

# More Verbs

# Hebrew Verbal Conjugations

We have already learned five conjugations for Hebrew verbs:

- Perfect
- Imperfect
- Waw consecutive Imperfect
- Waw + Imperfect
- Waw consecutive Perfect

# Additional Conjugations

While these make up the bulk of Hebrew narrative, they obviously do not do everything that verbs need to do. So we need more conjugations:

- Volitives: Jussive, Imperative, Cohortative
- Infinitives: Construct, Absolute
- Participles: Active, Passive

# Volitives

A volitive, also called a modal, is a verb expressing a desire, wish, or command. Hebrew has three such verbs:

- Imperative: Expresses a command or instruction in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person
- Jussive: Expresses a desire that a 3rd person would perform some action
- Cohortative: Expresses a desire in the 1<sup>st</sup> person that an individual or group might perform some action

# Imperative

The most common volitional in the Hebrew Bible is the imperative, which is built off of the imperfect conjugation. It is important to remember that it occurs *only* in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person.

2ms	קְטַל	(you) kill!
2fs	קְטַלְתָּ	(you) kill!
2mp	קְטַלְתֶּם	(y'all) kill!
2fp	קְטַלְתֶּםָה	(y'all) kill!

See *Biblical Hebrew: A Compact Guide*, p. 94.

# Imperatives

With imperatives, the subject is often implied and need not be stated.

פֶּרְאָה וְרֹבָה וּמְלֹא־אָרֶץ

“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28)

# The Particle נִאָ

The particle נִאָ sometimes follows an imperative, and may be translated as “please,” or simply not translated.

הַבְּטֹה שְׁמִימָה נִאָ :

“Look toward heaven...” (Gen 15:5)

# Imperatives

Imperatives will not be negated – that is, made negative – by **אֲלֹא** or **לֹא**. Rather, the negative command or prohibition will be given by one of these particles and an imperfect.

**אַל-פָּבִיט אַתְּ רֵיד**

“Do not look back” (Gen 19:17)

# Cohortative

The Cohortative is the first person volitional. Its form is exactly the same as the Imperfect, and so is commonly identified by being the first word in a clause.\*

נָצַלְמָנוּ אָדָם בְּצִלְמָה

“Let us make man in our image” (Gen 1:26)

\*note: NOT waw-consecutive imperfect

# Jussive

The Jussive is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person volitional. Like the Cohortative, it appears as an imperfect, but appears as the first word in a clause.

רִשְׁפָט יְהוָה בֵּיןִי וּבֵיןֶךָ

“May the Lord judge between me and you” (Gen 16:5)

# Infinitives

Hebrew has two types of infinitives, the infinitive construct and the infinitive absolute.

Generally speaking, an infinitive is a non-inflected verb. It does not indicate person, number, or gender, nor does it reflect tense or aspect.

Thus, both infinitives are parsed with just their stem (Qal, Niphal, Piel, etc.) and their conjugation.

# Infinitive Construct

The infinitive construct is normally translated as an infinitive (to kill) or as a gerund (killing). However, how it actually being used is often a difficult thing to work out.

*Biblical Hebrew: A Compact Guide*, pp. 102-104 gives a good summary of these translation options; as does Putnam's *Hebrew Bible Insert* (§2.2.6) in Logos.

# Preposition + Infinitive Construct

One common way the infinitive construct is used is with an inseparable preposition.

לִקְרָבּוֹן

“to kill”

# Meaning of the Infinitive Construct

The construction לְ + infinitive construct can demonstrate purpose, intention or result.

רִישָׁבּוּ לְאַכְלָלֶתֶם

“They sat down **to eat** bread” (Gen 37:25)

# Meaning of the Infinitive Construct

An Infinitive Construct may function as a simple verbal noun, with or without an attached preposition.

מְלֹאת מִזְבֵּחַ טֹב :

“To obey is better than sacrifice.” (1 Sam 15:22)

# Infinitive Absolute

The Infinitive Absolute is the least common conjugation. Like the Infinitive Construct, it is also a verbal noun – but there is not a comparable English function to relate it to.

קְטוֹל

Like the Infinitive Construct, it is not inflected for person, number, or gender. However, it does not take prepositions or pronominal suffixes as the infinitive construct does.

# Use of the Infinitive Absolute

The most common function of the Infinitive Absolute is being used in combination with a finite verb of the same root to emphasize or intensify that verb.

מוֹת קָרְ�מֹות

“...you will **surely** die.” (Gen 2:17)

See *Biblical Hebrew: A Compact Guide*, 107-108 for more uses of the Infinitive Absolute

# Participle

Participles in English are formed by adding “-ing” to the end of the word. Thus, “walk” becomes “walking.”

In Hebrew, participles share the qualities of verbs and adjectives. They are inflected for number and gender, but not person.

Masc. Sing.

קֹטֶל

Masc. Plural

קֹטְלִים

Fem. Sing.

קֹטֶלֶת

Fem. Plural

קֹטֶלּוֹת

# Use of the Participle

The use of the participle functions as adjectives do, as an attributive, predicative, or substantive.

# Use of the Participle: Attributive

The attributive use directly modifies a noun.  
The participle will agree in number, gender,  
and definiteness with the noun it is modifying.

יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר אָכְלָה :

“The Lord your God is a **consuming fire**” (Deut 4:24)

# Use of the Participle: Predicative

If the participle matches in number and gender, but *does not* match in definiteness, it is being used predicatively.

וְשָׁמֹעַל שָׁכֵב

“Samuel was lying down...” (1 Sam 3:3)

# Use of the Participle: Substantive

The participle can be used independently as a noun.

מְבֹנְלִים אַתֶּם

“You are spies!” (Gen 42:9)

# Passive Participle

The participle also has a passive form.

Masc. Sing.

קָטֹל

Fem. Sing.

קָטֹלה

Masc. Plural

קָטֹלים

Fem. Plural

קָטֹלות

# Use of the Passive Participle

The passive participle function in the same way as the active participle.

Attributive Use: **וַיּוֹבֵן אֶת־כָּל־הַחִזְמָה הַפְּרוּצָה**

“He rebuilt all of the **broken** wall” (2 Chr 32:5)

Predicative Use: **בָּרוּךְ הַבָּא בְּשָׁם יְהוָה :**

“**Blessed** is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” (Ps 118:26)

Substantival Use: **וַתִּתְהַתֵּחַדְתְּ הַרְוָגִים יִפְלֹא :**

“They will fall among **the ones slain**.” (Isa 10:4)