).

Type of Action

In the Hebrew language, the type of action is associated with the tense of the verb, and is actually more important than the time of action. See below under Time of Action.

- A. Simple
 - 1. Qal - He killed.
 - 2. Nifal - He was killed.
- B. Intensive
 - 1. Piel - He slaughtered.
 - 2. Pual - He was slaughtered. (The Pual is considered the passive of the Piel.)

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- C. Causative
 - 1. Hifil - He caused to kill.
 - 2. Hofal - He was caused to kill. (The Hofal is considered the passive of the Hifil.)
- D. Reflexive
 - 1. Hitpael - He committed suicide.
 - 2. Nifal - With some verbs, the Nifal is used as a reflexive, and translated as though it were a Hitpael.
- E. Reciprocal (Occurs in the plural only.)
 - 1. Nifal - They spoke with each other.
 - 2. Hitpael - They killed one another.

Time of Action

- A. Time can be observed only from the context. The two Hebrew tenses, the perfect and imperfect, of themselves imply no time factor. The primary function of the two tenses is to indicate the state (kind) of action.
- B. Ask the question, "Is the verbal event a simple past, present, or future from the author's viewpoint?"
- C. Is the time factor of the verb complicated by reference to a previous or subsequent event in time from the author's viewpoint?

State or Kind of Action

- A. A perfect describes action as complete. This tense views the finished whole as actually or conceptually completed and thus certain. (The time of completion may be past, present or future.) The action is not viewed as potential (subjunctive mood) unless it is indicating a contrary to fact state. See below under Mood.
- B. The imperfect describes an incomplete state of action or being. The completion of that action is not the matter under consideration. This incomplete action may be:
 - 1. In progress, and thus:
 - a. beginning
 - b. continuing
 - c. tending toward a conclusion (not concluded).
 - 2. Interrupted
 - 3. Repeated

The imperative may partake of somewhat similar characteristics, since it is a potential mood rather than an indicative one. The subjunctive mood and the imperative mood are both based on the imperfect idea. According to Yates, the imperfect maintains a past tense idea in most of its uses.

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Since the majority of the verbs in the Old Testament are in the past time, we...translate these verb forms as past. These forms, however, could be past, present, or future. The imperfect shows either incipient incomplete action (he began to look) or frequentative incomplete action (he looked repeatedly).¹

However, Greenberg states that,

The imperfect aspect expresses action or state as unaccomplished, continuing or customary. It corresponds generally to English present and future.²

Greenberg may be speaking in terms of modern Hebrew, which uses the perfect for the past tense and the imperfect for the future. It does appear that in the Hebrew Old Testament the imperfect is used mostly for events that are viewed as previous to the statement of the speaker, that is, in the past, as Yates declares. However, it is also true that the imperfect fits perfectly into the idea of future time, as events that are yet future are certainly incomplete, which is the purview of the imperfect.

Certainly, the imperfect is the basis for moods other than the indicative, that is, the imperative and subjunctive. The act or state of both these moods are unfulfilled at the time of the statement, and are therefore only potentially possible. But if fulfilled, it would be in the future from the speaker's viewpoint.

Mood

- A. The indicative mood deals with simple fact (i.e. if the speaker presents a statement as a fact, it is indicative mood). The author may use in the indicative the following:
 - 1. The perfect tense, (when not made contrary to fact by particles).
 - 2. The participle.
 - 3. The imperfect, (when not made potential by the context).
- B. The subjunctive mood deals with unreal, potential possibilities. These potentials may be either likely or unlikely, or even impossible. The author may use:
 - 1. The imperfect tense (when context indicates a potential element).
 - 2. The shortened imperfect.
 - 3. The perfect tense when used with contrary to fact particles.
 - 4. The jussive. "As the imperative does not take a negative, it was necessary that there be a negative command, hence the jussive. Its use however is not confined to negative commands, but it is used as a regular imperfect...."³
 - 5. The cohortative. "The cohortative expresses the will of the speaker in reference to his own actions."⁴
- C. The Imperative mood deals with commands of doing or acceptance.

1 Kyle M. Yates, *The Essentials of Biblical Hebrew*, ed. John Joseph Owens, (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), p. 41.

2 Moshe Greenberg, *Introduction to Hebrew*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 49

3 E. Leslie Carlson, *Elementary Hebrew*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956), p. 90.

4 Yates, p. 146.

Basic Hebrew Grammar

- 1 The true imperative presents only positive commands.
- 2 The imperfect in the 2nd person with אִלֵּי presents absolute prohibitions.
- 3 The jussive with עֲלֵ- presents a polite command wherein the author expresses his will concerning the person to or over whom he assumes control (if the verb is a 3rd person jussive). This important distinction is stated well by Kautzsch,

The imperfect with אִלֵּי represents a more emphatic form of prohibition than the jussive with עֲלֵ-, and corresponds to our thou shalt not do it! with the strongest expectation of obedience, while עֲלֵ- with the jussive is rather a simple warning, Do not do that! Thus אִלֵּי with the imperfect is especially used in enforcing the divine commands, e.g. לֹא תִגְנוֹב, thou shalt not steal, Ex 20:15....”¹
- 4 The imperfect supported by context may present positive commands. The imperative, which is generally used for positive commands, is in form derived from the imperfect.

This short treatment is designed to give the student an overview of the Hebrew verbal system. For further study the student is encouraged to consult the works cited in the footnotes.

¹ E. Kautzsch, *Genesisius' Hebrew Grammar*, trans. G. W. Collins and ed. A. B. Cowley (London: Oxford University Press, 1910), p. 317.