

## LESSON 15      STATIVE VERBS & הִיה

THERE ARE TWO major types of verb in Hebrew, as in languages in general: stative (or static) and dynamic (sometimes called “fientive”). *Stative* verbs describe their subject’s state or condition, rather than an action, and are therefore intransitive (do not govern direct objects); the closest parallel to stative verbs in English is the predicate adjective (*He was old*) and the verb “become” (*He had become unclean*).

*Dynamic* verbs—which we have been studying since Lesson 4—describe events, including any type of movement. Dynamic verbs are therefore *active*, but not necessarily transitive, since they do not necessarily occur with objects.

The verb הִיה is usually glossed as “be”, “become”, “happen”, or “come to pass”. Its function is larger than the English verb “to be”, which primarily links a topic with its [adjectival, nominal, or adverbial] comment (e.g., “Goliath was *large*”, “Goliath was *a giant*”, “Goliath was *in front of the Philistine army*”).

### 15.1 STATIVE VERBS

STATIVE VERBS in BH describe their subject’s condition or state, and so are usually glossed with forms of “to be” or “to become”. The forms of “be” that are used to render stative verbs do not have the same function as the forms of “be” found in passive clauses in English.<sup>1</sup>

1.	The ball <i>was thrown</i> .	passive
2.	The ball <i>was red</i> .	stative
3.	The ball <i>was polished</i> .	passive (if “polished” is a participle) or stative (if “polished” is an adjective).
4.	וְאֶגְלוֹן אִישׁ בְּרִיא מְאֹד	Now Eglon <i>was</i> a very fat man (stative; “fat” is an adjective)
5.	יְהִי שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבֹרָךְ	May YHWH’s name <i>be blessed</i> ... (Ps 113.2; passive)

This is a list of the most common stative verbs in BH.

כָּבֵד	<i>be heavy, wealthy</i>	גָּבַהּ	<i>be high, exalted</i>
מָלֵא	<i>be full</i>	גָּדַל	<i>be large, great</i>
קָדַשׁ	<i>be holy</i>	זָקֵן	<i>be old</i>
קָרַב	<i>be near</i>	טָהַר	<i>be clean, pure</i>
רָחַק	<i>be far, distant</i>	טָמֵא	<i>be unclean, impure</i>

#### 15.1.1 FORM

- The lexical form of most stative verbs (3ms *qal* perfect) has a vowel other than *pataḥ* after the second radical: either *holem* (גָּדַל, *be[come] large/great*) or *sere* (טָמֵא, *be[come] unclean*).
- Apart from this difference, the paradigm of the stative verbs is the same as that of מָשַׁל in the perfect; strong stative verbs tend to have *pataḥ* after the second radical in the imperfect and preterite. [NB: Many of these forms do not occur in BH.]

<sup>1</sup>For the various passive functions, BH uses different verbal stems (Lessons 18–21).

*Qal Perfect* (גָּדַל *be large, great*)

Person	Gender	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	Common	גָּדַלְתִּי <i>I was/became great</i>	גָּדַלְנוּ <i>We were/became great</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Masc.	גָּדַלְתָּ <i>You were/became great</i>	גָּדַלְתֶּם <i>You were/became great</i>
	Fem.	גָּדַלְתְּ <i>You were/became great</i>	גָּדַלְתֶּן <i>You were/became great</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Masc.	גָּדַל <i>He was/became great</i>	גָּדְלוּ <i>They were/became great</i>
	Fem.	גָּדְלָה <i>She was/became great</i>	

*Qal Imperfect/Preterite* (כָּבַד *be heavy, wealthy, important*)

Person	Gender	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	Common	אֶכְבֵּד <i>I was/became wealthy</i>	נִכְבְּדוּ <i>We were/became important</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Masc.	תִּכְבֵּד <i>You were/became heavy</i>	תִּכְבְּדוּ <i>You were/became wealthy</i>
	Fem.	תִּכְבְּדִי <i>You were/became heavy</i>	תִּכְבְּדֶנָּה <i>You were/became wealthy</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Masc.	יִכְבֵּד <i>He was/became heavy</i>	יִכְבְּדוּ <i>They were/became heavy</i>
	Fem.	תִּכְבְּדִי <i>She was/became important</i>	תִּכְבְּדֶנָּה <i>They were/became heavy</i>

*Qal Imperative* (קֹדֵשׁ *be holy*)

Person	Gender	Singular	Plural
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Masc.	קֹדֵשׁ <i>Be holy!</i>	קֹדְשׁוּ <i>Be holy!</i>
	Fem.	קֹדְשִׁי <i>Be holy!</i>	קֹדְשֶׁנָּה <i>Be holy!</i>

3. The 3ms *qal* perfect (lexical form) of many stative verbs is identical or nearly identical to the ms form of the adjective of the same root, e.g.:

<i>large, great</i>	גָּדַל	גָּדַל	<i>be large, great</i>
<i>old</i>	זָקַן	זָקַן	<i>be old</i>
<i>strong</i>	חָזַק	חָזַק	<i>be strong</i> (also fientive: <i>hold, seize, grasp</i> )
[ceremonially] <i>clean</i>	טָהַר	טָהַר	<i>be</i> [ceremonially] <i>clean</i>
<i>unclean</i>	טָמֵא	טָמֵא	<i>be</i> [ceremonially] <i>unclean, impure</i>
<i>heavy, wealthy</i>	כָּבַד	כָּבַד	<i>be heavy, wealthy</i>
<i>full</i>	מָלֵא	מָלֵא	<i>be full</i>

4. On the other hand, only one form of a stative verb looks like the adjective: **3ms *qal* perfect** is exactly like the **ms** form of the adjective. In all other forms, the stem (or “theme”) vowel—the vowel after the second radical—varies according to the type of PGN ending, just as in the fientive verbs (as the above paradigms show). In the adjectives, however, the vowel does *not* change:

### Adjectival Forms

	Singular	Plural		Singular	Plural	
Masc.	קָרַב	קָרְבִּים	<i>near,</i>	Masc.	כָּבֵד	<i>heavy,</i>
Fem.	קָרְבָּה	קָרְבוֹת	<i>close</i>	Fem.	כָּבְדָה	<i>honoured</i>

#### 15.1.2 STATIVE VERBS & TIME

Stative verbs can refer to the *present* even in the perfect, in the sense that they describe a condition that characterizes the subject. This same “presentness” is part of the function of the perfect of a number of verbs of thought, emotion, and perception (e.g., ידע, אהב). This is most common when they occur within quotations. In Ezk 22.4, they might be rendered as “you are ...” or “you have become ...”

בְּדַמְךָ אֲשֶׁר־שָׁפַכְתָּ אֶשְׁמֹתָ וּבְגִלּוּלֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתָ טְמֵאתָ	because of your blood which you shed, <i>you are guilty,</i> and because of your deeds which you have done, <i>you are unclean</i> (Ezk 22.4)
יֹאמֵר הָעֶבֶד אֶהְבֵּתִי אֶת־אֲדֹנָי אֶת־אִשְׁתִּי וְאֶת־בָּנָי	... the servant shall say, ‘ <i>I love</i> my master, my wife, and my children’ (Ex 21.5)
אֲדֹנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ לֹא יָדַעַתָּ:	... my master, O king, <i>you do not know</i> (1 Kgs 1.18)
וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־שִׁמְעִי אַתָּה יָדַעַתָּ אֵת כָּל־הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר יָדַע לְבָבְךָ	The king said to Shimei, “ <i>You know</i> all the evil which your heart <i>knows</i> , ...” (1 Kgs 2.44)

#### 15.2 DYNAMIC [ACTION] VERBS

##### Dynamic Verbs (transitive)

אָהַב	<i>love</i>
אָכַל	<i>eat, devour, consume</i>
אָמַר	<i>say, speak</i>
יָרַשׁ	<i>possess, dispossess</i>
כָּתַב	<i>write, inscribe</i>
מָלַךְ	<i>reign [as king] (also stative: be king)</i>
עָזַב	<i>forsake, abandon, leave</i>
עָמַד	<i>stand, stop, stay</i>
שָׁכַב	<i>lie down, sleep</i>
שָׁמַע	<i>listen, hear; obey</i>
שָׁמַר	<i>guard, watch, keep</i>

##### Dynamic Verbs (intransitive)

עָבַר	<i>cross over, pass by/through</i>
הָלַךְ	<i>go, walk</i>
יָרַד	<i>go down, descend</i>
יָשַׁב	<i>remain, sit, settle, stay</i>

Some verbs can be either dynamic or stative in *qal*:

חָזַק	<i>be strong (also dynamic: hold, seize, grasp)</i>
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#### 15.3 THE VERB הָיָה

Although the function of “being” is often implicit (cf. predicate adjectives, participles, and adverbial functions), the verb הָיָה is often glossed as “be” or “become” (the latter especially when followed by ל).

