

Chapter Twelve

Qal Imperfect Strong Verbs

Vocabulary

אָזן	ear (f)	עוֹלָם	eternity, for ever
אֵיל	ram	עָנָה	to answer (v)
גִּבּוֹר	mighty (adj)	קוּם	to arise (v)
זָבַח	sacrifice	שָׁפָה	lip, speech, edge (f)
יָכַל	to be able, capable (v)	שָׁאַל	to ask (v)
קָרַח	to cut off, make a covenant (v)	שָׁבַר	to break in pieces (v)
מָשַׁל	to rule (v)	שׁוּב	to turn, return (v)
סוּר	to turn aside (v)	שָׁכַח	to forget (v)
עָבַד	to work, serve (v)	שָׁפַט	to judge, deliver (v)
עָבַר	to pass over, through (v)	תְּפִלָּה	prayer (f)

Qal Imperfect Tense

The Qal imperfect expresses action that is simple and incomplete whether in the past, present or future. The Qal imperfect is normally translated as the English present or future tense. The imperfect gets its time of action from the context. The imperfect may also be translated modally as “would, could, should, may, might.”

Imperfect Tense Inflection

The imperfect conjugation has the following forms.

Qal Imperfect Inflection					
Singular			Plural		
3ms	יִשָּׁאֵל	he	3cp	יִשָּׁאֵלוּ	they
3fs	תִּשָּׁאֵל	she	3fp	תִּשָּׁאֵלנה	they
2ms	תִּשָּׂאֵל	you	2mp	תִּשָּׂאֵלוּ	you
2fs	תִּשָּׂאֵלִי	you	2fp	תִּשָּׂאֵלנה	you
1cs ¹	אֲשָׂאֵל	I	1cp	נִשָּׂאֵל	we

¹ “c” indicates “common,” meaning both masculine & feminine

שָׁמַר "he kept"					
3ms	יִשְׁמַר	he will keep	3cp	יִשְׁמְרוּ	they will keep
3fs	תִּשְׁמַר	she will keep	3fp	תִּשְׁמַרְנָה	they will keep
2ms	תִּשְׁמַר	you will keep	2mp	תִּשְׁמְרוּ	you will keep
2fs	תִּשְׁמְרִי	you will keep	2fp	תִּשְׁמַרְנָה	you will keep
1cs	אֶשְׁמַר	I will keep	1cp	נִשְׁמַר	we will keep

Qal Imperfect Usage

The Qal imperfect inflection expresses the kind of action as incomplete or an incomplete state of being. There are various ways the Hebrew imperfect may be translated. Context must be examined as to the kind of action or the state of being represented by the verb.

1. *Simple action in future time.* וְאֶת־רוּחִי אֶתֵּן בְּקִרְבְּכֶם. “And **I will put** My Spirit within you” (Ezek. 36:27a)
2. *Repetitive, habitual, or customary actions in the past, present, or future.*
 - a. *In the past.* וְאֵד יֵשְׁלַח מִן־הָאָרֶץ. “And a mist **went up** from the earth” (Gen. 2:6)
 - b. *In the present.* וְהַפִּלַת צְדִיקִים יִשְׁמַע. “But the prayer of the righteous **he hears**” (Prov. 15:29).
 - c. *In the future.* יִזְכֹּר לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ. “**He will remember** his covenant forever.” (Ps. 111:5)
3. *Modal expressions.* Modal expressions “would, could, should, may, might,” are meant when the imperfect is used in conjunction with other words.
 - a. When used with conditional particles אם, “if,” and אולי “perhaps.” אולי יִשְׁמְעוּ בֵּית יְהוּדָה “Perhaps the house of Judah will hear.” (Jer. 36:3)
 - b. When used with particles expressing end or purpose such as לְמַעַן “in order that,” כִּי “for, because,” אֲשֶׁר “that,” and פֶּן “lest.” פֶּן־תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ “lest you forget the LORD your God.” (Deut. 6:12)
 - c. When used after the interrogatives אֵיךְ “how,” מָה “what,” מִי “who,” and לְמָה “why.” מִי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁמַע בְּקוֹלוֹ “Who is the LORD that I should listen to his voice?” (Ex. 5:2)

Volitional usage

The imperfect can be used to express volition in the first person (Cohortative) and the third person (Jussive).

Number	Name	
1 st	Cohortative	I, we
2 nd	Imperative	You
3 rd	Jussive	He, they

1. *Jussive*. The word jussive comes from the Latin *iussū* meaning “by order, by command.” The jussive expresses the speaker’s desire, wish, or command, and is translated using “may” or “let.” The jussive occurs with the third person imperfect.
 - a. Simple jussive.
 - a. Translated “let.” אֶל־יִמְשְׁלוּ־בִי “Let them not have dominion over me.” (Ps. 19:14)
 - i. Translated “may.” יִשְׁפֹּט יְהוָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶיךָ “May the LORD judge between me and between you.” (Gen. 16:5)
 - b. Used with the particle of entreaty נָא “I pray.” וַיִּזְכֹּר־נָא הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ “Pray that the king remember the LORD your God.” (2 Sam. 14:11).
2. *Cohortative*. A first person exhortation to oneself or to a group. The word cohortative comes from the Latin *cōhaerĕo*, meaning, “to hold together, hang together.” The cohortative expresses the speaker’s “desire, intention, self-encouragement, or determination to perform a certain action.”²
 - a. Simple cohortative. Translated “let.” וְעַתָּה נִכְרַת־בְּרִית לְאַלֹהֵינוּ “And now, let us make a covenant with our God.” (Ezra. 10:3)
 - b. Used with the vocalic suffix הָ. וְאַכְרַתָּה לָכֶם בְּרִית עוֹלָם. “And I will make for you an everlasting covenant.” (Isa. 55:3)
3. *Imperative*. The second person command. The word imperative comes from the Latin *impĕrāre*, meaning, “to impose, to command.” The imperative expresses direct commands, requests, or permission.

Vav Consecutive with the Imperfect

When the author wants to convey consecutive events in past time, the phrase will begin with the perfect followed by a series of vav consecutives attached to the imperfect. This construction is referred to as the vav conversive. The vav consecutive is normally attached to the imperfect using the patach, plus the dagesh forte in the following consonant (וַ). With the addition of the vav consecutive the rules for its pointing will be similar to the definite article.

אֶת־קַיִן	Qal Impf וַתֵּלֵד	Qal Impf וַתַּהַר	אִשְׁתּוֹ	אֶת־חַוָּה	Qal Perf יָדַעַ	וְהָאָדָם
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“And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived, and she bore Cain (Gen. 4:1)

Practice

- I. Memorize the vocabulary.
- II. Complete the Qal imperfect for the following and translate:

1.	3 ms	כתב	3 mp	כתב
2.	3 fs	כתב	3 fpl	כתב
3.	2 ms	כתב	2 mp	כתב
4.	2 fs	כתב	2 fp	כתב

² Kelley, p. 132

5. 1 cs כתב 1 cp כתב

III. Translate the following:

1. וְחָטְאֵתֶיךָ לֹא אֶזְכֵּר (Isa. 43:25)
2. וְהוּא יִשְׁפֹּט־תְּבֵל בְּצֶדֶק (Ps. 9:9)
3. כִּי זֹאת הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר אָכַרְתָּ אֶת-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל (Jer. 31:33)
4. אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁכַּן-שָׁם בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעוֹלָם (Ezek. 43:7)