

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 2nd person
- Jussive: Expresses a desire that a 3rd person would perform some action
- Cohortative: Expresses a desire in the 1st 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 2nd person.

2ms	קַטֹּל	(you) kill!
2fs	קַטְּלִי	(you) kill!
2mp	קַטְּלוּ	(y'all) kill!
2fp	קַטְּלֵנָה	(y'all) kill!

Imperatives

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

פְּרֹו וּרְבוּ וּמְלֹאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ

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

The Particle נָא

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

הִבֵּט־נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה

“Look toward heaven...” (Gen 15:5)

Imperatives

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

אַל-תִּבְּיט אַחֲרֶיךָ

“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.*

נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ

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

*note: NOT waw-consecutive
imperfect

Jussive

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

יִשְׁפֹּט יְהוָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶיךָ

“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.

לְהַרְגוֹ

“to kill”

Meaning of the Infinitive Construct

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

וַיֵּשְׁבוּ לֵאכֹל-לֶחֶם

“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.

שְׂמַע מִזְבַּח טוֹב

“**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.

קָטוּל

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.

מֹת תָּמוּת

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

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.	קַטֵּל	Masc. Plural	קַטְלִים
Fem. Sing.	קַטְלָה	Fem. Plural	קַטְלוֹת

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 with agree in number, gender, and definiteness with the noun it is modifying.

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵשׁ אֹכֶלֶת

“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.

וְשָׁמוּאֵל שָׁכַב

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

Use of the Participle: Substantive

The participle can be used independently as a noun.

מַרְגְּלִים אַתֶּם

“You are spies!” (Gen 42:9)

Passive Participle

The participle also has a passive form.

Masc. Sing. קְטוּל

Fem. Sing. קְטוּלָה

Masc. Plural קְטוּלִים

Fem. Plural קְטוּלוֹת

Use of the Passive Participle

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

Attributive Use: וַיִּבֶן אֶת-כָּל-הַחֹמָה הַפְּרוּצָה

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

Predicative Use: בָּרוּךְ הַבָּא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה

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

Substantival Use: וַתִּתַּח הַרֹגִים יִפְּלוּ

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