### 15.3.1 FORMS OF הִיָּה

Because הִיָּה ends in a vowel letter rather than a consonant, its forms are not like those of the verbs that we have studied to this point. The primary difference is that the final ה- disappears whenever there is an ending (and in the preterite when there is no ending). [III-הִיָּה verbs (הִיָּה and other verbs like it) are discussed in Lesson 25.]<sup>2</sup> הִיָּה is so important to the structure and message of Hebrew narrative that we introduce it here. The chief characteristic of III-הִיָּה verbs is that the final ה- (which is a vowel letter, not a radical) disappears before PGN endings in all forms. It is replaced by a *yod*, which is a vowel letter for either *hireq* or *sere*, as these forms show:

#### Qal Perfect of הִיָּה

Person	Gender	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	Common	הָיִיתִי <i>I was</i>	הָיִינוּ <i>We were</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Masc.	הָיִיתָ <i>You were</i>	הָיִיתֶם <i>You were</i>
	Fem.	הָיִיתְּ <i>---</i>	---
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Masc.	הָיָה <i>He was</i>	הָיוּ <i>They were</i>
	Fem.	הָיְתָה <i>She was</i>	---

1. The vowel letter *yod* (as part of *hireq-yod*) “replaces” the final vowel letter ה- before consonantal endings (endings that begin with a consonant).
2. The 3fs ending הָיְתָה “replaces” the final vowel letter ה-.
3. The 3cp vocalic ending הָיוּ “replaces” the final vowel letter ה-.
4. The 2fp *qal* perfect of הִיָּה does not occur in BH.
5. Because they are preceded by a vowel, the ה- of the PGN endings does not have *dageš lene*.

#### Qal Imperfect of הִיָּה

Person	Gender	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	Common	אֶהְיֶה <i>I am/shall be</i>	נֶהְיֶה <i>We are/shall be</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Masc.	תֶּהְיֶה <i>You are/shall be</i>	תֶּהְיוּ <i>You are/shall be</i>
	Fem.	תֶּהְיִי <i>---</i>	תֶּהְיֶינָה <i>---</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Masc.	יֶהְיֶה <i>He is/shall be</i>	יֶהְיוּ <i>They are/shall be</i>
	Fem.	תֶּהְיֶה <i>She is/shall be</i>	תֶּהְיֶינָה <i>---</i>

1. The vowel letter *yod* replaces the final vowel letter ה- before consonantal endings (2/3fp).
2. The vowel before the final ה- is *segol*.
3. The vocalic endings הָיוּ - (2fs) and הָיוּ (2/3mp) “replaces” the final vowel letter ה-.

#### Qal Imperative of הִיָּה

Person	Gender	Singular	Plural
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Masc.	הָיֶה <i>Be!</i>	הָיוּ <i>Be!</i>
	Fem.	הָיִי <i>---</i>	---

1. 2fp *qal* imperative of הִיָּה does not occur in BH.

<sup>2</sup>This nomenclature for types of verbal roots was explained in §6.2.

*Qal Preterite of היה*

Person	Gender	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	Common	וַיְהִי <i>I was</i>	וַיְהִי <i>We were/became</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Masc.	וַתְּהִי <i>You were/became</i>	וַתְּהִי <i>You were/became</i>
	Fem.	-----	וַתְּהִינָה <i>You were/became</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Masc.	וַיְהִי <i>He was/became</i>	וַיְהִיו <i>They were/became</i>
	Fem.	וַתְּהִי <i>She was/became</i>	וַתְּהִינָה <i>They were/became</i>

1. Final ה- drops off in the preterite, and forms without endings end in *hireq-yod*.
2. The 2fs *qal* preterite of היה does not occur in BH.

Do not confuse forms of היה with the *Tetragrammaton* (on left).

יהוה יהוה (YHWH)	הָיָה	<i>He was [became]</i>	3ms Q P
	יִהְיֶה	<i>He will be[come]</i>	3ms Q F
	יְהִי	<i>Let him [it] be[come]!</i>	3ms Q J
	יִהְיוּ	<i>They will be[come]</i>	3mp Q F
וַיְהוֹה (and YHWH)	וַיְהִי	<i>And he will be[come]</i>	3ms Q P + <i>waw</i>
	וַיְהִי	<i>And he was [became]</i>	3ms Q Pr

1. In the *imperfect*, the vowel after the second radical is *segol*.
2. In the *preterite*, the final ה- (a vowel letter) drops off; the -י prefix is not doubled due to the following *šewa*.

**N.B.** You do not need to memorize these paradigms, but you should be able to recognize and identify the forms of היה.

**15.3.2 FUNCTIONS**

The primary distinction in the function of היה is between the 3ms forms and the other forms of היה. Since the non-3ms forms are more easily explained, we discuss them first.

1. All forms of היה (including 3ms; Ru 1.1) can link the subject and predicate, with the form of היה indicating the general temporal frame of the clause.

טִמְאִים הֵם וְטִמְאִים יִהְיוּ לָכֶם:	They are unclean, and they <i>are/shall be</i> unclean for you (Lv 11.35) [both clauses have predicate adjectives]
יַד־יְהוָה הָיְתָה־בָּם	YHWH's hand <i>was</i> against them (Jg 2.15)
כַּאֲשֶׁר הָיִיתִי עִם־מֹשֶׁה אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ	As I <i>was</i> with Moses, I <i>shall be</i> with you (Jos 1.5)
לִי הָיְתָה הַמְּלוּכָה	The kingdom <i>was</i> mine (1 Kgs 2.15)

2. Furthermore, with an expressed (nominal, substantive) subject, היה is the predicate of a stative clause to which it adds explicit temporal information (past for the preterite and perfect, and present or future for the imperfect and *w*+perfect). This is not primarily a static description, but often signals some sort of change in the subject's condition or state, and therefore a turn in the narrative. It thus often marks the beginning of a segment, as these examples illustrate:

וַיְהִי אֹר	and <i>there was</i> light (Gn 1.3)
וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר	<i>There was</i> a morning and <i>there was</i> an evening, ... (Gn 1.5); or “A morning <i>was</i> and ...”
וַיְהִי רָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ	<i>There was</i> a famine in the land (Gn 12.10; Ru 1.1); or “A famine <i>came upon</i> the land”
וַיְהִי יְהוָה אֶת־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	YHWH <i>was</i> with Joshua, and his fame <i>was</i> in all [i.e.,
וַיְהִי שְׁמֹעוֹ בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ:	throughout] the land (Jos 6.27)

3. The 3ms forms of *היה* frequently open or introduce entire passages, especially in narrative. Without an expressed (nominal, substantive) subject, the 3ms preterite and *w*+perfect tend to signal a temporal or locational shift in the flow of events which is identified in the next two or three words. Either an *infinitive construct* (below) with a preposition will follow the form of *היה*, or a temporal phrase, with a preposition and one or more nouns (“At that time”, “After these things”). In these cases the presence of *היה* should be reflected, perhaps by using an appropriate expression, or spacing (e.g., a blank line between paragraphs) to signal the change.

- a. If the form is *וַיְהִי* (3ms *qal* preterite of *היה*), it opens a past narrative built on a series of preterites (*italicized* in both passages):

וַיְהִי בְּעֵת הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ	So at that time, Abimelech <i>said</i> (Gn 21.22)
וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָהֵם וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּצֵא	Now in those days, Moses <i>grew up</i> , and <i>he went out</i> to
... אֶל־אֶחָיו וַיֵּרָא בְּסִבְלָתָם וַיֵּרָא אִישׁ	his relatives, and <i>he saw</i> their burdens, and <i>he saw</i> a man ... (Ex 2.11)

- b. If the form is *וַהֲיָה* (*waw* + 3ms *qal* perfect of *היה*), it is either the predicate of a simple clause, or it introduces a series of instruction or prophecy built on a series of *waw*+perfects. This form therefore occurs primarily within direct quotations, rather than on the main storyline of the narrative.

וַהֲיָה שְׁמֹךְ אַבְרָהָם	Your name <i>shall be</i> Abraham (Gn 17.5)
וַהֲיָה כִּי־יֹאמְרוּ אֵלֵיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם	When your sons say to you ..., you shall say (Ex
וַאֲמַרְתֶּם ...	12.26-27)

*וַהֲיָה* may be followed by a temporal particle, such as *כִּי* (“when” in this context), which in turn is then followed by one or more verb(s) in the imperfect, preterite, or *waw*+perfect conjugations; *וַהֲיָה* is rarely followed by these particles.

וַהֲיָה כִּי־יִקְרָא לָכֶם פַּרְעֹה וַאֲמַר	When Pharaoh summons you and says ... (Gn 46.33)
וַהֲיָה כִּי־יַחַטֵּא וְהָשִׁיב	When he sins and is guilty and returns ... (Lv 5.23)

4. The combination of a form of *היה* followed by the preposition *ל* has two predominant functions: possession and change in status.

- a. The combination can indicate *possession* (the “possessive” use of *ל*), with a temporal nuance added by the conjugation of *היה*.

וַיְהִי־לוֹ צֹאן־וּבָקָר ... and *he had* flocks and herds (Gn 12.16)

- b. It can also indicate a *change* in its subject’s *status* or *condition*, introducing what the subject has “become” (or, in the future, “will become”) by the ל.

וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה: The man *became* a living being (Gn 2.7)

וְהָיָה לְאוֹת בְּרִית It shall *be* a sign of a covenant (Gn 17.11)

- c. These functions can be combined when two words are introduced by ל—one indicates the new “owner”, and the other the change in the subject’s status.

וַתְּהִי-לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה ... and she *became his* wife (Ru 4.13); “a wife of his”

וַיְהִי-לָהּ לְבֵן ... and he *became* her son (Ex 2.10)

וְהָמָּה יִהְיוּ-לִי לְעָם: ... and they *shall be[come]* my people (Jr 31.33)

הִיתָה-חֵירוֹן לְכָלֵב בֶּן-יִפְנֵה הַקְּנִזִּי Hebron *became* the inheritance of Caleb son of Jephuneh the Kenizzite (Jos 14.14)

לְנַחֲלָה

אֲנַחְנוּ נִהְיָה לְאֲדֹנָי לְעֲבָדִים: We *shall be[come]* my lord’s slaves (Gn 44.9)

**15.4 FREQUENCY** Some forms of היה—by far the most common verb in BH (c. 3500x), are extremely frequent in the Bible:

הָיָה	<i>He was [became]</i>	3ms Q P	1022x
וְהָיָה	<i>He will be[come]</i>	3ms Q P + waw	776x
וַיְהִי	<i>He was</i>	3ms Q Pr	396x
יִהְיֶה	<i>He will be[come]</i>	3ms Q F	334x
יִהְיוּ	<i>They will be[come]</i>	3mp Q F	130x
יְהִי	<i>Let him [it] be[come]!</i>	3ms Q J	75x

**15.5 CONCEPTS**

dynamic	intransitive	status, change of
fientive	static	transitive
	stative	

15.6 VOCABULARY<sup>3</sup>

<i>be/become full</i> (st. vb.); <i>full</i> (adj.)	מָלֵא .219	<i>if, then</i>	אִם .211
		<i>אִם ... אִם either ... or</i>	
[a] <i>few, little</i> (adj.)	מְעַט .220	<i>be/become high, exalted</i> (st. vb.)	גָּבַהּ .212
<i>be/become holy; restricted in use</i> (st. vb.)	קָדַשׁ .221	[ceremonially] <i>clean, pure</i> (adj.)	טָהַר .213
<i>be/become far, remote, distant</i> (st. vb.)	רָחַק .222	<i>be/become</i> [ceremonially] <i>clean, pure</i> (st. vb.) <sup>4</sup>	טָהַר
<i>far, remote, distant</i> (adj.)	רָחַק	<i>be/become</i> [ceremonially] <i>unclean, impure</i> (st. vb.); <i>unclean, impure</i> (adj.)	טָמֵא .214
<i>call, invite, summon; name; read; proclaim</i> [This overlaps with קָרָה (Lesson 21).]	קָרָא .223	<i>be able</i> [to] (st. vb., often with infinitive construct, §16.2.6c); <i>overcome, prevail</i> (over)	יָכַל .215
<i>near, close</i> (adj.); <i>be/become near, close, approach</i> (st. vb.)	קָרַב .224 קָרִיב	<i>fear, be afraid of</i> (thing or person introduced by <i>מִן</i> , <i>מִפְּנֵי</i> , <i>אֶת</i> ) (st. vb.)	יָרָא .216
<i>be/become whole, complete</i> (st. vb.)	שָׁלַם .225	<i>be/become heavy, severe; honoured, wealthy</i> (st. vb.); <i>heavy, severe; &amp;c.</i> (adj.)	כָּבֵד .217
		<i>for, because; that; but; since, while; when, if</i> [NB: These glosses do not exhaust its function, but will suffice for the purposes of this grammar.]	כִּי .218

## 15.7 EXERCISES

When you have reviewed the forms and function of הִיָּה, gloss these clauses, parsing all verbal forms.

- Ps 104.1b; מְאֹד *very, much* .1 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי גְדֹלֶת מְאֹד
- Ex 3.5; הֵלֵם [to] *here* .2 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־תִּקְרַב הֵלֵם
- 1 Sam 2.22; Eli .3 וְעֲלִי זָקֵן מְאֹד
- Gn 27.2; מוֹת is construct singular of מוֹתָא .4 וַיֹּאמֶר הַנְּהַנָּא זָקַנְתִּי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי יוֹם מוֹתִי:
- Lv 18.25; וַתִּשָּׂא וַתִּקְאָ *vomit* (3fs Pr); יָשַׁב *inhabitant* (ms Q Ptc) .5 וַתִּשָּׂא הָאָרֶץ וַאֲפָקֶד עֲוֹנָה עָלֶיהָ  
וַתִּקְאָ הָאָרֶץ אֶת־יִשְׁבֵיהָ:
- Ex 2.11; Moses .6 וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הֵהֵם וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה
- Gn 13.2; מְקַנְהָ *property*; אַבְרָם .7 וַאֲבָרָם כָּבֵד מְאֹד בַּמְקַנְהָ בַּכֶּסֶף וּבַזָּהָב:

<sup>3</sup>This list includes all stative verbs with strong verbal roots that occur fifty times or more in BH. Stative verbs from other root types will be introduced later.

<sup>4</sup>About one-half of the occurrences of both טָהַר and טָמֵא are in Lv.



2 Sa 20.17; הַאֲתָהּ (2ms pronoun with interrogative -הּ) *Is it you?*; אִמָּה [female] servant; Joab

8. וַיִּקְרַב אֵלֶיהָ וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה הַאֲתָהּ יוֹאָב  
וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ שְׁמַע דְּבַרִי אִמָּתֶךָ  
וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמַע אָנֹכִי:

Gn 9.1 (|| Gn 1.28); רְבָה *be fruitful*; פְּרָה *multiply* (both are 2mp Q imperative)

9. וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ:

Please locate all of the occurrences of וַיְהִי and וַיְהִיָּה in Genesis 11.27-13.18, as well as any stative verbs, and identify their function.

### 15.8 ENRICHMENT: GENESIS 13.2

Since the 3ms *qal* perfect of stative verbs are identical in form to the masc. sing. adjective, the interpretation of some clauses is open to debate, with potentially significantly different interpretations. In Gn 13.2, for example, does כָּבֵד describe a state or condition, or is it a flashback to Gn 12.16? The three interpretations are all grammatically permissible:

	Now Abram <i>was</i> very wealthy (כָּבֵד as either 3ms <i>qal</i> perfect or ms adj.)
וַאֲבְרָם כָּבֵד מְאֹד	Now Abram <i>became</i> very wealthy (כָּבֵד as 3ms <i>qal</i> perfect)
	Now Abram <i>had become</i> very wealthy (כָּבֵד as 3ms <i>qal</i> perfect)

There is probably not a great deal of difference in the long run—however we translate it, Abram was very wealthy. The larger question is how this wealth affected his relationship with Lot, and thus we might want to get some idea of when the troubles between Lot’s and Abram’s shepherds may have begun.

Our interpretation of the events of Gn 12, and of the relationship between Gn 12 and 13, will affect how we read this clause. The verb can *only* be interpreted in reference to its clause and the larger context. Gn 12.16 says that however well-to-do Abram had been, his wealth greatly increased after Pharaoh took Sarai, which in turn suggests that Gn 13.2 is meant to remind the reader of what had happened in Egypt (Gn 12.16). This in turn suggests that the third option listed above—the past perfect—is the best in this context. We are here searching in the shadows between philology and interpretation, but its occurrence in a disjunctive clause also suggests a flashback to events before the immediately preceding preterite (“Abram went up from Egypt, ...”; Gn 13.1).

## LESSON 16 THE INFINITIVES & SUMMARY OF QAL

**H**EBREW HAS TWO forms that are called “infinitives”—the *infinitive construct* (NC) and the *infinitive absolute* (NA). The names refer to whether or not the particular infinitive can occur with affixes; NC routinely occurs with prepositions and pronominal suffixes, whereas NA does not. The term is unfortunate, for two reasons: (1) they have a distinctive form, but their identity as infinitives does not depend on the presence of a preposition as does the infinitive in English (“to ...”); (2) their function overlaps with that of the English infinitive only occasionally.

### 16.1 FORM

In nearly all verbs, the infinitive construct is essentially identical to the 2ms imperative. The *qal* infinitive absolute has *gameš* after the first radical and *holem* after the second radical. This chart lists 2ms *qal* imperfect and imperative for comparison.

	imperfect (2ms)	imperative (2ms)	infinitive construct	infinitive absolute
משל	תִּמְשַׁל	מְשַׁל	מְשַׁל	מְשַׁל
כתב	תִּכְתֹּב	כָּתֹב	כָּתֹב	כָּתֹב
שכב	תִּשְׁכַּב	שָׁכֵב	שָׁכֵב	שָׁכֵב
שמע	תִּשְׁמַע	שְׁמַע	שְׁמַע	שְׁמוֹעַ

#### 16.1.1 INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT: FUNCTION

#### HBI §2.2.6

1. Infinitives are inflected for *stem*, but *not* for person, gender, or number. Instead, they use pronominal suffixes to indicate pronominal subjects (“he”, “they”), or nouns to indicate nominal subjects; in some uses the subject is implied from the context.
2. If the subject is a *noun*, it follows the infinitive construct; if the subject is *pronominal* (“he”, “they”), it is suffixed.
3. If NC has an *object*, the object may be suffixed (in which case the subject will be a noun), or it may follow the infinitive (in which case the subject may be either a suffix or noun). These clauses illustrate the possibilities:

בְּשָׁמְרוּ	when <i>he</i> guards <i>or</i> that <i>he</i> may guard
בְּשָׁמְרוּ אֶת־יַעֲקֹב	when <i>he</i> guards <i>Jacob</i>
וַיְהִי אַחֲרַי קָבְרוּ אֹתוֹ	After <i>he</i> buried <i>him</i> (1 Kgs 13.31)
לְלַמְּדָם מִלְחָמָה	to teach <i>them</i> war (Jg 3.2) [the pronominal object may be considered “indirect” in English]
וּכְשָׁמְעוּ אֶת־דְּבָרֵי רֵבֶקָה אֲחֹתוֹ	and when <i>he</i> heard the words of Rebecca his sister (Gn 24.30)

4. NC often occurs with prepositions; the preposition indicates the function of the subordinate clause. When NC occurs with a preposition *other than* ל, it tends to be the predicate of a temporal [circumstantial] clause. In these cases its temporal reference—or “tense”—is relative to that of the main clause. Both prepositions -ב and -כ convey contemporaneous action (*when, while, as*); the temporal aspect depends on the preposition and the context.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>This function is precisely analogous to the infinitive with prepositions in NT Greek.

וְהָיָה כְּשֶׁכֶּב אֲדֹנָי־הַמֶּלֶךְ עִם־אָבֹתָיו  
 אַחֲרֵי קָבְרוּ אֶת־אָבִיו:  
 וַיְהִי כִּרְאֹת אֶת־הַנֶּזֶם  
 וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת־דְּבָרֵי רֵבֶקָה אַחֲתוֹ

When my lord the king *sleeps* with his fathers, ... (1 Kg 1.21). [The future is indicated by introductory וְהָיָה.]  
 ... *after he buried* his father (Gn 50.14).  
 When he saw the gold ring ... and when he heard the words of Rebecca his sister (Gn 24.30). [The past is indicated by introductory וַיְהִי.]

5. When the phrase בַּיּוֹם (*in the day [that]*) precedes NC, it usually has the same contemporaneous function as the prepositions בְּ- and כְּ- (i.e., *when, while, as*), although it can also refer to a specific period of time (daylight, twenty-four hours, &c.). This may affect interpretation—does Nu 30.9 mean that the husband must restrain his wife immediately (“*when he hears*”), or either before sundown or within the next twenty-four hours (“*on the day that he hears*”)?

כַּאֲשֶׁר בְּיוֹם שְׁלַח אוֹתֵי מֹשֶׁה  
 בְּיוֹם בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֲדָם  
 וְאִם בְּיוֹם שָׁמַע אִישָׁה יִנְיָא אוֹתָהּ

just as *when* Moses sent me (Jos 14.11)  
 ... *when* God created them (Gn 5.1)  
 and if, *when* her husband hears, he restrains her, ... (Nu 30.9)

6. With a prefixed ל, NC has four main functions (not all of these infinitives are *qal*):  
 a. *telic* (purpose, result); this is always the case when it occurs with לְמַעַן, and often when it occurs with prefixed ל:

וַיָּבֹאוּ מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים לְשִׁמְעַ  
 אֵת חֲכָמַת שְׁלֹמֹה  
 וַיִּשְׁלַח תַּעֲנִי אֶת־יֹרָם־בְּנוֹ אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 דָּוִד לְשַׁאֲלֵהוּ לְשָׁלוֹם  
 וּלְבָרְכּוֹ עַל אֲשֶׁר נִלְחַם בְּהַדָּדְעִזֶּר  
 ... בְּגִן־עֵדֶן לְעַבְדָּהּ וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ:

They came from all the peoples *to hear* Solomon’s wisdom (1 Kgs 5.14).  
 Toi sent Joram his son to King David *to ask* him for peace and *to bless him* because he had fought against Hadad-ezer (2 Sa 8.10).  
 ... in the garden of Eden *to serve [till]* it and *to guard* it (Gn 2.15)

- b. *gerundive* (glossed as “by \_\_\_\_\_ing”, where the blank is filled by the infinitival verb)

שָׁמֹר אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקֹדְשׁוֹ  
 כִּי תִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ  
 לְשָׁמֹר אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתָיו

Keep the Sabbath day *by sanctifying* it (Dt 5.12)  
 When you obey YHWH your God *by keeping* all his commands (Dt 13.18)

- c. *complementary*, completing or explaining a “vague verb” (כָּל “be able”, פֵּלַה “finish”, חָדַל “cease”, the *hifil* of יָסַף “do again, repeat”. NC also has this function without ל. [In Jg 3.18 and Ru 1.18, English style suggests their gerundive gloss.]

אִם־תּוּכַל לְסַפֵּר אֹתָם ...  
 וַתִּחְדַּל לְדַבֵּר אֵלֶיהָ:  
 כִּלָּה לְהַקְרִיב אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה ...

... if you are able *to count* them (Gn 15.5)  
 She stopped *talking* to her (Ru 1.18); She ceased *to talk* ...  
 ... he finished *offering* the tribute (Jg 3.18)

- d. *quotative frame*. The form לְאָמַר (Q NC of אָמַר; trad., *saying*) is the most common infinitive

construct in BH, usually following verbs of speech *other than* אָמַר (although it does occur with אָמַר):

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| וַיַּעֲנוּ אֶת־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ לֵאמֹר         | They answered Joshua, <i>saying</i> , “... (Jos 1.16)              |
| וַאֲשַׁלְּחָה עֲלֵיהֶם מַלְאָכִים לֵאמֹר | I <i>sent</i> messengers to them, <i>saying</i> , “... (Ne 6.3)    |
| וַיִּצַו בְּעֵז אֶת־נְעָרָיו לֵאמֹר      | Boaz <i>commanded</i> his servants, <i>saying</i> , “... (Ru 2.15) |

**N.B.** Although ל occurs far more frequently with NC than any other preposition, and even though the ל is often glossed as “to”, the ל is *not* the “sign of the infinitive” as the word “to” is in English. [In other words, “go” is not an English infinitive, but “to go” is.] In contrast, מִשָּׁל—with or without the ל is an infinitive construct.

7. NC is negated by either בְּלֹאֵי or לֹבֵלֵי, expressing negative purpose or result, or a negated gerundive.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| צִוִּיתִיךָ לְבִלְתִּי אֲכָל־מִמֶּנּוּ                           | ... I commanded you <i>not to eat</i> from it ... (Gn 3.11)                            |
| הִפְגִּיעוּ בַמֶּלֶךְ לְבִלְתִּי שַׂרֵף אֶת־הַמְּגִלָּה          | They pressed the king <i>not to burn</i> the scroll (Jr 36.25)                         |
| פְּנִיתְשָׁכַח אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְבִלְתִּי שָׁמַר מִצְוֹתָיו | ... lest you forget YHWH your God <i>by not keeping</i> his commandments ... (Dt 8.11) |

### 16.1.2 INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE: FUNCTION

### HBI §2.2.7

Called “absolute” because it is not directly connected to anything, the infinitive absolute (NA) never occurs with prepositions, suffixes, or any other affix except the conjunction *waw* and interrogative  $\text{—}הֲ$  (this occurs 23 times in BH).

	infinitive construct	infinitive absolute
משל	מִשָּׁל	מִשָּׁל
כתב	כָּתַב	כָּתַב
שכב	שָׁכַב	שָׁכַב
שמע	שָׁמַע	שָׁמוֹעַ

1. NA usually occurs in a clause with a finite form of the same verb. This makes it fairly easy to recognize, because there are *two forms of the same verbal root* in one clause. It apparently focusses or strengthens the function of the main verb. Its gloss depends on the function of the main verb (stem and conjugation) and the context.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| מִכָּל עֵץ־הַגָּן אֲכַל תֹּאכַל: וּמֵעֵץ הַיְדֻעַת טוֹב וְרָע ... מוֹת תָּמוּת: | “From [any] tree of the garden you may <i>freely</i> eat, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ..., you shall <i>surely</i> die” (Gn 2.16-17) |
| אָמַר אֶמְרָתִי   | “I <i>most certainly</i> said ...” (1 Sam 2.30)  |
| קָרַע אֶקְרַע אֶת־הַמַּמְלָכָה מֵעַלְיָךְ                                       | I will <i>certainly</i> tear the kingdom from you (1 Kgs 11.11)  |

2. When NA occurs alone, it serves as the main verb in its clause. When it does this, its function is equivalent to that of any conjugation, but is most often imperatival.

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-הָעָם זְכוֹר  
 אֶת-הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה  
 הֲלֹךְ וְקִרְאתָ בְּאָזְנֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם  
 הֲלֹךְ וְרָחַצְתָּ ... וְטָהַרְתָּ: Moses said to the people, “Remember this day!” (Ex 13.3)  
 Go call in the hearing [ears] of Jerusalem (Jr 2.2)  
 Go and wash ... and you will be clean (2 Kgs 5.10)

3. Two different verbal roots occur side-by-side in NA, especially NA of הֲלֹךְ, in the sense of continually or constantly.

וַיִּלְךְ דָּוִד הָיָד הֲלֹךְ וְגָדוֹל  
 הֲלֹךְ וְתִקְוֶעַ בְּשׁוֹפְרוֹת: David continued to grow strong (2 Sam 5.10 [= 2 Ch 11.9]); grew stronger and stronger  
 ... continually blowing the horns (Jos 6.9)  
 וְעָלוּ עִלָּה וּבְכָה: ... and they were weeping as they went up (2 Sam 15.30)

4. NA is not directly negated, although the main verb of its clause may be negated with אַל or לֹא.

## 16.2 SUMMARY OF THE QAL STEM

It is helpful to think of verbal forms in Hebrew as containing certain “diagnostics” that help us identify the stem and form of the verb. The most basic of these are the PGN prefixes and endings for the perfect, imperfect (cohortative, jussive), preterite, and imperative. You must be able to identify these at sight.

PERSON	GENDER	PERFECT		IMPERFECT		IMPERATIVE	
		Sg.	Pl.	Sg.	Pl.	Sg.	Pl.
1 <sup>st</sup>	common	הִי -	נִי -	- א	- נ		
2 <sup>nd</sup>	masc.	תָּ -	תָּם -	- ת	וּ - ת	---	וּ -
	fem.	תִּי -	תֵּינִי -	י - ת	נָה - ת	י -	נָה -
3 <sup>rd</sup>	masc.	---	וּ -	- י	וּ - י		
	fem.	תִּי -		- ת	נָה - ת		

Since the PGN affixes are common to all stems and types of verbal root, they do not enable us to distinguish a verb’s stem (which often affects or determines the verb’s function). It is instead the vowels that “attach” the subject [PGN] prefixes to the verbal root that are the primary diagnostic of the verb’s stem. We will address this as we encounter each stem (Lessons 18-21).

### 16.2.1 THE QAL STEM

The word *qal* means “light”, used *qal* is the only stem that has no “stem prefix” (its only prefix is the subject [PGN] prefix in imperfect and preterite), and no doubled letters (in the strong verb).<sup>6</sup> The sign of the *qal* are the *a*-vowels of the perfect, the (occasional) *holem* of the imperfect, imperative, and infinitive construct, and the *holem* and *šureq* of the *qal* active and passive participles. In imperfect and preterite, the primary signal that a verb is *qal* is the *hireq* under the prefix.

The primary diagnostic for the *qal* is therefore **negative: no prefix or doubling** in the **perfect, imperative, participle, and infinitives**, and **hireq** as the prefix vowel in the **imperfect (cohortative, jussive)**, and **preterite**. This paradigm summarizes the *qal*. [See also the full paradigm in Appendix D.]

<sup>6</sup>This means that doubling is not a sign of the *qal*, as it is of some other stems.

Conjugation	PGN	Dynamic Verb	Stative Verb
Perfect	3ms	מָשַׁל	כָּבַד
Imperfect	3ms	יִמְשַׁל	יִכְבֵּד
Preterite	3ms	וַיִּמְשַׁל	וַיִּכְבֵּד
Imperative	[2]ms	מִשַׁל	כַּבֵּד
Inf. Const.		מְשַׁל	כּוֹבֵד
Inf. Abs.		מִשַׁל	כִּבְד
Ptc. (active)	ms	מֹשֵׁל	
Ptc. (passive)	ms	מוֹשָׁל	

1. *Qal* perfects tend to have *a*-vowels; *qal* imperfects and preterites tend to have *o*- or *a*-vowels.
2. The prefix vowel in *qal* imperfect and preterite is *hireq*.
3. The “stem” or “theme” vowel (*qal* imperfect, preterite, imperative, infinitives) is either *holem* (fientive roots) or *patah* (stative roots); this only appears when there is no ending or a consonantal ending.
4. *Qal* active participle is nearly the only verbal form with *holem* after the first radical.
5. *Qal* passive participle is the only verbal form with a *u*-vowel between the second and third radicals.
6. *Qal* is the only stem that lacks both a stem prefix (perfect, imperative, infinitives, & participle), and a doubled middle radical. [The significance of this will become clear as we study the other stems.]

## 16.2.2 THE CONJUGATIONS

We have now reviewed all of the conjugations of the Hebrew verb, as they appear in the *qal* stem of the strong verb. How are the functions of these conjugations related?

1. The perfect and preterite are complementary. If a disjunctive clause interrupts the preterite chain of a narrative, the predicate of the disjunctive clause may be in the perfect. This is one way in which BH shows a “flashback”—an event that happened before the story—or compares the actions or situations of two characters. The predicate of the disjunctive clause may also be either participial or non-verbal, in which case the clause contains background information about the setting.
2. The imperfect and *w*+perfect are complementary. If a disjunctive clause interrupts the *w*+perfect chain of instructions, commands, or predictions, the predicate of the disjunctive clause will usually be in the imperfect, showing that the event is secondary to the main line of the instructions, &c.
3. Infinitives construct are either circumstantial (often after וַיִּהְיֶה) or complementary, filling out “vague verbs”, showing purpose or result, or functioning as gerunds. They may do this after any finite conjugation (imperfect, preterite, perfect, imperative).
4. Participles are functionally adjectives, modifying or functioning as nouns, although they occasionally occur with a form of הִיה in a sort of “periphrasis”.

5. The conjugations can occur with various affixes [in addition to the subject (PGN)]:

Conjugation	This conjugation can be combined with ...			
	conjunction <i>w-</i>	article	prepositions	pronominal suffixes
imperFect	yes	no	no	yes
Preterite	always	no	no	yes
imperatiVe	yes	no	no	yes
Perfect	yes	no	no	yes
Participle	yes	yes	yes	yes
iNfinitive Construct	yes	no	yes	yes
iNfinitive Absolute	yes	no	no	no

- Thus a verb with an article (e.g.) is a participle; a conjunction-less verb cannot be preterite, &c.
- “Yes” does *not* mean “always” (“always”, however, means “always”).
- “No” means “never”.

**16.3 FREQUENCY** More than one-tenth (**10.5%**) of all verbs in BH are infinitives (6985 occurrences in BH), but infinitives construct (9.4%) are far more common than infinitives absolute (1.1%; 796 occurrences).

Verbs in *qal* account for slightly more than two-thirds of all verbal forms in BH (c. 49,000 occurrences). They occur in the various conjugations in about the same proportions as all verbs in all stems (§5.6).

#### 16.4 CONCEPTS

circumstantial clause	infinitive absolute	temporal clause
gerundive	infinitive construct	vague verb

#### 16.5 VOCABULARY

<i>open</i> (vb.)	פָּתַח .234	<i>there is/are not</i> (opp. 317); <i>no</i> ; וְאֵין often <i>without</i>	אֵין .226
<i>innocence; righteousness</i>	צְדָקָה .235	<i>not</i> (adv.); <i>except, unless</i> (cj.) us. מִבְּלִתִּי or לְבִלְתִּי	בִּלְ .227 בְּלִתִּי
<i>north</i>	צָפוֹן .236	<i>wine</i>	יַיִן .228
<i>abundance, multitude, great quantity</i>	רַב .237	<i>right</i> (hand, side); cf. Benjamin ("son of my right hand"); <i>south</i>	יְמִין .229
<i>chase, persecute, pursue</i>	רָדַף .238	<i>seat, throne</i>	כִּסֵּא .230
<i>rejoice, be glad</i>	שָׂמַח .239	<i>number, total</i>	מִסְפָּר .231
<i>hate</i>	שָׂנֵא .240	<i>dwelling; Tabernacle</i>	מִשְׁכָּן .232
<i>break, smash, shatter</i>	שָׁבַר .241	<i>assembly</i> (trad. "congregation")	עֵדָה .233

## 16.6 EXERCISES

After learning the forms of the *qal* infinitives construct and absolute, and reviewing the *qal* system, please gloss these clauses, parsing the verbs. Remember that infinitives have no PGN; if they have a pronominal suffix, it is identified by PGN in the “suffix” column.

- 2 Sam 15.10; מְרַגֵּל *spy* (here *secret messengers*); שִׁפְרָה *ram's horn*; Absalom; Hebron
1. וַיִּשְׁלַח אֲבִשְׁלוֹם מְרַגְלִים בְּכָל־שִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר  
כְּשִׁמְעֵכֶם אֶת־קוֹל הַשִּׁפְרָה  
וַאֲמַרְתֶּם מִלֶּדֶךָ אֲבִשְׁלוֹם בְּחֶבְרוֹן:
- Gn 37.8; interrogative –הֲ; when followed by אִם, the two clauses express alternatives (real or hypothetical)
2. וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אֶחָיו הַמְלֶכֶךְ תִּמְלֶכֶךָ עָלֵינוּ  
אִם־מָשׁוּל תִּמְשַׁל בָּנוּ
- Gn 3.24; וַיִּשְׁכַּן *he caused to dwell*; מִקְדָּם [to the] *east of*; גַּן *garden*; Eden; חַיִּים *life*
3. וַיִּשְׁכַּן מִקְדָּם לְגַן־עֵדֶן אֶת־הַכְּרָבִים  
... לְשֹׁמֵר אֶת־הַדֶּרֶךְ עַץ הַחַיִּים:
- Qo 3.6, 8; הִשְׁלִיךְ *throw away* (*hifil* of שָׁלַךְ)
4. עַת לְשִׁמּוֹר וְעַת לְהִשְׁלִיךְ:  
עַת לְאֹהֵב וְעַת לְשֹׂנֵא  
עַת מִלְחָמָה וְעַת שְׁלוֹם:
- Jr 45.1; דִּבֶּר *he said*; Jeremiah, Baruch, Neraiah
5. הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יִרְמְיָהוּ הַנָּבִיא אֶל־בְּרוּךְ  
בֶּן־נְרִיָּה בְּכַתְּבוֹ אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה  
עַל־סֵפֶר מִפִּי יִרְמְיָהוּ
- Ex 15.26
6. וַיֹּאמֶר אִם־שָׁמַעַתְּ תִשְׁמַע לְקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ ...
- Pr 6.22; שָׁכַב *lie down*; [the subject of תִּשְׁמַר (3fs) is “Wisdom”]
7. בְּשֹׁכְבְךָ תִשְׁמַר עָלֶיךָ
- 1 Sam 24.21
8. יָדַעְתִּי כִּי מֶלֶךְךָ תִּמְלֹךְךָ
- Jos 14.7; בְּן־אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה *40 years old*; רַגֵּל *to spy* (D); Moses, Kadeš Barnea
9. בְּן־אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה אֲנֹכִי בִשְׁלַח מֹשֶׁה עֶבְד־יְהוָה אֹתִי  
מִקְדָּשׁ בְּרַנַּע לְרַגֵּל אֶת־הָאָרֶץ
- 2 Ch 24.1; בְּן־שִׁבְעַ שָׁנָה *7 years old*; Joash
10. בְּן־שִׁבְעַ שָׁנִים יָאֵשׁ בְּמִלְכוֹ
- Dt 6.17 [the *nun* on תִּשְׁמְרוּן does not affect its function]
11. שְׁמֹר תִּשְׁמְרוּן אֶת־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה
- 1 Sa 8.7; מָאָס *reject, spurn; refuse*; the second כִּי *but*
12. כִּי לֹא אֶתְךָ מָאָסוּ  
כִּי־אֹתִי מָאָסוּ מִמֶּלֶךְךָ עָלֵיהֶם:



13. וַיֵּרָא דָוִד כִּי־יֵצֵא שְׂאוּל לְבַקֵּשׁ אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ  
 1 Sam 23.15; וַיֵּרָא *he saw* (3ms Q Pr < (ראה); יֵצֵא *go out*; בַּקֵּשׁ *seek*; David, Saul
14. עַד כִּי־חָדַל לְסַפֵּר כִּי־אֵין מְסַפֵּר:  
 Gn 41.49 עַד + כִּי *until*
15. רַק חֵזַק לְבַלְתִּי אֲכַל הַדָּם כִּי הַדָּם הוּא הַנֶּפֶשׁ  
 Dt 12.23; רַק *only*; תֹּאכַל (2ms Q F) וְלֹא־תֹאכַל הַנֶּפֶשׁ עִם־הַבֶּשֶׂר:  
 וְלֹא־תֹאכַל הַנֶּפֶשׁ עִם־הַבֶּשֶׂר:
16. וּמְכַר לֹא־תִמְכְּרֶנָּה בַּכֶּסֶף  
 Dt 21.14; מְכַר *sell* (N.B. 3fs suffix)
17. וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹאָב אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ הַבִּשְׁתָּ הַיּוֹם  
 2 Sam 19.6-7; הַבִּשְׁתָּ *you have shamed*;  
 both NCs are gerundive (“by \_\_\_\_ing”) אֶת־פָּנָי כָּל־עַבְדֶּיךָ לְאַהֲבָה אֶת־שִׁנְאֶיךָ  
 וְלִשְׂנֹא אֶת־אַהֲבֶיךָ

### 16.7 ENRICHMENT: GERUNDIVE INFINITIVES

As the functions outlined above suggest, not all infinitive constructs are created equal. In Deuteronomy 10.12, for example, the first infinitive construct, *to fear*, presents the basic response of the Israelites, whereas the next three—*by walking ... loving ... serving*—expound what “fear” means in this covenantal context:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ שֶׁאֵל מֵעַמֶּךָ | Therefore, Israel, what does YHWH your God ask from you                                      |
| כִּי אִם־לִירְאָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ                    | but <i>to fear</i> YHWH your God   |
| לְלַכֵּת בְּכָל־דְּרָכָיו                                 | <i>by walking</i> in all his ways  |
| וּלְאַהֲבָה אֹתוֹ   | and <i>by loving</i> him,  |
| וְלַעֲבֹד אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל־לֵבְבְךָ            | and <i>by serving</i> YHWH your God with all of your heart and all of your being (Dt 10.12). |
| וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁךָ:  |  |

## LESSON 17 QUESTIONS, NEGATIVES, NUMERALS

**T**HIS LESSON addresses three syntactical and functional topics: (1) explicit and implicit questions; (2) negated clauses (at which we have already glanced under the topic of “irrealis” (§6, §6.11, §10.3); and (3) numerals. Addressing these together does not mean that they are unimportant. Numerals occur in nearly 3000 verses (and not just in genealogies and the book of Numbers!), there are more than 6000 negated statements, and nearly 900 explicit questions.

### 17.1 ASKING QUESTIONS

BH asks questions in two basic ways. *Explicit* questions begin with an interrogative form, such as an interrogative pronoun or adverb, or the interrogative particle **הֲ**. *Implicit* questions—which are much less common—are required or suggested by the context. Unlike English and many languages, BH has no question mark.

#### 17.1.1 INTERROGATIVE ADVERBS

- BH has a number of interrogative adverbs, which can ask about location, direction (“where”), reason (“why”), or manner (“how”). Since a good many questions in BH are rhetorical—asked not to gain information, but to make a point (e.g., Gn 4.9; Ps 42.4, 10)—the line between questions and exclamations is often blurred (e.g., **אִיךָ** in Is 14.11 and 2 Sam 1.5).

<b>אִי</b>	Where?		<b>אִי הֶבֶל אָחִיךָ</b>	Where is Abel, your brother? (Gn 4.9)
<b>אֵי-מִזֶּה</b>	From where?	31x	<b>לֹא יָדַעְתִּי אֵי מִזֶּה הָמָּה:</b>	I did not know <i>where</i> they were from (1 Sam 25.11)
<b>אֵי</b>	Where [is]?	56x	<b>אֵי הֲאֵלֹהִים:</b>	Where is your God (Ps 42.4)
<b>אֵן אָנָּה</b>	[To] where?	42x	<b>אָנָּה אַתָּה הַלֵּךְ</b>	“Where are you going?” (Zc 2.6)
<b>אִיךָ</b> <b>אִיכָּה</b>	How? Why? How!		<b>אִיךָ נִפַּלְתָּ מִשָּׁמַיִם</b>	How you have fallen from heaven! (Is 14.11)
		61x	<b>אִיךָ יָדַעְתָּ כִּי- מֵת שָׂאוּל</b>	How do you know that Saul is dead? (2 Sam 1.5)
			<b>אִיכָּה יֹשְׁבָה בְּרָד הָעִיר</b>	How the city sits solitary, ...! (La 1.1)
<b>לָמָּה</b> <b>לָמָּה</b>	Why?	178x	<b>לָמָּה שָׁכַחְתָּנִי לָמָּה-קָדַר אֵלַיךְ</b>	Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go about mourning? (Ps 42.10)
<b>מִדּוּעַ</b>	Why?	72x	<b>מִדּוּעַ אֲדַנִּי בִכָּה</b>	Why is my master weeping? (2 Kgs 8.12)

#### 17.1.2 INTERROGATIVE **הֲ**

- The interrogative particle **הֲ** introduces “yes-no” questions by being *prefixed* to the *first* word of a direct or indirect question.<sup>7</sup>

<b>הֲכֹלֵב אֲנֹכִי</b>	Am I a dog? (1 Sam 17.43)
<b>הֲעֶבְדַּר יִשְׂרָאֵל</b>	Is Israel a slave/servant? (Jr 2.14)

<sup>7</sup>It is preceded twice by the conjunction **וַ** (2 Sa 15.35; Zc 3.1).

(cont'd.)

הַשְׁמֵר אָחִי אֲנֹכִי: Am I my brother's keeper? (Gn 4.9)  
 וְהֲלוֹא עִמָּךְ שָׁם צָדוֹק וְאַבְיָתָר And are not Zadok and Abiathar there with you? (2 Sam 15.35)

2. The vowel under the interrogative  $\text{--ה}$  varies according to the first letter of the word to which it is attached:

Interrogative + Vowel	If the word begins with ...	Example
$\text{--ה}$	any non-guttural followed by a full vowel	הַשְׁמֵרָה Did she keep watch?
$\text{--ה}$	any guttural followed by a vowel other than <i>qames</i> or <i>qames hatuf</i> , or any non-guttural followed by a half-vowel	הַעֲבֹד Is a servant ...? הַאֱלֹהִים Did God ...?
$\text{--ה}$	any guttural followed by <i>qames</i> or <i>qames hatuf</i>	הָאֲנֹכִי Am I ...?

3. The compound form  $\text{ה--ל}$  ( $\text{ל} + \text{ה}$ ) introduces a *negative rhetorical* question—i.e., a question that assumes a positive answer. These might be represented with or without a “tag question” in English (e.g., “Am I not YHWH?” *versus* “I’m YHWH, aren’t I?”), or even “indeed”. The question’s cotext (literary context) and content determine which might be more appropriate).

הֲלֹא אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה: Am I not YHWH? (Ex 4.11)  
 הֲלֹא אֲנֹכִי אֶתְנֶךָ “Am I not your she-donkey, ...?” (Nu 22.30)  
 הֲלֹא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם עִמָּכֶם Is not YHWH your God with you? (2 Chr 22.18)

4. *Polar questions*—“yes/no” questions that pose a choice between opposites—end with  $\text{לֹא אִם}$  (“... or not” questions; e.g., Jg 2.22), introduce each choice with interrogative  $\text{--ה}$  (Nu 13.18b), or end with  $\text{אִם}$  followed by an adjective (Nu 13.18c).

לְמַעַן נִסּוּת בָּם אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל ... in order to test Israel by them—*whether*  
 הַשְׁמֵרִים הֵם אֶת־דְּרֹךְ יְהוָה they will observe the way of YHWH ... or not  
 (Jg 2.22).  
 אִם־לֹא: ...

וּרְאִיתֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ מֵהֵיוּא and see the land, what it is,  
 וְאֶת־הָעָם הַיֹּשֵׁב עָלֶיהָ and the people who live in it  
 הַחֲזָק הוּא הַרְפָּה —*whether* they are strong *or* weak,  
 הַמְּעַט הוּא אִם־רַב: [whether they are] few or many (Nu 13.18).

5. *Implicit questions* are not marked (interrogative  $\text{--ה}$  occurs only 746x). Some questions are semi-explicit, introduced by a verb such as  $\text{שָׁאַל}$ , “he asked”, but most must be recognized from the context, which means that there is often disagreement about whether or not a particular clause is a question or a statement. In 1 Ch 22.18, David exhorts the leaders of Israel by asking a rhetorical question (introduced by  $\text{הֲלֹא}$ ). Does the force of the interrogative carry over to the next clause or not? It can be read either way:

הֲלֹא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם עִמָּכֶם    *Is not YHWH your god with you?*  
 וְהִנֵּי לָכֶם מִסְבִּיב    *And has he not given you rest all around? or*  
 And he has given you rest all around.

Nor does the rest of the sentence (“for he has given into my hand the inhabitants of the land, and the land has been subjugated before YHWH and his people.”) answer the question, since it fits both readings.

## 17.2 NEGATIVES

BH has three main negative clause-level adverbs—לא, אין/אין, אל—as well as a number of relatively infrequent negatives (e.g., בלתי, Lesson 16). These largely and usually negate the clause in which they occur.

1. The adverbs לא and אל negate clauses.

וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה    ... but they *did not listen* to Moses (Ex 6.9)  
 וַיִּרְאַת יְהוָה לֹא בָחָרוּ    ... but the fear of YHWH they *did not choose* (Pr 1.29)  
 לֹא־קָרָאתִי בְנִי    *I did not call*, my son ... (1 Sam 3.6)  
 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשָׁפָט אֶל־יְאֹמְרֵי כֵן:    Jehoshaphat said, “The king *should not say so*” (1 Kgs 22.8)

2. לא and אין can also occur in single-element statements as “No”, when the rest of the sentence is understood from the context:

וַיֹּאמֶר הַיִּשְׁפָּה אִישׁ וַאֲמַרְתָּ אֵין:    “... and he says, ‘Is there a man here?’, you shall say, ‘No’.” (Jg 4.20)  
 וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא כִּי בְרַחֲב גָלוּן    They said, “No. Instead/But, we will spend the night in the square” (Gn 19.2).

3. אין negates non-verbal clauses as “There is/was not/no”. When it negates a participle, its subject is often a pronominal suffix. When the participle itself is the subject, ואין can function like “without ...” (Lv 26.36).

אֵין כְּמִנִּי בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ    *There is none* like me in all the earth (Ex 9.14)  
 כַּאֲשֶׁר אֵינְךָ יוֹדֵעַ מִהֲיִדְרֶךְ הַרוּחַ    Just as you *do not* know what the way of the spirit is (Qo 11.5)  
 וַנִּפְּלוּ וַאֲיִן רֹדֵף:    ... and they will fall *without* a pursuer (Lv 26.36)

4. אין occurs with the possessive preposition ל to indicate that someone “does not have” something. The ל is prefixed to the person who “does not have”:

וּבֶן אֵין־לוֹ    ... and *he had no* son (Dt 25.5)  
 וְאִם־אֵין לְאִישׁ גֹּאֵל    but if the man *has no* “redeemer, ...” (Nu 5.8)

5. ואין occurs with nouns and participles in the sense of “there is no one who” or “without”:

וַאֲיִן־פּוֹתֵר אוֹתָם לְפַרְעֹה:    ... but *there was no* interpreter of them for Pharaoh (Gn 41.8); ... *no one* to interpret them ...

(cont'd.)

וְאֵין מוֹשִׁיעַ: ... but *there will be no* [without a] deliverer (Dt 28.29)

אֵין יוֹצֵא וְאֵין בָּא: *No one* went out and *no one* went in (Josh 6.1)

### 17.3 NUMERALS

Like English, Hebrew has two sets of numerals, *cardinal* (e.g., “one”, “two”, “three”) and *ordinal*, which identify *order* (e.g., “first”, “second”, “third”).

#### 17.3.1 CARDINAL NUMERALS

“One” – “Ten”		“Tens”
“Masculine”	“Feminine”	
אֶחָד	אַחַת <i>one</i>	
שְׁנַיִם	שְׁתַּיִם <i>two</i> (the initial <i>šewa</i> is silent in the feminine)	
שְׁלֹשׁ	שְׁלֹשָׁה <i>three</i>	שְׁלֹשִׁים <i>thirty</i>
אַרְבַּע	אַרְבַּעַה <i>four</i>	אַרְבָּעִים <i>forty</i>
חֲמִשָּׁה	חֲמִשָּׁה <i>five</i>	חֲמִשִּׁים <i>fifty</i>
שֵׁשׁ	שֵׁשָׁה <i>six</i>	שִׁשִּׁים <i>sixty</i>
שִׁבְעָה	שִׁבְעָה <i>seven</i>	שִׁבְעִים <i>seventy</i>
שְׁמֹנֶה	שְׁמֹנֶה <i>eight</i>	שְׁמֹנִים <i>eighty</i>
תְּשֵׁעַ	תְּשֵׁעָה <i>nine</i>	תְּשַׁעִים <i>ninety</i>
עָשָׂר	עָשָׂרָה <i>ten</i>	עָשָׂרִים <i>twenty</i> (plural of “ten”)

1. Apart from “one” and “two”, the main difference between the masculine and feminine forms is the “feminine ending” (ה-).
2. When the feminine forms occur in the construct, the final ה- is replaced by ת- (as in nouns); e.g., עֶשְׂרֵת / עֶשְׂרֹתָהּ.
3. The numeral “one” usually follows the noun that it modifies and agrees with it in gender and definiteness. If there is no noun, it functions like an indefinite “one” in English, often with the article.

בְּנֵי אִישׁ־אֶחָד נַחֲנוּ We are the sons of *one* man [a man] (Gn 42.11)

תּוֹרָה אַחַת לָהֶם They [shall] have *one* law (Lv 7.7)

כָּל הַיֹּלֵךְ אֶל־מְקוֹם אֶחָד Everything goes to *one* place (Qo 3.20)

שֵׁם הָאֶחָד פִּישׁוֹן The name of *one* was Pishon (Gn 2.11)

4. The numeral “two” can either precede or follow its noun, which is in the plural. If it precedes, it is in construct, but does not mean “two of ...”. “Two” also occurs with pronominal suffixes:

עַמּוּדִים שְׁנַיִם *two* pillars (2 Chr 3.15)

וְאֵת שְׁנֵי בָנֶיהָ ... and her *two* sons (Ex 18.3)

(cont'd.)

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לָהּ שְׁנַי גּוֹיִם בְּבֶטְנְךָ  
 וַיֹּאכְלוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו

YHWH said to her, “Two nations are in your womb”  
 (Gn 25.23)  
 The *two of them* ate together (Jg 19.6)

5. The numerals “three” through “ten” disagree in gender with the noun that they modify.

שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲלֹהֵי בְנֵי-נֹחַ  
 חֲמֵשָׁה שֶׁקֶלִים כֶּסֶף

These *three* were Noah’s sons (Gn 9.19)  
*five* shekels of silver (Lv 27.6)

6. Hundreds & thousands:

מֵאָה	100
מֵאֹתַיִם	200 (dual ending)
שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת	300
...	&c.
אַלְפַּיִם	1,000
אַלְפֵיִם	2,000 (dual ending)
שְׁלֹשָׁת אֲלָפִים	3,000
...	&c.
רְבֹבוֹת / רֶבְבָה	10,000
רְבֹבוֹתַיִם	20,000 (dual ending)
שְׁלֹשׁ רְבֹבוֹת	30,000
...	&c.

7. #6 (above) illustrates how Hebrew forms compound numerals (e.g., “thirteen”, “ninety-nine”, “one hundred forty-two”): numerals are either juxtaposed or linked with the conjunction ׀. Determining whether to multiply or add large numerals is contextual.

כָּל-נַפְשׁ אַרְבַּעַת עָשָׂר  
 שָׁשׁ מֵאוֹת עָשָׂרִים וְאַחַד  
 שָׁשָׁה וְאַרְבַּעִים אֶלֶף וְחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת

*fourteen* people in all (Gn 46.22)  
 621 (Ez 2.26)  
 46,500 (Nu 1.21)

8. The preposition כֹּ- occurs with numerals in the sense of “approximately” or “about”:

כֹּאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת אִישׁ:  
 כֹּאַשֶׁר שָׁנִים

*about* four hundred men (1 Sam 22.2)  
*about* ten years (Ru 1.4)

9. Age is usually indicated by the phrase “the son of X years”:

וְאַבְרָם בֶּן-חֲמִשׁ שָׁנִים וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה  
 בֶּן-שְׁמֹנֶה שָׁנָה יָאֲשִׁיחֻהוּ בְמִלְכוֹ

Now Abram was *seventy-five years old* ... (Gn 12.4)  
 Josiah was *eight years old* when he became king (2 Kgs 22.1)

### 17.3.2 ORDINAL NUMERALS

Ordinal numerals, adjectives that tell the *order* in which something occurred are generally formed by adding ךְ - to the cardinals (but not “first” and “second”). Ordinal numerals are not inflected for gender:

רֵאשׁוֹן	<i>first</i> (cf. רֵאשִׁית, <i>beginning</i> ; רֵאשׁ, <i>head</i> )
אֶחָד	<i>first</i> (occasionally)
שֵׁנִי	<i>second</i>
שְׁלִישִׁי	<i>third</i>
רְבִיעִי	<i>fourth</i> (cf. אַרְבַּע)
חֲמִישִׁי	<i>fifth</i>
שֵׁשִׁי	<i>sixth</i>
שְׁבִיעִי	<i>seventh</i>
שְׁמִינִי	<i>eighth</i>
תְּשִׁיעִי	<i>ninth</i>
עֲשִׂירִי	<i>tenth</i>

1. The ordinals function as attributive adjectives, following their noun and agreeing with it in gender, number, and (usually) definiteness:

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי	On the <i>seventh</i> day ... (Josh 6.15)
וּבַיּוֹם הָרְבִיעִי עָשָׂרָה פָּרִים	On the <i>fourth</i> day, ten bulls, ... (Nu 29.23)
אֲנִי רֵאשׁוֹן וְאֲנִי אַחֲרוֹן	I am <i>the first</i> and I am <i>the last</i> (Is 44.6)

2. Ordinals only function from “first” to “tenth”; beyond “tenth”, BH uses cardinal numerals:

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת־הַפֶּסַח	They made [celebrated] the Passover in the <i>first</i>
בְּרֵאשׁוֹן בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ	[month] on the <i>fourteenth</i> day of the month (Nu 9.5).
בְּשָׁנַת שְׁתַּיִם עֶשְׂרֵה לְאַחַז	In the <i>twelfth</i> year of Ahaz ... (2 Kgs 17.1)

### 17.4 CONCEPTS

cardinal numeral	non-verbal clause	polar question
interrogative	negation	rhetorical question
	ordinal numeral	

**17.5 VOCABULARY**

<i>nine</i>	תֵּשַׁע	.250	<i>one</i> (m., f.)	אַחַת	אֶחָד	.242
<i>ten</i>	עָשָׂר	.251	<i>two</i> (m., f.)	שְׁתַּיִם	שְׁנַיִם	.243
<i>twenty</i>	עֶשְׂרִים		<i>second</i> (ord.; m., f.)	שְׁנִית	שְׁנֵי	
<i>hundred</i>	מֵאָה	.252	<i>three</i>		שְׁלֹשׁ	.244
<i>two hundred</i>	מֵאוֹתַיִם					
<i>thousand</i>	אַלְפֵי	.253	<i>four</i>		אַרְבַּע	.245
<i>two thousand</i>	אַלְפַיִם					
<i>first</i> (ord.)	רִאשׁוֹן	.254	<i>five</i>		חֲמִישׁ	.246
<i>first; beginning</i> (n.)	רֵאשִׁית	.255	<i>six</i>		שֵׁשׁ	.247
<i>half</i>	חֲצִי	.256	<i>seven</i>		שִׁבְעַת	.248
<i>shekel</i> (approx. 11.4g, 0.5 oz.)	שֶׁקֶל	.257	<i>eight</i>		שְׁמוֹנָה	.249

**17.6 EXERCISES**

1. You will find numerals for the populations of the tribes of Israel in the following verses. Please fill in the name of each tribe and its population at the beginning and end of the wandering in the wilderness. **NB:** The order of two tribes is reversed in Nu 26.

Num 1	Tribe	Population	Num 26	Population
1.21			26.7	
1.23			26.14	
1.25			26.18	
1.27			26.22	
1.29			26.25	
1.31			26.27	
1.33			26.37	
1.35			26.34	
1.37			26.41	
1.39			26.43	
1.41			26.47	
1.43			26.50	
1.46			26.51	



2. These verses contain numerals for, e.g., ages, numbers of people (census lists), &c. Please gloss the clauses, transmorphifying the numerals.

- Gn 5.27; Methusaleh וַיְהִיו כָּל־יָמָיו מֵתוֹשֵׁלַח תִּשְׁעַ וְשָׁשִׁים שָׁנָה וַתִּשְׁעַ מְאוֹת שָׁנָה .a
- Gn 7.24; וַיִּגְבְּרוּ הַמַּיִם עַל־הָאָרֶץ חֲמִשִּׁים וּמֵאֵת יוֹם: prevail; the sign *sof pasuq* [:] marks the “end of the verse” .b
- Ex 23.12; שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מְעֹשֶׂיךָ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי תִשְׁבֹּת: *you shall do* (2ms Q F <עשה); *work, deed*; *rest* .c
- Ex 24.18b; Moses וַיְהִי מֹשֶׁה בָּהָר אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וְאַרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה: .d
- 2 Sam 5.4-5; חֹדֶשׁ בְּנִשְׁלָשִׁים שָׁנָה הָיָה הַיּוֹד בְּמַלְכוֹ אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה מֶלֶךְ: month, new moon; David, Hebron, Jerusalem, Israel, Judah .e
- Nu 11.19; the second form of וְלֹא יוֹם אֶחָד תֹּאכְלוּן וְלֹא יוֹמִים וְלֹא חֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים וְלֹא עֶשְׂרֵה יָמִים וְלֹא עֶשְׂרֵים יוֹם: *is dual* (i.e., *two days*) .f

3. Please gloss these clauses and sentences, parsing the verbal forms.

- Nu 14.41; וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לָּמָּה זֶה אַתֶּם עֹבְרִים אֶת־פִּי יְהוָה: why?; Moses .a
- Jr 3.14 וְלִקְחָתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶחָד מֵעִיר וּשְׁנַיִם מִמִּשְׁפָּחָה .b
- Is 44.6; כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגֹאֲלוֹ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֲנִי רִאשׁוֹן וְאֲנִי אַחֲרוֹן וּמִבְּלַעֲדֵי אֵין אֱלֹהִים: *redeemer* (Q Ptc); *thus*; *last*; *apart from, except for, without* (+ lcs suffix); Israel .c
- 2 Kgs 10.34; וַיִּתֵּר דְּבָרֵי יְהוָה וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְכָל־גְּבוּרָתוֹ הִלּוּ־אֵיהֶם כְּתוּבִים עַל־סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: [the] *rest, remainder*; *do*; *strength, power*; Jehu .d

## 17.7 ENRICHMENT: *IRREALIS*

If a story is a record of events—a record of “what happened”—why do authors tell their readers that some events did *not* occur? What does negative information (*irrealis*) add to a story?

As Lydia walked down the street, she saw a dog tied in front of a house. The dog barked and lunged at her, breaking its rope. Suddenly realizing that it was free, it ran after her, but *did not bite her*.

In this admittedly simple illustration, the negative clause (in *italics*) tells the reader something that is *contrary to expectation*. We probably expect that a barking dog that breaks loose and chases someone intends to attack that person, but this dog did not, contrary to our expectation (and, perhaps, to our experience). In fact, in this example, the last (negative) statement also leads us to conclude that the dog caught her, since if it did not, the *irrealis* would not make sense (if the dog didn’t catch her, it couldn’t have bitten her).

But what if the story read:

As Lydia walked down the street, she saw a dog tied in front of a house. The dog barked and lunged at her, breaking its rope. Suddenly realizing that it was free, it chased her, but Lydia ran inside *before the dog could catch her*.

In this case the negative information is that the dog did not catch her (most readers would probably infer that if the dog had caught her, it would have attacked her). The *irrealis* is given obliquely and implicitly, in a “privative” clause (related to the root of the word “deprive”), rather than in a negative statement. Furthermore, if we rewrite the last clause so that it reads merely “... but Lydia ran safely inside”, we would not need the clause in italics, since the word “safely” implies that the dog did not catch her.<sup>8</sup>

In the beginning of the story of Abram, we find a number of *irrealis* clauses:

וַתְּהִי שָׂרַי עֲקָרָה אֵין לָהּ וָלָד׃ And Sarai was barren—she had *no child* (Gn 11.30)

This is one of the precipitating crises of the Abram story—his lack of an heir—set over against the divine promise of descendants (e.g., Gn 12.2; 13.16). Since we are told this at the very beginning of the stories about Abram, we might suspect that this will become an important theme in what follows.

In 1 Sa 3.1b, the author uses a form of *irrealis* to warn readers against mis-reading the preceding incident (the prophetic announcement of YHWH’s judgment upon Eli’s house). This prophecy follows Eli’s word to Hannah (1.17), which might encourage us to think that prophetic revelation was relatively commonplace in Israel at that time. As the opening of 1 Sa 3 shows, however, that was not true:

וַדְּבַר־יְהוָה יָקָר בְּיָמִים הַהֵם׃ Now YHWH’s word was rare in those days;  
אֵין חִזּוֹן נִפְרָץ׃ there was *no vision* breaking through (1 Sa 3.1b).

This double statement not only warns against misinterpreting the prophetic activity of the preceding chapter as a normal occurrence, but also helps to set the stage for the restoration of prophetic revelation through Samuel (which is the story of 1 Sa 3).

<sup>8</sup>There is another type of *irrealis*, which we might call “positive” *irrealis*. In Lv 10.3, Aaron’s response to Moses’ speech was silence: וַיִּדַם אַהֲרֹן, *and Aaron was silent*, i.e., Aaron did not speak. This raises a host of complex questions about the relationship between positive and negative statements that are better left for another course of study.